

In the Name of God

STUDIES IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Translated By
Dr. Fazel Asadi Amjad & Dr. Mehdi Dasht Bozorgi

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Contents

Preface.....	1
The Graduation of Existence in Islamic Philosophy / <i>Ahmad Abedi</i>	3
The Knowledge of the Creator from the Points of View of Three Philosophical Schools / <i>Muhammad Entezam</i>	15
The Definition of Knowledge from the Point of View of Muslim Theologians and Philosophers / <i>Muhammad Taghi Fa'ali</i>	49
The Arguments of the Sincere / <i>Husayn Oshagi</i>	69
Personal Identity / <i>Amir Divani</i>	81
The Basic Principle in Ibn Sina's (Avicenna) Ontology / <i>Dr.Reza Akbarian</i>	121
The Analysis of the Relationship of Generation / <i>Rasul Abudyat</i>	141
The Argument from Necessity and Contingency in Islamic Philosophy and Theology / <i>Mohsen Javadi</i>	151
The Theory of the Oneness of Existence and its Demonstrability from the Points of View of Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra / <i>Ghassem Kakaie</i>	183

Preface

Man has always been curious about the most essential life subjects within the context of cultural, social, political, and religious issues, and this curiosity has brought about important and obvious achievements. Without denying the role of other factors in this process, we cannot ignore the impact of religious principles on generating different but impressive and decisive approaches. A brief look at the history and culture of nations where religion played a prominent role will demonstrate this principle. Islamic tenets have also paved the way for the emergence of new elements. Muslim philosophers played an important role in administering and interpreting the principles of ancient Greek philosophy advocated by Plato and Aristotle.

The impact of this trend today is that sound understanding acquired by various philosophical tracts and theological schools plays an important role in the development and spread of these ideas, equally influencing prevailing ideas within these schools. Clearly, the interpretation of philosophical and theological subjects by major philosophical schools in the Muslim world (Peripatetic, Illuminationist and Transcendental philosophy) is important for all those eager to learn more about such issues.

The selected articles in this collection stem from research efforts at Iranian seminaries and universities, hopefully, they will be helpful in opening the doors of dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim philosophers, assisting in the constructive criticism of different ideas.

We thank Mr. Muhammad Reza Bayat for his great effort in collecting and editing these articles.

The Graduation of Existence in Islamic Philosophy

Ahmad Abedi

The problem of the graduation of existence is one of the common challenges of theology and philosophy, and even Muslim mystics have given serious thought to the subject and discussed the issue at length in their works. The importance of this discussion is such that we can confidently assert it is next in importance only to the problem of 'fundamentality of existence,' in transcendental theosophy. The solution to most arguments and problems of transcendental theosophy depends upon it.

Discussions of graduation are the advancement of Muslim thinkers; nothing regarding this subject can be traced in the sphere of Greek philosophers. This problem and the 'fundamentality of existence' are the twin ideas nurtured by Islamic Philosophers, rooted in mystic Muslim theorems. They emerged from the encounters between philosophers and theologians. In this article, the historical background of the problem is reviewed briefly; as well arguments and results of the study are discussed.

The Historical Background

Abu-Ali Cina (Avicenna) (370-428 AH) is the first philosopher to discuss the question of the graduation of existence. At the end of the third chapter and fifth article of the theology of *Shifa*, he states: "Existence has no strength or weakness, and does not become less or more defective, and differs only on three percepts, viz, priority and posteriori, independence and dependence, necessity and contingency." He adds: "This is why when priority and posteriori are considered, first existence is attributed to the cause and then to the effect. The cause is also independent from the effect, but the effect is dependent on it. The cause is also necessary in its existence, but the effect is essentially contingent in its existence."¹

Following Abu-Ali Cina (Avicenna), Taftazani, Bahmanyar, Fakhr –e-

1. Avicenna, *al Shifa*, "Illahiyyat", Bidar Publication, p.444.

Razi, Abu al-Barakat -e- Baghdadi and some other philosophers accepted the view. Khawjah Nassir al-Din -e-Tussi says in his works, "There is no increase or augmentation in existence." At other times he states: "There is strength and weakness in existence."²

What Khawjah Nassir intends is that there is existence in popular graduation but no particular graduation. The concept does not apply to the cause and effect in the same way; however, in the concept of existence, there is movement from weakness to strength. Quschci, one of the most important commentators on the thoughts of Khawjah Nassir, offered comment³ in his work. Allameh Hilli also followed the approach of Khawjah Nassir,⁴ but for the first time, Sheikh Eshraq suggested graduation in perfection and deficiency. In *Hikmat al-Eshraq*, he says: "The different degrees of light are due to perfection or deficiency, and the difference between two immaterial sources of light is not due to the whole essence, nor part of the essence, nor because of the accidents, for the quiddity cannot be the cause of difference." He added: "Because those lights are simple, a part of the essence cannot be the cause of this distinction: On the other hand, material accidents are not there; therefore their perfection and deficiency in existence should be the cause of their distinction and difference."

Analysts of his work have explained Suhrawardi's view in the following way: "The existence of the Necessary and the existence of the contingent have no common nature: On the other hand, the existence of the Necessary is more intense and stronger than the existence of the contingent: For it is clear that the qualities and the characteristics that exist in the existence of the Necessary do not exist in the contingent beings. We also see that when two lines are compared with each other, albeit that one of them is longer than the other, and although their difference is clear, they do not differ in their quantitative nature. Therefore, their difference should be related to existence: The long line includes the short line, plus some addition. Sometimes, we also see that there is motion in a color, and we know that there is no motion in quiddity; therefore, motion should be related to existence."

The intention of the peripatetic philosophers is that in general existence there are two kinds of multiplicity:

1. Accidental multiplicity, such as man, plant, animal, etc;
2. Existence that is anterior and posterior, strong, or weak, etc. They

2. *Tajrid al Aghaid*, p. 35; *Naghd al-Mohassal*, p. 518; *Shawarigh al-Ilham*, p. 52.

3. *Sharh-e- Tajrid al- Aghaid*, pp. 14, 24.

4. *Anwar al- Malakout fii Sharh al- Yaghout*, p. 47; *al-Jawhar al-Nathiid*, p. 20.

hold that multiplicity is the effect of the following three things:

- A. The difference is in the whole such as the difference of the higher genera from each other.
- B. The difference is in a part of the essence, such as the difference between two species of one genus.
- C. The difference is in the accidents, such as the difference between two individuals of one species.

But the Illuminationist philosophers argued that there is also a fourth kind of difference, that is, perfection and deficiency in existence: There is no graduation in concepts, but the graduation is related to the truth of existence.

Sheikh Eshraq, Sadr al-Mutahillin accepted this theory making it the foundation of his philosophy, even proving the fundamentality of existence by means of graduation. An explanation of the discourse of Mulla Sadra and his evidence for graduation and the effects and results of this problem will be discussed later.

Nearly two centuries after Sadr al-Mutahillin even his closest students did not consider his theories. As Agha Hussain Khansari writes, “The particular graduation of existence is something that we do not understand, and it seems that even the theoretician himself did not notice it.” But in the fourteenth century (A.H.) the theory of this particular graduation of existence was strongly supported by the great commentators of Mulla Sadra’s philosophy.

The Popular Graduation

What is important in Mulla Sadra’s philosophy is particular graduation. A brief explanation of popular graduation, and then a discussion of particular graduation follow.

Before Sheikh Eshraq, all Peripatetic philosophers in the Muslim world and all theologians believed in popular graduation. Popular graduation holds that one universal concept cannot be true of all its extensions in the same way, but applies to its individual parts in different ways. All these extensions have the meaning of that name in common, but at the same time the application of that meaning to the extensions is not similar; for example, the word ‘heat’ applies to different degrees of hotness. In this kind of graduation, the matter of difference is different from that which is shared commonly, for example, cotton, snow, and an elephant tusk share the element of whiteness, but are different in other ways. The differences cause some of them to be ‘whiter’ than others.

In fact, the difference is in issues that are added to the essence of these things. Therefore, this kind of graduation returns to agreement, but

unsophisticated persons think that graduation is this state. This is why this kind of graduation is called popular.⁵ This kind of graduation is indeed a logical issue and is of little importance in philosophical discussions, for it is closer to verbal discussion than ontology.

Particular Graduation

With the exception of the Sophists, everyone accepts certain realities, and, according to the fundamentality of existence, existence is the only reality. Existents that have real existence have real differences with each other, and because it is only existence that has reality these difference return to existence itself. In one sense, though they have differences, all these existents do exist and existence applies to all of them equally and with the same meaning. For example, some of these existents are anterior and are stronger and more perfect than others; for instance the existence of the cause is stronger and prior to the existence of the effect; also the existence of each of the vertical intellects is prior to the next intellect; and also the application of the substance to the substance is prior and more appropriate to its application to the accident.⁶

In this kind of graduation, the distinguishing factor of the existents is identical with their common factor, that is, their difference is due to their rank rather than to matters added to their essence. In other words, on the basis of the fundamentality of existence, there is nothing other than existence. The distinction of these external realities, therefore, should be of the kind of their common factor.

Also, since existence has different degrees and stages, all have existence in common, and their difference is due to the strength and weakness of existence and its effects. At the top of this hierarchy is the existence of the Exalted God whose light of existence is dependent on His essence; He accepts no condition or fetter, and the application of existence to Him is an eternal necessary proposition, and He has no causal or restricting aspect: All other levels of existence belong to and are dependent on the Exalted God. Therefore, God's existence is the origin of the truth of existence all other levels of existence are a ray of His light.

This kind of graduation is called particular graduation, and also the 'consensual graduation' [ambiguity of agreement], for the common factor is

5. See al-Asfar al-Arba'a, vol. 1, p. 65; Usoul Falsafe va Ravesh-e-Realism, vol. 3, p. 385.

6. Ibid.

the very distinguishing factor.⁷

Different examples have been given of particular graduation. Before discussing these examples, however, we should be aware that sometimes an example might bring greater understanding of the point; but it might not necessarily be true, or correspond to the claim in all aspects of the argument.

- A. Light is a unique reality that has different and various degrees. Whatever the definition of light, it applies equally to weak, strong, and average light, all lights are equal in their being light, though there are differences between these different degrees of light. Clearly weak light is not made of unfamiliar matter other than light nor is strong light composed of any other compound other than light. Therefore, all sources of light have light in common, but differ in the degree and intensity of lightness.
- B. When increments of time are compared with each other, some of them will be anterior and some others are posterior with the common principle of these parts and pieces being time. Their difference is due to their priority and posteriori; the priority and posteriori are also of the genus of time. Therefore, they are common in that thing which is the cause of their difference.
- C. When we compare two movements, one fast and the other slow, these two movements will have the principle of motion in common, but they differ in rapidity or slowness of motion. Rapidity and sluggishness themselves are kinds of motion and they are nothing other than motion. Fast movement is not made of motion and something else, but only motion, slow movement is not made of motion and some other thing, but only motion. Therefore, the two movements have motion in common while at the same time motion is the cause of their difference.
- D. When considering two things, we will see that they are common in the principle of existence, and also have certain differences. Because we have nothing other than existence, existence then should be the cause of their difference. Therefore, they are common in the principle of existence, and their difference is due to the level and degree of their existence.

A Survey of the Existing Theories

Throughout history, philosophical thought has sought to find unity in the

7. Avicenna, *al Shifa*, "Illahiyyat", Bidar Publication, p.444.

diversity mystics have claimed to achieve in their mystical experience. In mystical intuition, diversity is considered to be an error, and though one can see the state of the many, diversity is indeed nothing other than an illusion and a mirage. It is no exaggeration to say that when the first philosopher Thales states that everything takes its origin from water, he is seeking to find unity in diversity. Today, this idea is reflected in the theory of the graduation in a more perfect way. Philosophers and mystics have suggested different theories on this subject, which are referred to briefly here.

1. Multiplicity of existence and Multiplicity of existents is the view of the Peripatetic philosophers. Most people have accepted this view, and concerning the subject of monotheism, monotheism is of this nature. The followers of this theory believe in the popular graduation.
2. The unity of existence and the unity of existents is the belief of Sufis divided into two kinds:
 - A. Those who argue that there is only one existence that is real that has different aspects and kinds. In heaven, it shows itself in the form of heaven, and on earth, in the form of earth. These multiplicities are subjective and do not harm the unity of existence.
 - B. Those who state that existence is a truth free from all these stages; it is the existence of the Exalted Necessary being and is unconditioned; all the stages of existence are His forms and aspects and are dependent on Him, and this dependence and need is not incompatible with Necessity. So, on the basis of this belief, there is only one level of existence, and the rest are His forms and aspects. This is the belief of mystics, including Mulla Sadra. The reality of the particular graduation of existence of the elite refers to this theory.
 - C. Existence has one necessary stage, and because it is unconditioned, it has no manifestation, forms, or aspects; there are some other stages of existence that are poor and dependent, but their existence is also not alien or separate and independent from the existence of the Necessary being. This is the view of the Iranian philosophers in the ancient Pahlavi era that supported particular graduation.
3. The unity of existence and the multiplicity of existents; according to this belief, only one Necessary being exists, and all of the existents are things that are only related to existence and have no existence their own. This is the view of Muahqqiq Dawani.
4. The unity of existents and the multiplicity of existence; evidently no

one has accepted this view.

5. The unity of existence and existents and at the same time the multiplicity of existence and existents: For example, a person who is standing in front of several mirrors, despite his unity, has multiplicity. Mulla Sadra also accepted this view attributing it to some of the mystics. Accepting the particular graduation of existence can also justify this belief. This theory supports the particular graduation of the elite.

The [First] Explanation Proving the Particular Graduation of Existence

Because Mulla Sadra understands existence to be a unique reality on the one hand, and on the other holds that this unique reality has various levels and degrees, he should offer strong evidence for this claim, which is the grounds and foundation of all his philosophy. But unfortunately, because he believed that this was evident and obvious, he offered little supporting corroboration. Various arguments can be established for supporting the graduation but first we must briefly explain the reason that the Peripatetic philosophers offered for denying and rejecting the particular graduation.

The Peripatetic philosophers ask whether existents are different from each other.

If they are different from each other, then they have no unity in quiddity and they will have no basis for unity and agreement. However, if they do not differ from each other, there will be no graduation, for there will be no cause for disagreement.

Mulla Sadra holds that this demonstration is incomplete, for in his view, these existents, first of all, have one aspect of sharing and unity with each other. The concept of 'existence' is extracted from them, and it applies to all of them. So it becomes clear that there is a sort of unity among them. On the other hand, the difference of the effects of these existents proves that there is a kind of difference among them. So, there is a difference, and there is unity because we believe in the fundamentality of existence and the subjectivity of quiddity, both the unity and the difference are related to existence. Therefore, the common factor is the very distinguishing factor, and thus the graduation of existence is proven.

The Second Explanation Proving the Particular Graduation of Existence

Agha Ali Mudarres says: "Once the fundamentality of existence is proved,

all the differences of existents will be due to existence. For example, the difference among individuals in respect of accidents, or the species in respect of differentia, or genera regarding the special accidents will always be due to difference in existence. Because we cannot predicate one concept of two things unless there is an aspect of unity, these existents should have an aspect of unity, otherwise, there must be one meaning for separate existents, and multiplicity should be equal to unity.

“So there should not be an aspect of unity. When we compare a man with a horse, we see that there is an aspect of unity in existence and an aspect of difference in existence. The difference among existents does not exclude them of their unity. Then the unity of every existence with another existence is identical with differences. Therefore, the subject in common is identical with the distinguishing factor, and thus the particular graduation of existence is proved.”⁸

The Third Explanation Proving the Particular Graduation of Existence

By strength and weakness in the graduation we mean the plenitude and scarcity of the effects, and the argument for the graduation is that we divide existence on the basis of its individuals to strong and weak and anterior and posterior, and without a doubt the existence of the Necessary is superior, prior and stronger than the existence of the contingent beings. In addition, the existence of immaterial beings is stronger than material things. These strengths and weaknesses are related to existence.

Therefore, first, the difference between dependence and independence in existence and strength and weakness is undeniable. Second, there should be a shared aspect among these existents, otherwise, the two things which have nothing in common cannot be less or more perfect than the other. Third, belief in separate realities cannot be true, and its fallacy has been discussed in its appropriate place. Fourth, the graduation in quiddity is not correct. Recognizing these four premises, it is clear that the graduation is related and is exclusive to existence.

The Fourth Explanation Proving the Particular Graduation of Existence

Existence is in contradiction with non-existence, and non-existence is not a

8. Agha Ali Modarres, *Risale Hamliye*, p. 39.

multiple but is only one. Therefore, existence, which is contradictory, should also be one, otherwise the law of excluded middle will be applicable. Then we say that the difference among existents is clear. For example, an animal has all the characteristics and effects of inanimate bodies and plants in addition to sensation and perception. Man has all the effects and characteristics of inanimate bodies, plants and animals, in addition to a universal perception. We believe that existence is simple and is not compound. Therefore, these existents should have something in common and some cause for difference, both exist because of existence itself.

These demonstrations prove the principle of the graduation of the stages of existence. Of course, it is clear that against the Peripatetic philosophers who hold that existents are separate realities these demonstrations are sound and perfect. However, against the discourse of the mystics who consider existence to be one truth with various appearances and manifestations – rather than stages and degrees – these demonstrations meet with no resistance. Thus, Mulla Sadra himself sometimes accepts the views of the Illuminist philosophers and the Pahlavis and sometimes the viewpoint of the mystics.

From the perspective of transcendental theosophy, existence is a truth with different stages, and multiplicity is related to existence itself. They call the highest level of existence and its most perfect degree the Necessary being. Other levels are different in their weakness; the farther away they are from God, the weaker they are. So, from the philosopher's point of view, God is the pure existence that exists in the highest level; however, other levels do exist, too, and they cannot be denied.

From the mystics' point of view, however, existence is a single truth that cannot be diversified, and all multiplicities are the result of its different manifestations. Existence is one single truth that manifests itself in a new form and a new aspect at each moment. Multiplicity does not belong to existence; rather, it is its signs and signals, whose multiplicity is not real but is relative. Therefore, existence is a single truth and accompanies no existent either vertically or horizontally.

Vertical and Horizontal Graduation

Having explained the popular and particular graduation, we refer briefly to the vertical and horizontal graduation.

According to the vertical graduation, existence is a unique truth that extends from The Necessary being, the strongest level of existence, accepting no restriction to the primordial substance, which is the most

deficient and the lowest level of existence. Thus, on the one side, it has the strongest level of existence, and on the other side, the weakest level of existence. Between these two poles, there are also other intermediary levels. So, in the vertical graduation a comparison is made between two stages of existence, one more perfect than the other with a causal relationship with each other.

In the horizontal graduation, a few specimens of existents are compared with each other at one level. For example, consider one level of light that is beaming on different bodies. When the light of the sun shines on a stone, the earth, or a tree, the multiplicity of light is in existents, which have horizontal graduation. These few effects are not related to each other by a causal relationship, though all of them crosswise are the effects of one cause. Despite their multiplicity, these few effects have also a sort of true unity.

The Results of the Problem of the Graduation of Existence

Mulla Sadra accepts the theory of the particular graduation of the levels of existence and makes it the foundation of his philosophy. In his study of the graduation of existence, he reached some certain effects and results as follows:

1. Returning all multiplicities to a sort of unity
2. The problem of corporeal resurrection
3. The problem of the corporeality of the soul
4. Substantial movement and solving the question of the subsistence of the subject
5. Explaining God's knowledge on the ground that the collective knowledge is simultaneous with the revelation of the details
6. The unity of the intelligent and the intelligible
7. A new account of the proof of the Sincere on proving the existence of God
8. Another explication of the relationship between cause and effect
9. Accepting the homogeneity of the Necessary being and the contingent things and rejecting their total separation
10. Accepting a sort of mystical unity of existence
11. Denying the separate realities accepted by the Peripatetic philosophers
12. Accepting the true unity of existence and simultaneously its the true diversity.

The consequences of denying the particular graduation of existence are as follows:

1. The impotence of the intellect in proving God's attributes of perfection
2. Our knowledge of God is not intuitive, but it is acquired
3. The impossibility of justifying the unity of God's command: "Our command is only one."
4. Denying the evolutionary movement of man
5. Accepting the possibility of preponderance without there being a preponderant
6. Denying the principle "The one produce nothing other than the one"
7. Accepting [the possibility of] combination in the First emanated being.

An explanation of how these findings arise from the problem of the graduation is out of the range of this article, as each needs independent study. Some verses in the Holy Koran and Prophetic traditions also include issues that can be analysed and explained only by accepting the graduation; but this topic is not examined because the discussion could not remain purely philosophical.

Knowledge of the Creator from the Points of View of Three Philosophical Schools

Muhammad Entezam

Abstract

In religious texts and the current understanding by people, it is a truism that God knows everything. However, in philosophical analysis and subtle intellectual studies, God's knowledge of all particular and universal things constitutes one of the most difficult theological-philosophical problems. In this article, the writer refers to the attempts of philosophers like Avicenna, Sheikh Eshraq, and Mulla Sadra to explain God's knowledge of things and all phenomena before and after their creation.

Avicenna, Sheikh Eshraq, and Mulla Sadra are three renowned Muslim Iranian philosophers, who had a great influence on the development and eminence of philosophical debate in the Muslim world. Each of these three great philosophers was affiliated to an important philosophical trend. Although Avicenna is mainly known as the commentator and interpreter of Aristotelian thought, and his approach closely follows that of the Peripatetic philosophers, his innovations in philosophical issues, and especially in theology are undeniable.

Sheikh Eshraq is the founder and originator of the philosophy of Illumination in the Muslim world. Mulla Sadra is the founder of the transcendental theosophy, which indeed is the combination of the pure and original essence of the whole ideas and intellectual and intuitive sciences in the history of Islam with his personal innovations, presented in a comprehensive and systematic plan. A comparative study and survey of the thoughts and ideas of these three philosophers, besides showing the fundamental differences and the weaknesses and the merits of each of these three schools, will show the trend of development in philosophical thinking in the Muslim world. Consequently, it will clarify the development of the Muslim philosophers' perception and understanding of the three main principles of the philosophical cosmology, namely God, existence, and man.

In this research, we have discussed the knowledge of God, which is one of the important issues of Islamic philosophy from the point of view of these prominent philosophers, so that the reader, first, becomes familiar with the historical development of this issue, and, second, understands the degree of influence, which these intellectual and philosophical principles had on explaining important theological issues. Because all these three philosophers are Muslims, the impact of religious and Koranic teachings on them is undeniable. The Holy Koran introduces God as a perfect and simple reality, infinite in all His aspects that was and is and will be aware of everything, and this knowledge will never cause a difference in His essence. Moreover, the philosophical principles of these three philosophers necessitate the existence of an essentially Necessary Being who is purely simple, perfect and infinite, and on the level of essence. He should, therefore, possess all perfections and be free from any defect.¹ We recognize that all three philosophers indeed sought to prove God's infinite and comprehensive knowledge. This in turn, calls for the removal of any deficiency or passivity from His essence.

The aim of all these three philosophers is to prove God's element of knowledge, so far as it is considered by the intellect as perfection. However, this attempt to reach that single aim is approached through different means and is based on different principles. Based on the approaches taken in theosophy and philosophy, and on the grounds of the principles, which he has proved, each philosopher tries to prove the existence of God and His perfect attributes. Therefore, what they aim to prove at the beginning might be different from what they attain at the end of their journey. For example, God's knowledge, which Avicenna tries to prove by his particular philosophical principles, is not exactly one with His essence, and requires the multiplicity of the essence or an essence bare of knowledge; unquestionably this will not be the same as he, under the influence of the

1. Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa*, Ayatollah Mar'ashi Library, Qom, 1404 AH; p. 343 and 355. *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, with the commentary of Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi, vol. 3, Daftar Nashr Ketab, Tehran, 1403 AH.p. 54. Ibn Sina, *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, Institute of Islamic Studies, Tehran, 1984, pp. 6,10, 19. *Al-Nijat*, al-Maktabah al-Mortazawiyah, second edition, 1364 AH. pp. 227, 228. Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishragh*, in *Majmou'ah Musannafat-e- Sheikh Ishragh*, vol. 2, ed. Henry Corbin, Cultural studies and Research Institute, Tehran, 1372, p. 121. *Al-Talwihat in Majmou'ah Musannafat-e-Sheikh Ishragh*, vol. 1, p. 91. *A-Mashari' wa al- Mutarihat*, in *Majmou'a Musannafat*, vol. 1,pp.35,39,399. Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol.1, Dar Ihya'e al-Torath, Beirut, 1981. p. 122, vol. 6, p. 110.

Koranic teachings, and even on the basis of his philosophical principles, set out to prove at the beginning of his study.

Accordingly, a comparative study gives us an opportunity to find out the weaknesses and the merits of these three significant philosophical trends in proving the aims and objectives of their exponents.

1. Knowing that God's knowledge can be discussed at three stages, by separating these stages from each other, we can understand the views and thoughts of these philosophers at each of these stages. These stages are a) God's knowledge of His essence; b) God's knowledge of His creatures before creating them, and c. God's knowledge of His creatures after creating them. At each of these stages, and according to their historical order, initially the view of Avicenna, and then that of Sheikh Eshraq, and finally the view of Mulla Sadra will be discussed.

God's Knowledge of His Essence from the Point of View of Avicenna²

Avicenna holds that God is aware of His essence, and His knowledge of His essence is not an acquired knowledge but it is presentational knowledge (knowledge by presence); consequentially, God's essence is known to His essence, that is, in knowing His essence, God is the knowledge, the knower, and the known object.

A known object is called the intelligible if it is free from all the qualities and accidents of matter, whether it has this immateriality in essence, or in its dependence on the immateriality of another thing. On the other hand, that which understands and perceives the intelligible is named the intelligent. This is why Avicenna calls the knowledge of God the intellect and His being known, intelligibility, and argues that He is the intellect, the intelligent and the intelligible. Avicenna's argument on God's knowledge of His essence is founded on two premises.

1. God is immaterial and is self-subsistent or self-dependent.
2. Every self-subsistent immaterial being knows its essence, and is intelligent and intelligible in essence.

The first premise is proved in the following way: God is an essentially Necessary Being, and essential necessity requires that the Necessary being should be perfect and independent in all aspects. Neither potentiality and

2. *Al-Shifa*, (*Ilahiyyat*), p. 3564; *al-Nijat*, p. 243; *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, p.6; *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, vol.3, p. 65; *al-Ta'liqhat*, ed. Abdol Rahman Badavi, Daftar Tablighat Islami, 1404 AH. pp. 60, 78, 159.

predisposition nor a combination can have a place in His existence for potentiality and predisposition denote deficiency, and combination also denotes need and dependence in the Necessary being. Therefore, a being that has no predisposition, potentiality or combination thereof cannot be material or physical, for material and physical things are mixed with potentiality, predisposition and are affected with different types of combination.³

The second premise can also be proved by a careful analysis of human knowledge and perception and its different stages. For at the stages of perception, from sensation up to reasoning, we have to deal with some kind of immateriality. Although in sensory perception, the perceptual form is not free from the qualities of matter, and though this kind of perception is conditioned by the presence of matter, it is nonetheless free from matter itself. In imaginative perception also, though the perceptual form is not independent from the qualities and accidents of matter, it is free from matter itself and is not dependent on the presence of matter. But the necessary condition for perception to be transferred from these stages to that of reasoning is its total independence from matter and material qualities.⁴ For insofar as the intellectual form is mixed with the qualities of matter, it remains either at the stage of imagination or the that of sensation. The only obstacle of existents for being intelligible, then, is matter and their mixing with material interests and qualities. Therefore, if we seek to reason a material existent, we have no other way than separating it from matter and material qualities; so, a material being prior to its abstraction from matter is potentially, rather than actually, an intelligible.

But if there is an existent that is essentially free from matter and its qualities, then of course the criterion of its intelligibility will be inherent in its existents, and because this existent is actually immaterial, it will be intelligible, too. Moreover, because it is intelligible in essence, so it will be intelligent in essence, too, and consequently, such an existent will be the intellect, the intelligent and the intelligible. In other words, because every intelligible is immaterial, and every immaterial being is intelligible, and every intelligent should also be immaterial, reasoning will be the realization and the presence of a form that is free from matter and material qualities for an immaterial reality.

If the immaterial [being] is not self-subsistent and is dependent on others, it will be realized and will be present for others; as a result, it will be known

3. *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, vol. 3, p. 54.

4. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 322.

and intelligible for others. However, if it is self- subsistent, it will be present and realized for itself and it would know itself.⁵ God, Who is absolutely immaterial and is self-subsistent, and Whose essence does meet the criterion of reasoning, the presence and realization of an immaterial for its immaterial essence, knows His essence. His essence is the intellect, the intelligent, and the intelligible. He is the intelligible, for His immaterial essence is present and is realized for an immaterial being—‘and that immaterial being is His very essence’—, and He is the intelligent, because an immaterial thing —‘and that immaterial thing is also His very essence’—is realized and is present for His immaterial essence.

Nevertheless, knowing that the intelligent and the intelligible are two correlatives, and relation necessitates plurality and diversity, that is, it necessitates the existence of two sides, how is it possible that a thing could be both the intelligent and the intelligible?

Avicenna answers that additionally, conceptual and respective plurality is enough, and there is no reason for the necessity of having external plurality. If in certain cases external plurality becomes necessary, conceptual plurality and the correlation of two concepts by themselves do not necessitate that kind of plurality. Certain arguments and reasoning are required to prove this.

The requirement for being intelligent is the existence of an intelligible, whether this intelligible is the essence of the intelligent or something else, as the requirement for being a mover is the existence of that which is moving, whether this moving thing is the mover itself or another thing.⁶

The clear argument for the possibility of the external unity of the intellect, the intelligent, and the intelligible is that we intuitively know that there is a faculty within us that understands things, and this knowledge is realized either by this faculty or by another faculty. The second option is false, for it would necessitate the existence of a faculty that would understand this second faculty that would understand this second faculty, and understanding the third faculty would need fourth faculty, *ad infinitum*.

In the first option the intellect, the intelligent, and the intelligible will be one. This itself is an argument that the diversity in the concepts of the intelligent and the intelligible does not necessitate their diversity in the external. In consequence, in its absolute simplicity and unity, the essence of God can be both the intelligent and the intelligible.⁷

5. *Al-Nijat*, p. 174.

6. *Al-Shifa (Ilahiyyat)*, p. 357.

7. *Ibid*, p. 358; *al-Nijat*, p. 244.

God's knowledge of His Essence from Point of View of Sheikh Eshraq⁸

Like Avicenna, Sheikh Eshraq (Suhrawardi) holds that God has knowledge of His essence, and the knowledge of one's essence is of the kind of presentational knowledge rather than acquired knowledge. However, he does not accept the argument of Avicenna or other Peripatetic philosophers, establishing God's knowledge of His essence in another way.

For Sheikh Eshraq, the Necessary Being is a luminous reality, and because it exists in absolute simplicity, it is pure light, and because it is self-subsistent, it is light for itself. The reality of light is nothing other than self-manifestation. If the existence of light depends on other than itself, its manifestation will also be due to others, "provided that the manifestation of that other should be due to itself." If its existence is dependent on itself, its manifestation will be due to itself. Therefore, God, Who is the very light itself, and light in itself, is the very independent self-manifestation, and knowledge and perception are nothing other than self-manifestation and self-revelation. Sheikh Eshraq makes a great effort to prove that knowledge of a self-subsistent luminous reality is essentially presentational knowledge rather than acquired knowledge.

As an example, he uses the human soul's knowledge of itself as his grounds by demonstrating the presentational nature of the soul's knowledge of itself he proves that every self-subsistent luminous reality has presentational knowledge of its essence. Sheikh Eshraq argues that in knowing one's essence, the perceiver perceives himself, and he calls what he perceives 'I', whereas if this knowledge were realized through the form of the essence, he would call that 'it'. Moreover, if this knowledge were of the kind of acquired knowledge, this would necessitate the realization of form and an additional attribute, other than those of the essence, for the essence. Because the perceiver is aware of the realization of this attribute for his own essence, then in all cases he should have perceived his essence by presentational knowledge.

For Sheikh Eshraq, the inadequacy of Avicenna's argument of and those of other Peripatetic philosophers concerning God's knowledge of His essence lies in that the Peripatetic philosophers hold that the criterion of being intelligent or intelligible is the separation from matter and material interests. They proved His Knowledge of His essence by proving God's separation from matter and material interests. Elsewhere, light is the

8. *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, in *Majmou'a Musannafat*, vol. 2, pp. 110-116.

criterion of being a knower and a known object.⁹ If something in its essence is light and is self-subsistent, it will have knowledge of its essence, but if it is dependent on another being, and that other is self-subsistent light, it will be the subject of its knowledge.

However, if the criterion of being a knower and a known object, or to be more precise, if the criterion of being intelligent and intelligible is separation from matter and material interests, it can be bridged. Since first, for instance, there could be a taste devoid of matter and material interests, based on the argument of the Peripatetic philosophers; it should know its essence, whereas pure taste is a taste in itself and not an intelligible to itself. In other words, a pure taste is nothing other than being a taste; matter and material interests have nothing to do with it. Nevertheless, its separation from matter and material interest is not enough to make it intelligible to its essence; rather, in order to know its essence, it should be a light in itself and by itself (*The Wisdom of Illumination*, p. 14).

Second, though the primordial substance (*Hayula-ye-ula*) is immaterial and its essence is present for its essence, it has no knowledge of its essence, and the Peripatetic philosophers even admit this point. If the criterion of being intelligent and intelligible is separation from matter, the primordial substance then should know its essence and even the species forms. The argument for the immateriality of the primordial substance is that if the primordial substance is also made of matter and primordial substance, that matter and primordial substance would need another matter and primordial substance, *ad infinitum* (*The Wisdom of Illumination*, p. 115).

God's Knowledge of His Essence From the Point View of Mulla Sadra¹⁰

Mulla Sadra also believes that God has presentational knowledge of His

9. Suhrawardi has founded most of his philosophical issues on the reality of light and its characteristics. Except the material existents whose substance he termed "the dark substance" and the accidents and their forms which he termed "the dark form", Suhrawardi regards other realities of souls and intellects as light; he names God "the Light of the lights" according to that he considers all immaterial and self-subsistent existents as manifesting in themselves. Because they are lights in themselves; and because knowledge is nothing other than manifestation he considers every existent, which is manifesting in itself as a knower of itself. (*Hikmat al-Ishragh in Majmou'a Musannafat*, vol. 2, pp. 107, 110.)

10. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 6, p. 174.

essence. Based on the two fundamental and basic principles of transcendental theosophy - the fundamentality of existence and its graduated unity - he argues that the criterion of intelligibility and non-intelligibility is the intensity or weakness of existence. The more intense existence is, the stronger its unity and presence; the weaker and more limited it is, the more would be its disunity, hidden ness, and darkness.

Since the existence of physical and material existents is weak and mixed with non-existence, they are not present for themselves. They can neither be identified by themselves nor are they present for others to be known by them. The more we distance ourselves from the domain of matter its presence will also be more manifest. Since existence becomes more intense, God Who is at the highest level of existence and free from any limitation and deficiency, and the quintessence of absolute perfection and simplicity, far removed from any kind of combination with non-existence, is absolutely present for Him. The reality of knowledge is also nothing other than the presence of the thing for itself or for others.¹¹

For the Peripatetic philosophers, the condition of intelligibility is separation from matter, distinct accidents and comparisons. Although Mulla Sadra also holds that the intelligible and the intelligent are immaterial and non-physical, for “matter and corporeality denote the weakness of existence”, he does not think separation from distinct accidents and comparisons are the condition of intelligibility. He professes that, first, in the same way that man and animal and other similar things are conceived, their distinct accidents, such as position, quantity, and shape can also be conceived. Knowing that, how can these qualities prevent us from conceiving another thing?

Secondly, if the intelligible or conceived man were stripped of all qualities such as position, shape, hands, feet, eyes and other things, how could it then be understood as the quiddity of man? If we take away these qualities from man, there will remain nothing to call it the quiddity of man.

Therefore, the criterion of intelligibility of an object was the intensity of its existence rather than any thing else.¹² This criterion is compatible with the criterion of Sheikh Eshraq for the intelligible and the intelligent. He considers light as the criterion. Light is knowledge, the knower and the known object only when it is light in itself and by itself. This includes the human soul, horizontal and vertical intellects, and God. Since Sheikh

11. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 297.

12. Ibid., pp. 152-154.

Eshraq assumes that the soul and what is above the soul are pure existents, light which can perceive itself will be nothing other than very existence itself: Because of its intensity, existence is pure light. This is why, for Sheikh Eshraq, the existent that is present for itself is at one with that which perceives its essence.¹³

Consequently, we can say that Mulla Sadra and Sheikh Eshraq shared the same view on the criterion of knowledge, the knower, and the known object. Yet Sheikh Eshraq's detailed emphasis on the fundamentality of essence and the validity of existence makes his statements on this issue and other issues based on the fundamentality of existence problematic.

After establishing that the intensity of existence is the criterion of knowledge, the knower and the known object, referring to the graduated unity of existence, Mulla Sadra emphasizes that as existence has graduated levels, knowledge of one's essence also has different levels. The more intense and perfect existence, knowledge will correspondingly be more intense and more perfect. Consequently, the difference between God's knowledge of His essence and to the pure intellects and the human soul is commensurate to the level of God's existence to their existence. Similarly, the difference between every other existential perfection of God and that of other creatures is commensurate to the difference between their existential status and levels.¹⁴

Mulla Sadra's second argument regarding God's knowledge of His essence is that which is considered by the intellect as a perfection for an existent qua existent, and the existence of that perfection for the existent requires no potentiality, predisposition, change, combination, or corporeality. This perfection can be realized for an existent, its realization will be possible for God on the grounds of the general possibility. Besides, that which is possible for God on the ground of the general possibility, its existence in Him becomes necessary. Since, intellectually, knowledge of one's essence is considered to be a perfection for the existent qua existent, and this perfection for some existents, such as the human soul, is possible, and its existence for the Necessary being requires no change, predisposition, or corporeality, we can infer that this perfection necessarily exists in God.

This argument is based on two philosophical principles: 1) Everything that is considered by the intellect as perfection for an existent qua existent regardless of its corporeality, combination, or change, is possible for the

13. *Al-Mughawimat*, in *Majmou'a Musannafat Sheikh Ishraq*, vol. 1, p. 190.

14. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 6, p. 155.

Exalted Necessary Being based on the general possibility, and 2) Everything that is possible for the Necessary Being based on the general possibility, its existence will be necessary for Him. Although Sheikh Eshraq introduced these principles much earlier than Mulla Sadra¹⁵ proving all kinds of perfection for the Necessary Being using them, he does not rely on these principles concerning the knowledge of the Necessary Being of His essence. In fact, he did not see any need to repeat them. On the other hand, since Mulla Sadra employed these principles as an independent argument on God's knowledge of His essence, they are discussed in our explanation of Mulla Sadra's attitude to God's knowledge of His essence.

Concerning the first principle, Mulla Sadra explained that if the intellect considers a certain thing as the perfection of an existent qua existent, that perfection, in fact, would be related to existence qua existence. In addition, because God is pure existence consequently He should have that perfection. Of course, we can think of the perfection of an existent as an argument on the existence of that perfection in God only when its existence requires no corporeality, combination or change since corporeality, combination and change are not compatible with the necessity of God's existence and the absolute perfection and pure simplicity of His existence.

The argument established by the second principle is that if the existence of that which is established for the Necessary Being on the grounds of the general contingency were not necessary for the Necessary Being, its existence would be possible for God on the grounds of the special contingency. On the other hand, the kind of perfection possible for the Necessary Being based the special contingency has to occur to the essence of the Necessary Being and this means that the essence should be devoid of that perfection; consequently it should have a place for potentiality and predisposition. These issues, however, can never be attributed to the Necessary Being; in fact, this matter refers to the principle 'the Necessary Being in essence is the Necessary Being in all aspects'.¹⁶

Mulla Sadra's third argument for God's knowledge of His essence is that there are certain existents among other creatures that have knowledge of their essence. Since the primary source of this perfection and any other perfection is God, and since it is impossible that an existent which does not have a certain perfection could give that perfection to another existent, we

15. *Al-Mushari' wa al-Mutarihah* in *Majmou'a Musannafat Sheikh Ishraqh*, vol. 1, p. 401; *al-Talwihat* in *Majmou'a Musannafat Sheikh Ishraqh*, vol. 1, p. 41.

16. Mulla Sadra, *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, ed. Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, p. 89.

conclude that it is God Who gives some existents ‘such as the souls and the pure intellects’ the knowledge of the essence, He should also have knowledge of His essence.¹⁷

This argument is also based on the principle “He who gives a thing to others cannot be destitute of it,”¹⁸ by which Sheikh Eshraq, in a general way proves that God possesses all kinds of perfection that existents possess.¹⁹

Besides proving God’s knowledge of His essence, by proving the unity of knowledge, the knower, and the known object at all its levels²⁰, Mulla Sadra proves that not only it is reasonable and logical for one thing to be the intellect, the intelligent and the intelligible, but the unity of these three is the very requirement of the judgment of the intellect and is supported by evidence. This, indeed, manifests the illusion of those who by denying the possibility of the unity of the intellect, the intelligent, and the intelligible have denied God’s knowledge of His essence.

His response to Fakhr-e- Razi’s criticism and doubts about Avicenna’s theory of God’s knowledge of His essence is an effective step in enforcing this theory.

In his book, *al-Mabaheth al-Mashreqiyya (The Oriental Discussions)*, Fakhr-e- Razi criticizes and discusses Avicenna’s theory, believing that he is showing the invalidity of this theory from different perspectives.

Mulla Sadra discusses these doubts and answers them in the third volume of his *Asfar*. Fakhr-e- Razi’s two central questions and Mulla Sadra’s answers are as follows:

1. As was seen, concerning God’s knowledge of His essence, Avicenna holds that the essence of God is the intellect, the intelligent, and the intelligible. Further, intelligence, intelligibility and intellection are one and the same. Fakhr-e- Razi states that though in knowing one’s essence, the same thing is qualified with intelligence and intelligibility, the attributes of

17. Ibid, *al-Asfar*, vol. 6, p. 176.

18. The content of this principle is that if an existent grants an existence or an existential perfection to another being, he must have that perfection himself; otherwise, granting perfection to the other will be impossible. Islamic philosophers believe that this principle need not be proved, so, Mulla Sadra states: “It is impossible for the perfection-giver to be devoid of that perfection, because in that case the perfection-taker would be superior to the Necessary, and the taker would be better than the giver. It is not acceptable according to the primordial nature.”

19. *Al-Talwihat* in *Majmou’a Musannafat Sheik Ishragh*, vol. 1, p. 41. *Al-Mughawimat* in *Majmou’a Musannafat Sheikh Ishragh*, vol. 1, p. 118.

20. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, p. 321.

intelligence and intelligibility are not identical. For if these two attributes were identical, then one thing, in case it is the intelligent, has to be the intelligible, too; while we sometimes know something as the intelligent without attributing it with intelligibility, and sometimes we assume the intelligibility of one thing without characterizing it with intelligence.

Therefore, the attributes of intelligence and intelligibility are two different attributes with distinct natures, and once their difference in essence, even in one particular instance, is demonstrated, these two attributes will be different, even where the intelligent and the intelligible are one thing. Consequently, concerning the knowledge of one's essence, though one thing is both the intelligent and the intelligible, the attributes of intelligence and intelligibility are not identical.²¹

Mulla Sadra holds that this problem stems from mixing the concept and the extension, and contends that there is no question about the conceptual difference between the intelligent and the intelligible, but their conceptual difference is not a reason for their difference in extension or existence.

On the other hand, if conceptual plurality were reason for plurality in existence, then, in respect of God's positive attributes of the essence, God's essence would be divided into as many parts as there are attributes, whereas the Muslim philosophers are agreed that the essence of the Real can never be subjected to diversity or plurality. Moreover, if conceptual distinction denoted distinction in existence, what would be the difference between the intelligent and the intelligible? Alternatively, the mover and the moving object, or other similar things; why do philosophers believe that one object cannot be both the mover and the moving object, whereas they allow for an object to be both the intelligent and the intelligible?²²

2. About God's knowledge or intelligibility of His essence, Avicenna argues that intelligibility is nothing other than the acquisition of an immaterial thing by an immaterial object. If an object other than itself realizes an immaterial object—"that other should also be immaterial"—it will be intelligible for others. Yet if he realizes it, and it is independent in its existence, it will be intelligible for him.

Fakhr-e-Razi says: "The presence of one object for another or its realization by another is a relational issue, and relationship necessitates the existence of two things." Having said that, how could "the presence of one

21. Fakhr al-Din Razi, *al-Mabahith al-Mashrighiyya* Bidar Maktaba, Qom: 1411 A.H. second edition, vol. 1, p. 339.

22. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, p. 344-350.

object for another” include “the presence of an independent immaterial thing for itself”? In other words, the object and its self are not two things, so that they could exist for each other or could be related to each other in a one way or another. Therefore, whether knowledge and perception is the very relationship between the knower and the known object, or the presence of the form of the perceived object for the perceiver, or the presence of an immaterial thing for another thing, in all cases, it demonstrates the distinction between the knower and the known object.²³

Mulla Sadra contends: “Although relationship necessitates the distinction between the two sides of the relation, this distinction is realized in the context of the existence of relationship.” If a relationship, such as “the relationship between a father and a son,” is external, the distinction between the two sides of the relation will also be external. However, if it exists in the analytical frame of the intellect, such as “the relationship of the occurrence of the existence upon quiddity,” the two sides of the relationship will also be different in that frame. If the relationship is metaphorical, the distinction of the two sides of the relationship will also be metaphorical.

In respect of the positive attributes of God, the intellect considers the attribute, the described thing and the relationship between these two. For example, it considers knowledge as the attribute, the essence of God as the described thing, and characterization of essence with knowledge as the relationship between these two. This consideration results from comparing God to his creatures; in other words, because the attributes of the creatures are realized by occurrence and the occurrence of the attribute upon a creature is the cause of its characterization with this attribute. The intellect also initially considers this relationship between the attribute and the described thing in respect of God. However, after arguably proving that existence and its perfections are identical with God’s essence, the intellect decrees that God and His knowledge, Power, and His other perfections are dependent on His essence and are equal with His essence: There is no attribute outside His essence. In consequence, by giving attributes to the essence, the literal meaning is not intended. When we say that God’s existence, knowledge and power are dependent on His essence, we indeed refer to the freedom of God’s essence from combination and multiplicity, rather than supposing there is a kind of relationship between God’s essence and His attributes. Moreover, by relating God’s attributes to His essence we intend the metaphorical meaning, namely, lack of combination and multiplicity. This is

23. *Al-Mabahith Al-Mashrihiyya*, vol.1, p. 341.

a metaphorical relationship; the two sides of the relationship will be metaphorical, too. The relationship between the intelligent and the intelligible in God's knowledge of His essence is of a similar nature. That is, concerning God's knowledge of His essence through the intellect on the basis of comparing it with the knowledge of others establishes a kind of relationship between the knower and the known object, ultimately and on the basis of arguments, there is no such relationship, and it will not intend the real existence of this relationship. In consequence, this relationship has a metaphorical existence and it does not exist in the external context or that of intellectual analysis, and such a relationship does not necessitate multiplicity or diversity.²⁴

Avicenna's View on God's Knowledge of Things before Creating Them

Avicenna speaks of God's knowledge in the following terms:

1. God's knowledge does not derive from things: For if it were taken from things, God's essence would be dependent on the intellectual forms obtained from things, or they would be accidents of God's essence. Both of these assumptions, besides many other barriers, would necessitate God's dependence on things: For if God's essence were dependent on these intellectual forms, He would be in need of others in His essence, and if they are accidents of His essence, God would need others in the perfection of His existence. Need and dependence, however, are not compatible with His being a necessary existent.²⁵

2. The knowledge of God is active rather than passive:

This feature is a prerequisite for the last feature. To illustrate this further, if knowledge is taken from external objects, it is passive, and if it is the cause of the two elements of existence and the creation of external objects, it is active. For example, the form of a building created in the mind of the observer, is passive knowledge; but the form the builder has in his mind is active knowledge, which is instrumental in the creation of that building.²⁶

Because God's knowledge of His creatures has existed before their creation, and has been the cause of their emergence in the external, it is an active knowledge. There is this difference in that the active knowledge of man, for example, and the knowledge of the builder of the building, cannot

24. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 3, pp. 354-356.

25. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, p. 358. *Al-Ta'liqat* pp. 116,192.

26. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, p. 364. *Al-Ta'liqat*, p. 191.

be the complete cause of the existence of the object in the external. Different external causes, such as instruments and tools, and internal factors, such as the desire, intention, determination, moving the muscles, etc., should be employed to create this object in the external. However, God's active knowledge is the complete cause of the existence of His known objects in the external.

3. God's knowledge of things is acquired through the intellectual forms of things:

Knowledge is one of the relational attributes of the essence, and unless there is a knower and a known object, there will not be knowledge. Based on the last two premises, God knows the things prior to their creation; therefore, things in their external existence do not exist at the stage of God's knowledge. But since a relationship with non-existence is impossible, at the level of God's knowledge things should have another existence, and the existence of things at the level of God's knowledge prior to their external existence cannot be other than their intellectual existence, which is their intellectual or intellectual forms.²⁷

4. The intellectual forms are the effects of God's knowledge of His essence:

Because God is the complete cause of the existents, and because knowing the cause necessitates knowing the effect, His knowledge of His essence leads to His knowledge of things. Therefore, the intellectual forms of things are created through the knowledge of the Necessary Being of His essence, and the intellectual forms of things are identical to God's knowledge of things; in consequence, these intellectual forms are the effect of God's knowledge of His essence.²⁸

5. Because God's knowledge of His essence is equal to His very essence and is pre-eternal, the effect of knowing the essence, which is the intellectual forms of things, will also be pre-eternal, and the priority of the essence is priority in degree rather than in time.²⁹

6. Because the intellectual forms are the effect of knowing the essence, they do not count as perfection for God's essence; rather, the perfection of God's essence is the cause of their existence.

7. The intellectual forms of things are the concomitants of God's essence; that is, they are not independent from His essence or any other essence, nor

27. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, p. 358.

28. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, p. 364. *Al-Ta'liqat*, p. 191.

29. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, p. 364. *Al-lighat*, p. 158.

can they exist in any essence other than God's essence.³⁰

Since admitting their independent existence from any essence would necessitate the acceptance of Platonic ideas, which were severely criticized and denied by Avicenna, their existence in another essence, such as the Intellect or the Soul also raises some problems. For example, according to Avicenna, unless God knows things, they cannot exist. Indeed, perceiving things and knowing them is the cause of their existence. If the intellectual forms existed, for instance, in the first Intellect, because God is the cause of the existence of the first Intellect, and the cause of the existence of the intellectual forms in the first Intellect, it would present two problems. It implies that He should have had knowledge of them before the creation of the first Intellect, and before the creation of the intellectual forms that exist in it.

Conversely, the intellectual form of the first Intellect by which God knows the first Intellect, and the intellectual forms that exist in the first Intellect, cannot be impressed in the first Intellect, and this would be incompatible with the supposition that they should be impressed in the first Intellect.

Equally, if the creation of the intellectual forms that exist in the first Intellect were dependent on God's knowledge of those forms, that would necessitate an infinite regress. Based on this assumption, the forms of these forms should also be impressed in another existent, and their creation would depend on God's knowledge of them, and so on. Therefore, the only reasonable assumption is that the intellectual forms of things are the concomitants of God's essence and are dependent on Him.

8. Because the intellectual forms are the effect of knowing the essence, their dependence on the essence is an effusive dependence rather than an immanent (*Holuli*) dependence. Consequently, these intellectual forms are not accidents of the essence to introduce change in the essence of God.³¹

9. The existence of the intellectual forms of things at the level of God's knowledge is identical to their intelligibility to God's essence, and there is no need for other intellectual forms to be intelligible to God. This is because both the existence of these forms is equal to their intelligibility, and that these forms are concomitants of God's essence and not separate from it. The existence of these forms would have been dependent on other intellectual forms if their existence were not equal to their intelligibility or could have

30. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, p. 364.

31. *Al-Ta'liqat*, pp. 180-181.

existed independently of God's essence.³²

10. The external system that governs the existence of things and the kind of priority, subsequent order they display, derives from the system that governs their intellectual forms at the level of God's knowledge. Indeed this external system is a manifestation of that intellectual system. As the first effect has an ordinal priority over the second effect, the first intellectual form of the first effect has an ordinal priority over the intellectual form of the second effect. Since God's essence, by means of the first effect, is the cause of the existence of the second effect, God's knowledge of His essence through the intellectual form of the first effect will also be the cause of the intellectual form of the second effect.³³

This is a complete and comprehensive account of Avicenna's view on God's knowledge of things before their creation.

Because this account covers all the subtle points discussed by Avicenna, it automatically answers many of the questions put forth by scholars after Avicenna about this theory. Here we must explain Avicenna's view on God's knowledge of the temporal changing details in respect to his general theory of God's knowledge of things before their creation because Avicenna took great effort in explaining and elucidating this kind of knowledge, and his exponents and opponents have widely debated his theory of God's knowledge of details. Some of his opponents accused him of heresy because of this theory. Exponents, in turn, charge those opponents with misinterpretation and a lack of familiarity with his philosophical principles.

In the context of his theory, Avicenna made great efforts to explain God's knowledge of the temporal changing details in a way that proves God's knowledge of the particulars. Simultaneously, he asserted that His knowledge of the temporal changing details necessitates no change, transformation, deficiency, or limitation in His essence.³⁴

Because God's knowledge is not passive, or derived from external things, and because it is an active knowledge and is the cause of the existence of the known object in the external, His knowledge of the details is also not taken from the temporal particular and changing events. Avicenna asserts that besides necessitating change and transformation in knowledge itself, and consequently, in the knower, such knowledge requires sensory actual

32. *Al-Ta'liqat*, pp. 48, 154, 155, 191.

33. *Al-Ta'liqat*, pp. 120, 152. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, p. 363.

34. *Al-Ta'liqat*, pp. 13, 14, 15, 24, 25, 28, 29, 66, 81, 119, 120, 122. *Al-Nijat*, p. 247. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, pp. 358-362.

knowledge, and imaginative instruments and devices from which God is far removed. Therefore, God's knowledge of the temporal changing details is not of the kind of sensory knowledge that begins with the existence of the known object, changing when it changes, and perishing when the object is destroyed.

Rather, God's knowledge of the details is an intelligent process. Conversely, because thinking about material and sensory issues is possible only with this supposition that the object of knowledge is the universal natures of material things, the object of God's knowledge of the details will also be their universal natures. Such knowledge can only be acquired by knowing the causes and reasons of the particular and changing things. Because God is the origin and the cause of all external things, and there is also a causal relationship between external things, by knowing His essence, He will know His immediate effect, and by knowing that, He will know the effect of the effect, and thus He will know the whole material and immaterial existence.

Furthermore, because the effusion of the effect from the cause is necessary and inevitable, the knowledge of the cause of its effect will be definite and certain. Such knowledge will be the same before and after the emergence of the effect. In his illustration of this issue, Avicenna gives an example, showing how knowledge of the particular qua particular is changing, but knowledge of the particular from the perspective of its cause and reason is fixed and unchangeable. He says: The knowledge of the eclipse in a particular time is gained in two ways. One is the knowledge of the individuals who witness the definite eclipse in a specific time because in such knowledge the known object has a beginning and an end, and in each moment it is different from the preceding moment, knowledge will also have a beginning and an end. When the known object changes it will also change, and when it perishes it will also perish.

The other is the understanding of the astronomer, who through his knowledge of the spherical movements and the conjunctions and distance of heavenly bodies knows this definite and certain eclipse before its occurrence. This kind of knowledge, first, is universal; when the astronomer through his knowledge of the causes states that an eclipse will occur at a certain time. The object of his knowledge is universal nature, tied to many restraints, and though these restraints are numerous, they are not incompatible with the universality of knowledge. The affirmative knowledge is universal because concepts are universal, for an affirmation cannot be universal unless its conceptual components are universal.

Second, in respect to the restraints that are added to it, this universal knowledge has only one individual (instance) and has only one extension, but it can also be applied to many individuals. Thus, although this kind of knowledge is universal, it reveals the particular perfectly. Indeed, this kind of knowledge is the knowledge of the particular in a universal way, as knowledge in the first assumption is the knowledge of the particular in an exacting way.

Third, this knowledge is acquired by knowing the principles and causes of a particular thing, and because the relationship between one thing and its cause is one of necessity; this knowledge is definite, absolute and certain, not allowing for doubt or question.

Fourth, because this knowledge is the knowledge of the principles and universal knowledge, it is permanent. It will remain unchanged prior to and after the creation of particular things.

The conclusion of Avicenna's discourse regarding God's knowledge of the temporal and changing particulars is that God's knowledge, besides revealing them completely and having existed in God before and after their creation, should be free from any deficiency, limitation, potentiality, passivity, change or transformation. Such knowledge cannot be other than the knowledge of the particular in a universal way, showing the particular absolutely and without any deficiency.

Sheikh Eshraq's View on the Knowledge of the Necessary Being of Things before Their Creation

Sheikh Eshraq's theory of God's knowledge is connected to the third stage of this discussion, God's knowledge of things after their creation. However, his view on God's knowledge of things before their creation is not clear.

Mulla Sadra holds that at the stage of the essence, Sheikh Eshraq accepts neither the detailed knowledge nor the collective knowledge. However, Sabzawari believes that this view cannot be attributed to Sheikh Eshraq, and holds that all philosophers unanimously accept that the detailed knowledge of the cause of its essence necessitates its collective knowledge of the concomitants of the essence (*Asfar*, vol. 6, p. 260-61).

In his book *Al-Mashari'a wa al-Mutarihat*³⁵ after discussing the theory of the collective knowledge and the views presented by the founders of this

35. *Al-Mushari' wa al-Mutarihat*, in *Majmou'a Musannafat Sheikh Ishraq*, vol. 1, p. 478.

theory³⁶ Sheikh Eshraq states that in general, this theory is true although the details added by the theory's founders have made it rather confusing. However, he does not fully explain which parts of the theory he accepts or which part he rejects.

In his critique of this theory, Sheikh Eshraq questions the criterion of God's collective knowledge of things at the level of the essence as was suggested by the founders, accepting only that part of the theory which states that the Necessary Being's knowledge of His essence requires His knowledge of the concomitants of His essence. However, by the concomitants of the Necessary Being's essence, he understands the things and the external effects; he rejects the view that the concomitants of the essence are hidden within the essence, as suggested by the founders of theory of the collective knowledge, and held to be the criterion of God's collective knowledge at the level of the essence. He does not suggest another criterion for God's collective knowledge at the level of the essence; therefore, the claim that Sheikh Eshraq believed in God's collective knowledge of things at the level of essence is not well founded.

36. In explaining the theory of God's collective knowledge of things before generating them, Sheikh Eshraq says that believers in this theory think that since God has knowledge of His essence, He also has knowledge of His concomitants of the essence. And that the knowledge of concomitants of the essence is implied in the knowledge of the essence in the same way that the knowledge of human concomitants is implied in the Knowledge of human. "*al-Mushari' wa al-Mutarihat*," p. 478. Accordingly, since things are the effects and concomitants of God's essence, He also has the knowledge of things by the knowledge of His Own essence; since in the level of the essence, these concomitants are impressed in the essence and since God's essence is simple and has no plurality, this knowledge is termed as collective knowledge. The collectiveness does not mean ambiguity or knowledge combined with ignorance and doubt; rather it is collectiveness in comparison with detail that is the existence of the known as a collective and simple existence. Mulla Sadra believes that God's knowledge of things being implied in His Own essence and the objectivity of his knowledge to his essence with his collective knowledge of things are true but the theory of collective knowledge is incomplete in two respects: first, God's knowledge of things in the level of essence remains in the stage of collectiveness (vs. detail) while in transcendental theosophy the theory of collective knowledge is revealed in detail. According to the principle of simple reality, the opposition of collectiveness and detail is vanished. Second, the theory of collective knowledge and the impression of God's concomitants of the essence in His essence cannot be proved except by the principles and foundations of the transcendental theosophy. *Asfar*, vol. 6, pp. 238-244.

Sheikh Eshraq also severely criticizes Avicenna's theory and holds that it has many problems³⁷ as follows:

1. If the intellectual forms were impressed in God's essence, His essence would be affected by the intellectual forms. Even if we admit that accepting the effect of the occurrence of accidents is one of the features of the gradual corporeal and material things, we cannot hold that accepting an accident by an object is limited to corporeal things since an object cannot be the place of an accident unless it is characterized by it, and it is impossible for an object to be characterized by an accident while being incapable of accepting that accident.

If the essence of God were both the cause of the intellectual forms and capable of receiving them, His essence should be both active and passive, whereas the Necessary Being is simple and cannot admit synthesis.

2. Avicenna, on one hand, holds that God's knowledge of things is the cause and the external existence of things, and, on the other hand, he believes that His knowledge is the essence.

These two beliefs are not compatible. If knowing the essence were the cause of knowing the concomitants of the essence then before knowing the concomitants of the essence, the concomitants of the essence should have existed so that they could be the objects of knowledge. The concomitants of God's essence are the things and His effects, and if things had existed before their becoming the object of God's knowledge, the notion that God's knowledge of things is the cause of the external existence of things would be absurd.

3. If God's knowledge of things were the cause of their external existence, and the knowledge of things were also acquired through the intellectual forms which are associated with God's essence and are outside His essence, the conclusion of this theory would be that God's essence is not the origin of the external existence of things: The essence along with the forms which are associated and added to it are the origin and the cause of existence.

4. The first form which is impressed in God's essence, the 'form of the first effect', necessitates His essence to be both active and passive, and God's essence is nothing other than His pure essence, and its purity is nothing other than removing any trace of materiality from it. Because God is the receiver of this form, then its efficient cause should be its freedom from materiality. A corollary would be that the cause of this purity should be

37. *Al-Mushari' wa al-Mutarihat*, p. 480.

superior to God's essence, and it is clear that superiority of the cause of purity to God's essence is impossible.

5. On the basis of Avicenna's theory, God's essence and the intellectual form of the first effect would be both the cause of the external existence of the first effect and the cause of the existence of the intellectual form of the second effect. In fact, considering the single intellectual form, that is, 'the form of the first effect', God's essence would perform two different acts, namely: Give existence to both the first effect in the external, and the intellectual form of the second effect, even though Avicenna himself admits that from one single aspect, one single thing can never produce two effects.³⁸

6. On the basis of this theory, as the cause of the next intellectual form, each one of the intellectual forms would be supplementary to God's essence since on the one hand, these intellectual forms do not have an actual existence in the essence and on the other hand, their existence in the essence would cause the imperfection of the essence. Compared to them the essence would be [potential] latent, and a thing whose existence removes deficiency would cause perfection; each form being the cause of the existence of the next form, each one of these intellectual forms supplementary to God's essence, and because each supplement is superior and higher than the completed object, these intellectual forms would have to be superior and higher than God's essence. Avicenna definitely was not committed to this conclusion.

7. If the intellectual forms are the cause of perfection of the essence, and God does not possess these perfections at the phase of the essence, the essence would not be the cause of these perfections. Consequently, there should be a more perfect existent than the essence to produce these perfections in the essence.

38. This subject refers to the principle, "the one is not produced by other than the one" which is accepted by the majority of Muslim philosophers. Farabi believes that this principle is innovated by Aristotle, while Averroes attributes it to Plato and Themistius. This principle has been discussed in *Othologia* written by Plotinus, which is wrongly attributed to Aristotle. (*Ghava'id Kuli Falsafi dar Falsafe Islami*, Ibrahimi Dinani, Tehran: 1385, vol. 2, p. 267). The content of this principle is that two things are produced by truly one thing which has no plurality; for, if two things are produced on the basis of the homogeneity of cause and effect according to which no effect is produced by any cause, there must be two characteristics in the cause so that from one respect it produces the effect A and from another the effect B. In this case what has been supposed to be one is not one. (*Asfar*, vol. 7, p.204; *al-Isharast wa al-Tanbihat*, vol. 3, p.122).

Mulla Sadra's View on God's Knowledge of Things before Their Creation

Mulla Sadra initially defends Avicenna arguing that Sheikh Eshraq's objections stem from his not looking carefully into Avicenna's explanation. Mulla Sadra was convinced that the answers to each of these objections could be found in the subtleties expressed in Avicenna's theory. On this basis, Mulla Sadra also answers the criticism of other scholars such as Abu al-Barakat-e-Baghdadi and Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi. After demonstrating the fallacies of the Avicenna and Sheikh Eshraq theories Mulla Sadra proposed and advanced a new theory believing it to be one of the most important conclusions of the elements and principles of transcendent theosophy.

Thusly, Mulla Sadra's answers to Sheikh Eshraq's objections to Avicenna's theory will be examined followed by a discussion critiquing the Avicennian and Sheikh Eshraq theories, ending with an explanation of Mulla Sadra's pioneering theory.

I. Mulla Sadra's Response to Sheikh Eshraq's Objections³⁹

Response to the First Objection:

Action and acceptance can be the cause of diversity in a thing when acceptance necessitates recurrent passivity, which occurs when an attribute or accident is added to the existence of a thing that did not have that attribute or accident before. But that attribute or accident whose efficient cause is the thing itself, necessitates no passivity. Sheikh Eshraq accepted this truth concerning the concomitants of quiddity: For the concomitants of quiddity are both the effect of quiddity and dependent upon it. This effusion and dependence do not necessitate diversity in quiddity.

The intellectual forms of things, according to Avicenna, also emanate from God's essence. Since their existence is accidental, that is, their existence for themselves is equal to their existence for others the way they are emanated from the essence will be equal to the way they occurred to the essence.

The Answer to the Second Objection:

By saying that one's knowledge of the essence is the cause of knowing the concomitants of the essence, Avicenna does not mean that one's knowledge of the essence is the cause of knowing the concomitants of the essence in the

39. *Asfar*, vol. 6, 199.

external: rather he means that one's knowledge of the essence is the cause of that thing which is indeed a concomitant of the essence, though it is not yet realized. This is why Avicenna has called this knowledge active knowledge, that is, knowledge that existed before the external existence of the known object and is the cause of its existence. Therefore, Avicenna regards that one's knowledge of the essence is the cause of knowing what are indeed the concomitants of the essence, though they do not yet exist. In fact, the existence of the concomitants of the essence is the effect of knowing it, and it is clear there is no contradiction between these two discourses.

Response to the Third Objection:

Mulla Sadra draws his conclusion from this objection and responds, although it has not been specified in the discourse of Sheikh Eshraq. The conclusion is that if God's essence along with the intellectual forms of things is the cause of the existence of things, proving the existence of the First Intellect, which is believed by Avicenna and other Peripatetic philosopher to exist, would be impossible. For only based on the principle that 'the one is not produced by other than the one' that the First Intellect can be proved. This principle can be true only in relation to God's simple and unique essence, and not the essence accompanied by the intellectual forms.

He answers this question by arguing that, first, it is possible to prove the existence of the First Intellect in other ways, and second, the cause of the external creation of the existents is not God's essence along with any other intellectual forms: Rather, the cause of the existence of the First Intellect is God's essence, and the intellectual form of the First Intellect, and the cause of the existence of the Second Intellect is God's essence and the form of the Second Intellect, and so on.

It is clear from God's essence and the intellectual form of the First Intellect that only the First Intellect can be emanated. Third, the intellectual system in God's essence and the objective and external system are identical. External things are created according to the system that exists in God's knowledge, and because the intellectual form of the First Intellect is placed in the level next to that of the essence in the intellectual system, the external existence of the First Intellect will be in the level next to that of the essence as well.

However, Sheikh Eshraq's objection also concerns the aspect of viz: If the essence along with the intellectual forms are related and complimentary to essence and the cause of things, the conviction of all godly theosophists that God is the origin of all existents would be contradicted because

following this line of reasoning God's essence along with things outside the essence would be the origin of the existence of things.

Khawja Nasir al-Din Tusi raises the same objection to Avicenna's theory, and in explaining the objection of Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi, Mulla Sadra answers this objection, adding: "Since the intellectual forms are the effects of God's essence, it will not be incompatible with God's essence as the origin and ultimate cause of existents if God employs them in giving external existence to things." Similarly, as the mediation of some external existents in creating some other existents in the vertical chain of being, is not incompatible with God as the ultimate cause of things.⁴⁰

Response to the Fourth Objection:

As stated, the dependence of the intellectual forms of things on God's essence is an effusive dependence rather than an immanent one, and dependence in creation does not necessitate diversity in the aspects of action and acceptance in the essence; as these intellectual forms emanate from God's essence, their existence will be dependent on the essence, too.

Response to the Fifth Objection:

Because the intellectual form of the first effect is the effect of God's essence, it cannot be a true unit, consequently in this intellectual form, there is an aspect of perfection and another one of deficiency, and there is an effect to each of these two aspects. From its aspect of perfection, the First Intellect is created in the external, and from its defective and limited aspect, the intellectual form of the Second Intellect is produced in God's essence.

Response to the Sixth Objection:

Because Avicenna holds that the intellectual forms emanated from the essence and are dependent on it, and their dependence on the essence is of the kind of the effusive dependence rather than the immanent dependence, not only they are not, according to Avicenna, the cause of the essence's perfection, but it is the perfection of the essence that gives existence to them. Therefore, the relation of the intellectual forms to the essence is not one of potentiality or possibility, but that of necessity and inevitability, as the relation of the existence of every effect to its cause is also that of necessity and inevitability.

40. Ibid, p. 220.

Response to the Seventh Objection:

The answer to this objection is the same given to the sixth objection.

II. Mulla Sadra's Objections to Avicenna's Theory⁴¹

After admirably defending Avicenna's theory, Mulla Sadra states that certain objections can be made to this theory. Unlike the previous objections, these objections do not stem from misunderstanding of this theory, but stem rather from a problem, which exists within the theory. These problems are, first, that this theory emphasizes the accidental nature of the intellectual forms of things, and, second, it holds the intellectual forms of things to be equal to their mental existence.

Were it not for these two aspects, Avicenna's theory of the intellectual forms would have been convertible to Plato's theory on intellectual ideas. Although God's knowledge at the level of the essence cannot be proved by this conversion, a theory would have been presented for proving God's knowledge at the level of creation compatible with a wisdom drawn from *Hadiths*.

Mulla Sadra's objections to Avicenna's theory are as follows:

1. Avicenna holds that the intellectual forms are the concomitants of God's essence; on the other hand, he emphasizes that these forms are accidental. However, if they were concomitants of the essence, proving their accidental nature would be difficult; for the concomitants of things are either the concomitants of the quiddity or the concomitants of existence.

The concomitants of existence are also either the concomitants of mental existence or the concomitants of external existence: Since God's quiddity is equal to His existence the concomitants of God's quiddity are equal to the concomitants of His existence. On the other hand, because the supposition that these concomitants are the concomitants of God's mental existence is a false supposition this is not Avicenna's intention. The only true supposition will be that the intellectual forms are the concomitants of God's external existence, and the concomitants of the external existence of things themselves have an external existence.

In the external existence, some of the concomitants are substances and some others are accidents, and supposing an accidental existence for that which is substantial is absurd. For, according to the views of the Peripatetic philosophers, it is only in the mental existence that all things have accidental existence, whether externally they are substances or accidents: But in the

41. Ibid, p.228.

external existence, substance is substance and accident is accident. Therefore, if we assume that the intellectual forms are the concomitants of God's essence, we cannot claim that these forms are accidents.

2. Avicenna explains his theory based on the philosophical rule, which claims that knowing the cause necessitates one's knowledge of the effect. Although this rule is cited to prove the presentational and the intuitive knowledge of things, Avicenna claimed to prove acquired knowledge. To illustrate: When we say knowing the cause necessitates knowing the effect, by cause and effect we mean that aspect and quality that makes the thing a cause or an effect, and the aspect which makes the thing a cause or an effect is either the quiddity or the existence of the thing. If because of its existence, the thing is a cause or is an effect, based on this rule, knowing the cause will necessitate knowing the existence of the effect. Since things in their existence are the effects of God's essence, the knowledge of God of His own essence will necessitate His knowledge of the things. Knowing the existence of a thing is also intuitive knowledge, and knowledge by presence. Knowledge obtained from the intellectual forms, which is called acquired knowledge, is confined to quiddities. God's knowledge of things, therefore, is an intuitive and presentational knowledge.

3. On the basis of the rule of the superior possibility, the essence of one thing that in its existence has priority over other existents and should be superior to other essences and its existence should be stronger and more intensive than the existence of other beings. Because based on Avicenna's view, the intellectual forms of things have existential priority over the things themselves the existence of these intellectual forms should be superior to and stronger than the existence of the things themselves, whereas Avicenna holds that the intellectual forms are accidents. Because an accident, no matter of what kind, cannot be superior to or stronger than substance, how can we accept that the existence of the beings of the divine realm to be weaker than the external things which in themselves are the effects of those existents?

III. Mulla Sadra's Pioneering Theory of God's Knowledge of Things before Their Creation⁴²

After rejecting Avicenna's theory and claiming that at the level of God's essence, Sheikh Eshraq admits neither detailed knowledge nor collective knowledge, Mulla Sadra presented his pioneering theory. The summary of this theory is as follows:

42. Ibid, pp. 263-280.

1. God is the simple Reality, that is, there is no synthesis, whether external, illusory or intellectual, in God's essence: For every synthesis necessitates dependence and need, and God's essence is all-sufficient, and free from any need or dependence.

2. The simple Reality is all things and no existence or existential perfection is outside Him. For if one existence of the existences were outside of the simple Reality, the simple Reality would be a synthesis of gain and loss. Synthesis is incompatible with the supposition of being the simple Reality. Similarly, being the simple Reality necessitates that it should include all things in a single collective existence. The simple Reality, indeed, is the station of multiplicity in unity, for if the many existed in their multiplicity in the simple Reality, it would not be the simple Reality any longer.

This introduction is an elaboration on the meaning of the eminent theory, 'the simple Reality is all things and He is not one of them'; Mulla Sadra claimed credit for explaining and proving his pioneering principle.⁴³

III. God Knows His Essence

This introduction has already been proved.

Conclusion

Because God is the simple Reality and all things exist in His essence in a single collective existence, His knowledge of His essence is equal to His knowledge of all things. In addition, because all things exist in His essence in a single collective and simple existence, this knowledge is called the general or collective knowledge. However, this knowledge shows things in detail, and as no existent is independent of God's simple essence, no existent is outside the compass of God's essential knowledge.

In other words, as the station of the simple Reality is the station of

43. The content of this principle is that the overall simple reality contains all existential perfections, and no being is outside it by its existential perfection. The existence of things exists in the simple reality by their collective unique existence. So, although it is said that "the simple reality is all things" it is also emphasized that "It is not each of them" which means to remove the deficiencies and limitations of things from the simple reality. The corollary of these affirmation and negation is that the existential perfections of things exist in the simple reality by their simple unique existence (*Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 368; vol. 6, p. 110; *Masha'ir*, chapter 1, the sixth Mash'ar).

multiplicity in unity, the knowledge of the simple Reality of His essence will be general or collective in its unity and simplicity, and will be detailed in its multiplicity. Since the multiplicity of the simple Reality is the very unity, the collection (*ijmal*) would be identical with the detailed. This is why Mulla Sadra calls God's knowledge of things at the level of the essence and before their creation the collective knowledge, that is, equal to the detailed knowledge.

The View of Avicenna

Avicenna holds that God's knowledge of things before and after their creation is one and the same. That is, God's active knowledge that is acquired from the intellectual forms of things before their creation, and is the cause of the creation of things in the external, is the same knowledge that reveals things after their creation. Because things are created based on this knowledge, they will be, as it shows them, the same in their manifestation before and after their creation.

Accordingly, Avicenna does not accept that concerning God there are two kinds of knowledge: God's knowledge of things before their creation and His knowledge of things after their creation. Knowledge after or at the time of the creation of things is either acquired knowledge or intuitive knowledge or knowledge by presence. Except for the knowledge of the immaterial of its essence, Avicenna denies the knowledge by presence or intuitive knowledge. If the acquired knowledge derives also from things and is obtained after their creation, it will be passive knowledge. However, as was seen before, Avicenna strongly denies that God's knowledge could be passive knowledge, for passivity necessitates the existence of potentiality, possibility and change in God's essence; all of these are incompatible with the essential sufficiency and absolute perfection of God.

The View of Sheikh Eshraq

Concerning God's knowledge of things at the stage of creation, Sheikh Eshraq has a completely different view from that of Avicenna and even Mulla Sadra, a view considered one of the veritable masterpieces of the Illuminationist theosophy.

As previously noted, God's knowledge of things before their creation is an important issue that had not been discussed in Illuminationist theosophy. According to Mulla Sadra, Sheikh Eshraq even denied the collective knowledge of things at the level of essence. Hence, all his brilliant and captivating commentaries revolved around God's knowledge of things at the

stage of creation.

Concerning this subject, he begins with self-knowledge, proving the human soul's presentational knowledge of itself and its faculties establishing God's presentational knowledge of His self and His acts.

He attributes his greatest discovery to a revelation that he received during a trance, and relates all the particulars of the event in his book *al-Talwihat*, under the caption 'A Tale and a Vision'.

In this vision, Suhravardi perceives Aristotle in an astonishing shape with an indescribable awe and grandeur. He speaks to him about the difficulties of the problem of knowledge – an issue which preoccupied Suhravardi at the time – and ascetic practices, deep meditations and so many studies of the works of others which failed to yield a solution to his problems.

By directing Suhravardi's attention to self-knowledge and meditation on the way the soul knows itself and its faculties, Aristotle shows how God's presentational knowledge grasps His acts.

Aristotle says that when the human soul manipulates the body or employs its faculties, such as the imagination or fancy, it must know them. If this knowledge were acquired through their intellectual forms, it would be universal knowledge and would be applicable to many instances; whereas the soul knows its body and faculties as particular and specific issues. Such knowledge cannot be an acquired knowledge, for acquired knowledge is universal and can be applied to many instances.

Therefore, the soul's knowledge of its body and its faculties is knowledge by presence, as evidenced by the power of the soul over its body and faculties; for if the soul had the same power over external things, its knowledge of them would be knowledge by presence.

If in its power over its body and faculties the soul has presentational knowledge of them, God in His everlasting power over existents, and His causal and illuminative relationship with them, will, all the more, have presentational knowledge of things. On the other hand, any perfection that is proved for an existent qua existent on the grounds of the general possibility will be possible for God as well. Alternatively, that which is possible for God on the grounds of general possibility will necessarily exist for Him because the soul's presentational knowledge of its acts is certain, and insofar as its existence is concerned, knowledge by presence is the soul's perfection, God's presentational knowledge of His acts will be possible on the grounds of the general possibility. Consequently, such knowledge will necessarily be

certain for God.⁴⁴

In his analysis of the reality of seeing, which is one of the controversial issues in philosophy and natural sciences, Suhravardi comes to a new and unprecedented theory by which he proves God's presentational knowledge of things. Concerning seeing, there were two important theories before Suhravardi, known as the theory of impression and that of emanation of ray. On the basis of the theory of impression, at the time of seeing, the visible thing is imprinted in the moisture of the retina and seeing is thus made possible. According to the theory of the emanation of ray, at the time of seeing, a cone-shaped light is emanated from the eye. The head of this cone is the eye where its basis takes place on the surface of the visible thing and thus seeing becomes possible.

After criticising both theories,⁴⁵ Suhravardi presents his own theory on seeing and says: Seeing is nothing other than the encounter of the luminous thing and the healthy eye. This encounter occurs when there is no barrier between the observer and the observed object. Besides the absence of barriers, there should exist a relationship between the observer and the observed thing. Because the real observer is the human rational soul, this relationship should be between the soul and the visible thing; when this relationship is present and there is no barrier between the observer and the observed object, the soul's knowledge of the thing will be knowledge by presence.⁴⁶

Because God is the cause of the creation of all existents, and they come into existence by His illuminative relation to them, there is no veil or barrier between Him and His creatures. In God's knowledge of His creatures, therefore, the absence of the barrier is never an issue. In consequence, all existents in their external existence are present to God and are known to Him by knowledge by presence. This is why Suhravardi, unlike other philosophers who base God's seeing on His knowledge, attributes God's knowledge to His seeing.⁴⁷

As previously noted, Suhravardi proves God's presentational knowledge of the external things, either material or immaterial, in two ways:

1. Proving the soul's presentational knowledge of itself and its faculties, and generalizing it to include the knowledge of the Necessary Being by, a)

44. *Majmou'a Musannafat Sheikh Ishragh*, vol.1, pp. 41,70-73.

45. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 99.

46. *Ibid*, vol. 2, pp. 134, 150-153, 213.

47. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 150.

correcting the criteria and b) The two philosophical principles, viz: 'Everything that is considered by the intellect as a perfection for an existent qua existent, regardless of its corporeality, combination or change, is possible for the Exalted Necessary Being on the grounds of the general possibility,' and: 'Everything that is possible for the Necessary Being on the grounds of the general possibility, its existence will be necessary for Him.'

2. Explaining the reality of seeing reducing it to the soul's presentational knowledge of the observed object and proving the existence of the criterion of seeing in God's knowledge of the external things.

The View of Mulla Sadra

In some of his works, Mulla Sadra prefers Sheikh Eshraq's view to others, and this is why he tries to amend and complete this theory and attempts to remove its ambiguities and dispel objections made to it. He does not himself offer a new theory on God's knowledge of things before or after their creation⁴⁸ but he strongly criticises his theory in his *Asfar*, and argues that it is defective in different aspects.⁴⁹

He cites the two major problems and faults of Sheikh Eshraq's theory: the theory does not prove God's detailed knowledge of things at the level of the essence; and thus, fails to note God's foreknowledge and will. Secondly, according to Sheikh Eshraq, all things material or immaterial, because of God's illuminative relationship with them, and His eternal and existential encompass over them, are essentially known to Him. However, the existence of the material existents, because of the weakness of their existence and their disunity and change and combination with potentiality and loss, is not of an intellectual existence for knowledge is the presence of the known object to the knower, and in corporeal existents, each a component is absent from another component. Yet, particularly based on the substantial motion, corporeal existents are the very process of renewal and continual creation, and in the renewed things, the existence of each supposed constituent necessitates the absence of the other constituent.

Therefore, for the constituents of a changing thing, conglomeration in existence is not possible, and a thing whose existence is changing enduringly, cannot be present to itself or to others. In addition, a thing that is not present to itself or to others, is not known to itself or others.

So, in the transcendent theosophy, God's knowledge at the stage of

48. *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*.

49. *Asfar*, vol. 6, p. 256.

creation, which is called active knowledge in philosophy, is denied existence in the realm of material and corporeal existents. It is only accepted in the domain of intellectual and immaterial existents whose existence is collective and intellectual.

However, material existents can only be identified through their intellectual forms and by acquired knowledge. Yet, since acquired knowledge necessitates passivity and change, and requires material and corporeal devices in respect of material and corporeal existents, this is inconceivable in the case of God. Accordingly, in their collective and perfect existence in transcendent principles, and especially in respect of their existence in the essence of the Necessary Being, God knows the material existents by knowledge, by presence.

However, understanding the final view of the transcendent theosophy on God's knowledge of the corporeal and material existents and their creation is difficult. That is not because Mulla Sadra's explication is defective, but because his explanations in this regard appear inconsistent. He excludes, on one hand, the material and corporeal existent from the realm of knowledge and perception, and declares that this sort of existents are neither known to themselves nor are they known to others in essence or by knowledge by presence. On the other hand, based on the fundamentality of existence, and the belief in the objectivity of all kinds of perfection with the reality of existence, he holds that knowledge and perception are present at all the stages of existence, and believes that, like existence, knowledge and perception have graduated levels.

Concerning the material existents and massive forms, he says: "Although we hold that the massive form is one of the stages of knowledge and perception, by knowledge we understand only an immaterial form which is free from combination with non-existents and darkness that necessitate diversity and ignorance."⁵⁰

Perhaps it is for this reason that we see in *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, written at the peak of the author's intellectual acumen, that Mulla Sadra contends that the existence of the material and the corporeal existents at the stage of creation and active knowledge, is identical with God's knowledge; he differentiates between the detailed knowledge before the creation of things and the detailed knowledge after their creation, and says, "His knowledge of the material details is similar to His activity, for, as has been demonstrated, the aspects of creation of things and knowing them are one for

50. Ibid, p. 340.

Him. For the Exalted God, then, the existence of things is equal to His knowledge of them. This is related to that knowledge which is accompanied by creation; His knowledge of things before their creation has been explained already.”⁵¹

In conclusion we can say that although Mulla Sadra maintains that in proving the stage of the essential and detailed knowledge before the creation of things, Sheikh Eshraq’s theory is inadequate: He accepts this theory at the level of the active detailed knowledge accompanied with the creation of things, and argues that we can prove this level of knowledge by presence and detailed knowledge only with the assistance of the principles and rules of transcendent theosophy.

51. *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, ed. Seyyed Jalal Ashtiyani, Mashhad University Press, p.41.

The Definition of Knowledge from the Point of View of Muslim Theologians and Philosophers

Muhammad Taghi Fa'ali

Abstract

Research on the nature of knowledge in Islamic philosophy has been followed irregularly in different disciplines of Islamic studies. Avicenna was the leading philosopher in this respect. Besides giving a definition of knowledge, the writer of this article will refer to each of the situations in which the nature of knowledge has been discussed, and will show that the role and contribution of the presentational knowledge has been immense. In this article, the definition of knowledge from the perspective of three different schools of philosophy and some of the Muslim theologians has been discussed.

Before discussing the nature of knowledge, we should refer to a few useful points:

1. The issues related to knowledge in Islamic sciences - philosophy, theology, logic and even the science of the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence - have been discussed intermittently. There are several chapters and instances in Islamic sources, which have discussed the issue from their own particular point of view. None of these is independent of the others because each has discussed one aspect of knowledge, so naturally they collectively constitute the varied positions of the 'geometry of knowledge', and in the end they provide a comprehensive view of knowledge in Islamic sciences. These issues are as follows:

I. The issue of 'categories' is a section of philosophy, and quality is one of these categories. Muslim philosophers have considered knowledge as one of the mental qualities, speaking on the nature of knowledge.

II. Psychology is one of the most important sections of Islamic philosophy discussing the question of knowledge; in this respect, the renowned philosopher Avicenna has contributed most extensively. He contended that universal souls are divided into the heavenly and the earthly.

Earthly souls include the vegetative, the animal, and the rational. Each of these souls has certain faculties, and because one of the faculties of the animal and the rational souls is the knowing faculty, knowledge has been one of the subjects treated in classical psychology. Issues such as degrees of knowledge, types of knowledge, and the relationship among the perceptive faculties, on the one hand, and on the other, different faculties and the soul, and also the soul's knowledge of itself, have been discussed.

III. The question of 'Intelligence, the intelligent and the intelligible' is one of the issues of philosophy. Discussed by philosophers ever since Imam Fakhr-e-Razi it consequently brought to light certain issues such as the types of intellection, the emanatory source of intellectual forms, and the unity of the intelligent and the intelligible.

IV. Mental existence is one of the philosophical subjects, suggested [by philosophers] after Avicenna. By considering this question, philosophers sought to show the value of knowledge and the imitation of the mind from the objective state of things.

V. The 'secondary intelligibles' is another philosophical issue, which is related to the question of knowledge.

VI. The "criteria of truth of propositions" is another issue discussed in intellectual sciences and is related to the question of knowledge.

VII. 'Quiddity and its precepts' is an issue that has found its way into philosophy. The points discussed here, such as the regard of quiddity and the problem of the universal and the particular, are a form of science that investigates the mind shedding some light on its many faceted components.

VIII. In logic we deal with questions such as concept and affirmation, the self-evident and the theoretical, the question of intellection, the issue of reasoning and the types of self-evident knowledge, which, in fact, present an explanation of, and elaboration on the question of knowledge. Essentially the science of logic is the analysis of the human mind.

IX. Theology in the general sense, or the issues related to God, is a part of Islamic philosophy. In this section, after proving the existence of God and analysing and studying all the divine names and attributes, the individual attributes of the real are discussed. One of the attributes of the Necessary Being is His knowledge. During analysis of the nature of the divine knowledge, man's knowledge will be referred to on certain occasions, and a comparison will be made between the two.

X. In the science of the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, we deal with issues such as the universal and the particular, the absolute and restricted, the conceived and the articulated, and other similar issues. In general, some of

the issues related to words are a meticulous and subtle analysis of the world of the mind, and give man an idea of the recesses and complexities of the mind.

Concerning these 10 points, Muslim scholars have discussed and developed varied opinions about the different dimensions of knowledge.

2. Looking carefully at these issues and questions, we will discover that Muslim philosophers have treated the question of perception and knowledge from two perspectives. One of these is the autonomous perspective and the other is a mirror-like and representational dimension. In their discussion of knowledge sometimes, they speak of the immateriality of perception, degrees of perception, the accidental nature of knowledge, and perceptive faculties. Central to this perspective is the 'existence of knowledge', consequently, one faction regarding the issues of knowledge, will be that of the 'ontology of knowledge'. However, issues such as the classification of knowledge into the acquired and the presentational, and then into concept and affirmation, and also into the self-evident and the theoretical, intellectual considerations, secondary intelligibles, etc. constitutes a conceptual rather than an ontological view of knowledge. These issues are of the kind of 'conceptology of knowledge'. Accepting the independent view of knowledge and taking its existence and being into consideration, we will encounter problems in the first group. However if we admit an organic view of knowledge and consider its conceptual and representational aspect, then we will come across different problems and questions in the second group.

Issues included in the second group view knowledge organically and conceptually that are related to the following: a. the way knowledge is established, b. the limits of knowledge, c. types of knowledge, and d. the value of knowledge. Each of these in turn has its subdivisions.

3. The general structure of knowledge is such that initially it is divided into two sections: presentational knowledge and acquired knowledge. These two types of knowledge have their own divisions respectively.

Definition and Reality of Knowledge

In the world of Islam and among the Muslim scholars, four groups deliberated the question of knowledge seriously: the theologians, the Peripatetic philosophers, the Illuminationist philosophers, and the transcendental theosophists. Therefore, it is appropriate here to discuss and study the reality of knowledge from these four points of view.

The First Group: The Theological Point of View

Theological books usually started with a discussion on knowledge, raising many questions, one of these being the definition of knowledge.

Ghazzali (450 – 505 AH) in his definition of knowledge writes, “the acquisition of a form of an object by the intellect”.¹ This definition was also emphasised by other theologians such as Abhari² and because this definition is a widespread view held among contemporary Muslim scholars, it needs further explanation.

I. This definition does not include presentational knowledge. The important question needing to be answered is, what is the fundamental distinction between presentational knowledge and acquired knowledge, and what is the difference between the two? There are certain views in this regard:

1. Distinction by Medium

Medium is the fundamental distinction between presentational and acquired knowledge. If the knower is presented with the known object with no need of medium, that knowledge will be presentational knowledge; if the knower, however, can gain knowledge of the thing only through the medium of form, that knowledge would be acquired knowledge. An object known through a medium is an acquired known object, and that which is known without a medium is a presentational known object.³

2. Distinction by Form

Form is the fundamental distinction between presentational knowledge and acquired knowledge.⁴ If the knower comes to knowledge of an object

1. Ghazzali, Mohammad, *al- Ghistas*, Cairo: Dar al- Ma‘arif, 1961, p. 4; Shirazi, Sadr al-Din, Ghotb-e-Razi, *Risalatan fi al-Tassawor wa al-Tasdiigh*, Qom: Mo‘assese Isma‘ilian, 1416, p. 30.

2. Abhari, Asir al-Din, *Tanziil al- Afkar*, p. 139; *Risalatan fi al- Tassawor wa al- Tasdiigh*, p. 28.

3. Sabzevari, Haj Mulla Hadi, *Sharh al-Manzoume*, “*Hikmat*”, Tehran: Entesharat ‘Ilmiye Islamiye, 1367, p. 137.

4. This criterion can be found in the following sources: *Sharh-e- al- Manzoume*, “*Hikmat*”, p.76; Suhrawardi, Sheikh Shahab al-Din, *Sharh-e- Hikmat al-Ishragh*. Qom: Bidar Publications, p.38; Shirazi, Sadr al- Din Mohammad, *al- Asfar al- Arba‘a*, Qom: Maktabat al- Mostafavi, 1383, p. 263; Shirazi, Sadr al- Din Mohammad, *Mafatih al- Ghayb*, p.108; ‘Allame Tabataba’i, Seyyed Mohammad Hossein, *Nahayat al- Hikma*, Qom: Mo‘assese al- Nashr al- Islami, p. 236; Mesbah,

through the form, then the knowledge will be acquired knowledge. If there is no form and the object becomes present for the knower without a form, such knowledge will be presentational. In other words, acquired knowledge is possible through form, but presentational knowledge is the knowledge of the thing itself. In presentational knowledge, the object is present, but in acquired knowledge, it is gained.

The second view may complete and interpret the first view, for form and medium are one and the same. Thus, in acquired knowledge, form mediates between the knower and the known object accidentally, but in presentational knowledge the knower without need of any medium finds his way to the known object and uncovers it. Whenever there is a medium between the knower and the known object, this medium is nothing other than form, and if knowledge is gained through form, then there occurs a medium between the knower and the known object.

3. Distinction by Special Faculty

There is another distinction between presentational knowledge and acquired knowledge; namely acquired knowledge needs a special faculty, but presentational knowledge does not.⁵

On this basis, generally the difference between presentational and acquired knowledge has two causes: because of knowledge or the known object, or because of the knower. The first and the second distinctions (the medium and form) are related to the first cause, that is, knowledge or the known object. But these two kinds of knowledge also differ because of the knower. In presentational knowledge the essence of the knower is present and directly meets the known object, but in acquired knowledge the knower himself is not present, and only through a special faculty or device—such as the sensory or imaginative faculties—finds the known object. Thus, we see that acquired knowledge is related to one of the devices of the soul, but in presentational knowledge, there is no faculty, or device, but rather the whole essence of the knower is in direct contact with the known object.

Mohammad Taghi, *Amouzeshe-e-Falsafe*; Tehran: Sazman Tablighat-e-Islami, 1364, vol. 1, p. 153; Javadi Amoli, Abdoulah, *Shenakht Shenasi dar Quoran*, Tehran: Markaz Nashr-e-Farhangi Raja, p. 67; Sobhani, Ja'far, *Nazariya al-Ma'rafa*, Qom: Manshourat al-Markaz al-'Alami le al-Dirasat al-Islamiya, 1411, p. 48.

5. Tabataba'i, Allame Seyyed Mohammad Hossein, *Usul-e-Falsafe va Ravesh-e Realism*, Mortaza Motahhari's Footnote, Qom: Mo'assese Matbou'at dar al-Islam, vol. 3, pp. 28-29.

The definition of Ghazzali cited above—"the acquisition of the form of an object by the intellect" - faces a problem in that it does not include presentational knowledge, for in this kind of knowledge there is no form. Seeking to explain the reality of knowledge, we should provide a definition that includes all types of knowledge. Of course - according to one analysis - [the existence of] presentational knowledge might be denied, but we should not let the definition be affected by one singular approach. The reasonable approach is that we should, first, explain what we intend exactly by the terms and key expressions, and, second, by giving strong evidence, make our position demonstrable. A definition affected by certain attitudes, which is heavily loaded with theories, cannot be a true definition and its truth is already questionable.

II. Not only does Ghazzali's definition not include presentational knowledge, it also does not cover the secondary intelligibles. To explain this further we should acknowledge, that from one perspective concepts are divided into the particular and the universal. The universal concepts or the intelligible are of two kinds: the primary intelligible and the secondary intelligible,⁶ the first group includes those concepts that the mind, in its communication with the external, extracts from the extensions. After experiencing one or more sensory perceptions of an object, the mind will automatically have a universal concept suited to its extensions, such as the concept of man, whiteness or fear. Such concepts, which are either substantive or accidental and are extracted from the senses or presentational knowledge, are indeed the reflection of the external in the mind. The primary intelligibles are the quiddities, and their extensions are realised in the external.

The view expressed by the philosophers in their discussion on 'mental existence' is related to these circumstances,⁷ for this theory explains that quiddities exist in two positions and have two kinds of existence: sometimes in the external and so have an external existence, and other times in the mind and have a mental existence. Accordingly, the quiddities act as the

6. For more details refer to: *al-Asfar al-Arba'a*, vol. 3, p. 443; Motahhari, Mortaza, *Majmou'e Asar*, Tehran: Sadra Publications, vol. 10, PP. 307- 363 and vol .9, pp. 381- 410; *Shenakht Shenasi dar Quoran*, pp. 92-104; *Amouzesh -e falsafe*, vol. 1, pp. 176-180; *Sharh-e al- Manzoume*, "Hikmat", pp. 35-36.

7. See *al-Asfar al-Arba'a* `vol. 1, pp. 263- 327; *Sharh-e al-Manzoume*, "Hikmat"; pp. 22-32; Razi, Fakhr, *al-Mabahith al- Mashrighiya*, Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al- Arabi, 1410, vol. 1, pp. 130-132.

connecting bridge between the mind and objects in the external objective, standing between these two. Because the effects are related to existence, and the existence of the quiddities in the mind is different from their existence in the external, the effects of the quiddities existing in the mind would be different from the effects of the quiddities existing in the external. In fact, with this theory the philosophers sought to prove the validity of perceptions. The validity of man's knowledge can only be justified through the essential unity of the subject and the object.

The conclusion drawn here is that one group of the intelligibles are the quiddities which are the truth, the form, the mirror and the reflection of the external existents. The extensions of this group of the intelligible are realised in the external, and the occurrence of these concepts on the extensions in also achieved in the external. Evidently, this group of man's knowledge and perceptions, we can say, is the form of the external objects that have been realised in the mind. In other words, concerning this group of perceptions, the aforementioned definition of Ghazzali is correct.

In the second group of the secondary intelligibles their occurrence, in general, (*'arud*) is mental. However, concerning their characterization (*ittisaf*), they are of two kinds: mental, and external. Accordingly, we have two kinds of secondary intelligibles: secondary logical intelligibles and secondary philosophical intelligibles. The characterization of logical concepts such as universality, particularity, validity, species, genus, proposition and, in general, the characterization of all the key terms of logic is mental, in the sense that their reference or extension is in the mind. The universal, the genus, and the extensions of the species are all subjective or mental issues. The concept of man that exists in the mind is the universal [man] and not the external human being. The concept of animal that is in the mind is characterized by genus.

The occurrence of these kind of concepts take place in the mind, as well; that is, abstracting these kind of concepts from the extensions needs mental exploration and intellectual operations. If the mind approaches the concept of man from a particular angle and with a special attitude, it would be able to abstract the concept of universality from it - man considered as applicable to many extensions would be a universal man. Therefore, this group of concepts is reflective, but their abstraction or extraction requires some mental process and intellectual endeavour.⁸

The characterization of the secondary philosophical intelligibles is

8. In this field, refer to Motahhari, Mortaza, *Majmou'e Asar*, vol.10, pp. 263-308.

external; for example, an external being is characterized as a cause or an effect, or a substance or an accident, or is either potential or actual. At the same time, the qualities of cause and effect, the qualities of substance and accident do not exist in the external. In the external we have a cause (the extension of a cause), but no causality; that is, other than the essence of the cause and alongside it, we do not have any additional thing named causality.

Therefore, the occurrence of this group of concepts is mental; that is, extracting the philosophical concepts needs the exploration of the mind and the endeavour of the intellect. The conclusion to draw from this is that the secondary intelligibles, logical or philosophical, contrary to the primary intelligibles, are not extracted directly from the external and do not reflect the external world. Secondly, the secondary intelligibles are preceded by other concepts through which they can communicate with the external, but the essential concepts (those belonging to quiddities) are directly reflected from the external in the mind. In other words, the primary intelligibles are preceded by one of the senses, whereas the senses do not directly accompany the secondary intelligibles. To establish the essential concept in the mind, initially its sensory form and then its imaginative form and finally its intellectual form should be considered. However, the secondary intelligibles do not need to progress through these stages. Lastly, the secondary intelligibles are not specific or restricted to any group but the primary intelligibles, are specific to special groups: one group to substance, another to quality, another to quantity, and so on.

The ten categories are quiddities, and because these categories are of the highest genera, they do not overlap each other, that is, no quiddity enters into more than one category otherwise it would not be a quiddity. The secondary intelligibles do not fit into the categories thus they are above the categories and overrule the highest genera.

In short, if we define knowledge as “the acquisition of the form of an object by the intellect,” this account would include only the essential concepts (those belonging to quiddities), and would correspond with the theory of the mental existence, for form is the same as quiddity. As witnessed, the domain of knowledge is much wider than that. The secondary intelligibles constitute a large section of human perception, and it is this very group of concepts that provide mankind with philosophy, logic, and all other sciences whose concepts are of the kind of the secondary intelligibles - such as mathematics, law, and ethics.

In *al- Mawaqif (Positions)*⁹ one of the most authoritative books on Islamic theology, the author Qadi Edhd al-Deen Eedji gives an elaborate account of the reality of knowledge, initially introducing three points of view:

1. Fakhr - e -Razi (543 –606 AH) holds that knowledge has no need for definition, and believes that its concept is self-evident. Then he provides two arguments to support this claim.

2. The concept of knowledge is neither self-evident nor necessary, and it can have a definition. In other words, the concept of knowledge is theoretical and is acquired, though its definition is hard and difficult. Imam al-Haramein abu al-Maali Juweini (419 – 478 AH) holds this view believing that “in a definition we should have both genus and differentia; in respect of obvious issues such as sensory things this would be done with difficulty, but finding a genus and a differentia for invisible issues would be much more difficult and time consuming.”¹⁰

3. The concept of knowledge is theoretical and needs a definition, providing a definition of knowledge would not be difficult.

Eedji continues giving six definitions of knowledge:

1. From the point of view of the Mutazilites, knowledge is the understanding of the object, as it exists in the context of reality. In other words, if we understand things as they are, we have gained some knowledge. This is a realistic definition, in the sense that belief and the mind would be compatible with and adaptable to reality, so that it can be termed knowledge. Besides, according to the view of Abu al-Hashim Jobbae (d. 321 AH), the soul should arrive at peace and rest by that belief.¹¹

2. Qadi Abu Bakr Baqillani (d. 403 AH) says, “Knowledge is understanding the known object as it is”. This definition is similar to that of the Mutazilites. Therefore, according to Baqillani’s view, knowledge is man’s understanding of things as they are. If man understands an object not as it is, then this understanding, in fact, would not be ‘knowledge’. In this definition Baqillani uses the two terms ‘knowledge’ and ‘known object’, making the definition circular since if the *explanandum* (the defined object) is expressed in the definition, the definition will be circular, and such a definition cannot explain the reality of the *explanandum* (the defined object).

9. Ijee, ‘Azod al- Din, *Sharh al- Mawaghif*, Qom: Sharif Razi Publications, 1370, vol.1, pp. 62- 86.

10. See Ghazzali, Mohammad, *al- Mostasfa*, vol. 1, p. 25.

11. Baghdadi, ‘Abd al-Ghahir, *Usul al-Din*, p. 5.

It is assumed that prior to the definition we have no knowledge of the *explanandum*, and through the definition we just want to clarify it.

Now if the *explanandum* is unknown and the definition is clarifying, the *explanandum* should not be stated in the definition, otherwise, the definition would also be unknown and therefore would not be clarifying.

3. Abu al-Hasan al-Ashaari (260 – 324 AH) in his definition of knowledge writes, “Knowledge is understanding the known thing as it is” or “knowledge is that which necessarily makes its holder a knower.” The first definition is similar to the previous two definitions. The second definition understands knowledge as a thing that makes its owner a knower. This definition does not discuss the reality of knowledge, as it is also tainted with the problem of circularity.

4. In his second view, Imam Fakhr-e-Razi has defined knowledge in the following terms: “Knowledge is a dogmatic conviction which corresponds with its cause.” What is understood by this definition is that there are two conditions for knowledge: first, it should be dogmatic, and second it should correspond with reality. In consequence, matters of speculation are not knowledge; likewise, if mental forms do not correspond with reality, they would not deserve to be called knowledge.

A Study and an Analysis

The last four definitions have the belief in common that knowledge should reflect the reality of things. If the mental form does not show the known thing as it is, the result would not be knowledge. In this respect, two points should be mentioned:

First, this definition of knowledge is realistic. For when we say that knowledge should correspond with reality, then that which does not do so would not only be false knowledge, but it would not be knowledge at all, and it would be nothing other than ignorance. It is on the basis of this assumption that we can say the theologians are definitely realistic, and that, for them, the validity of knowledge is self-evident, contrary to many of the Western philosophers who fell into scepticism.¹² It is clear that man ‘has the potentiality for uncovering reality’ and that the external reality is accessible to man.

Secondly, knowledge that corresponds with reality, knowledge that belongs to things as they are, is an affirmation and not a concept. Therefore,

12. Fa‘ali, Mohammad Taghi, *Daramadi bar Ma‘refat Shenasi Dini va Mo‘aser*, Qom: Nahad-e Namayandegi, 1377, pp. 113-138.

concepts have no place in these definitions furthermore concepts and affirmations are defined as such in Islamic sciences. In definition Avicenna says, "A concept is that which is present with no need of judgment, but an affirmation is that which is present along with a judgment."¹³ In this account, concept and affirmation are defined in their being free from or accompanied by judgment, respectively. Therefore, the main difference between the two is the existence or non-existence of judgment.

The writer of *al-Mawaqif (Positions)* gives a definition similar to that of Avicenna writing: "If knowledge is free from judgment, then it is a concept; otherwise it is an affirmation."¹⁴ In this explanation, the criterion of the distinction between a concept and an affirmation is also considered to be judgment. Sabzevari also holds that the fundamental distinction between a concept and an affirmation is judgment.¹⁵

In this relation, there are different discussions, but it suffices to underline one point closely connected to our discussion, namely: Knowledge, whether conceptual or affirmative, reflects the external.¹⁶ Representation has always been the essential and inseparable quality of knowledge; therefore, if knowledge does not represent the external reality, it would not be knowledge, but only ignorance. Because concepts reflect what is outside them, they always lead the knower to what is exterior to him; so it is with the affirmations. In other words, concepts as well as affirmations, and in general, knowledge, does not occupy the knowers with themselves, but directs their attention to what is outside them.

Therefore, knowledge always looks for something to uncover or represent, and that knowledge which does not do so, indeed, is not knowledge at all. Of course, there is an important point to consider here, that is, 'representation' is different from 'truthfulness'. Here, representation means reflecting the external, but truthfulness means correspondence with reality. Some thing may show the external and reveal what is beyond itself, but it may not correspond with the external reality. Representative knowledge needs a thing to reflect, but the 'represented thing' may not correspond with the extension. Consequently, knowledge that is representative may not be true. Therefore, knowledge that always reflects

13. Avicenna, Abdollah, *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, Tehran: Daftar-e Nashr-e Ketab, 1403, vol. 1, p. 12.

14. *Sharh al-Mawaghif*, vol. L, p 86.

15. *Sharh-e al- Manzoume*, " Mantegh"; p. 7.

16. *Usul-e Falsafe va Ravesh-e Realism*, vol. 1, p. 130.

the external could be either true or false. Representation is the prelude to truthfulness, and truthfulness is that last scale of a ladder, which can be reached only after stepping up the scales of showing the external and representation. Of course, the problem of falsehood has a special justification.¹⁷

Now returning to the second point, it was said that the last four definitions correspond with affirmations and not concepts, and, considering this, the reason is clear. When we say knowledge is that which shows the known thing as it is and corresponds with the known object, such a definition of knowledge includes only affirmative knowledge. For knowing an object as it is should be accompanied with judgment, and knowledge accompanied with judgment is just an affirmation; therefore, concepts cannot be placed in this group of definitions.

We said that Eedji gives six definitions of knowledge. The two definitions that remain are the following:

1. In his definition of knowledge, Ibn Forak al-Ashaari (d. 406 AH) states: "Knowledge is that by which the knower can do a job skilfully." In this account, knowledge is defined by its effect, for he says that knowledge is that which gives rise to actions, which are accompanied with skilfulness. Therefore, a knower is that person whose deeds are accompanied with skilfulness.

2. Eedji continues citing a definition by some philosophers, "Knowledge is the acquisition of the form of the object in the intellect." It is obvious that this definition is very similar to that of Ghazzali.

After explaining these views and theories, Eedji offers his obscure and complicated definition of knowledge: "It is a quality which causes its owner to distinguish between meanings in a way that bears no controversy." From this definition, we understand that knowledge has two characteristics, first, knowledge is that which enables us to distinguish between things, and, second, once knowledge is realised, it will be decisive and will not tolerate any controversy. Therefore, whenever we know an object, we, first, make a distinction between that object and other objects, and, second, we know it decisively and definitely, otherwise we will not have knowledge of it and we do not deserve to be called a knower.

The Second Group: The Peripatetic View

Among the Peripatetic philosophers, I explain only the view of Avicenna.

17. Ibid, Artic 4.

Avicenna defines knowledge in different ways:

“It is similar to any perception, that is, it is grasping the form of the perceived object.”¹⁸

“It is similar to any perception, namely it is grasping the form of the perceived object in one way or another.”¹⁹

“Perception is the acquisition of the form of the perceived object in the essence of the perceiver.”²⁰

“Knowledge is that which is acquired from the forms of existents.”²¹

The most precise definition of Avicenna is that which is given in *al-Isharat wal al-Tanbihat (Remarks and Admonitions)*: “The perception of an object means that its reality should be embodied for the perceiver, and he, that perceives, should see it.”²²

In the first few definitions, Avicenna holds that knowledge is the acquisition of forms in the mind, and in his last definition he shows that by ‘form’, he understands the ‘embodied reality’. In his commentary on the second definition, Khawjah Nassir al-Din –e-Tussi says that a perceived object is either in the essence of the perceiver or not,²³ if the object of perception is not outside the perceiver, then it must be united or one with him. In this case, the embodied reality is the objective reality of the perceived thing, which is present for the perceiver. This knowledge is indeed presentational knowledge, and the existence of the perceived object is present for the perceiver with no need of a medium.

Nevertheless, if the known object is different from the perceiver and is outside his essence, then the perceiver will not encounter the form of the perceived object nor its very existence; his knowledge of it will be acquired through this very form. In this case, there will be an impressionistic perception and an acquired knowledge. In this last type, the embodied reality will be the form of the known object. In short, perception is the acquisition of the embodied reality of the known object for the knower; this embodied

18. Avicenna, Abdollah, *al- Nijat men al- Ghargh fi Bahr al- Dilalat*, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1362, p. 344.

19. Avicenna, Abdollah, *al- Shifa*, Kitab al-Nafs, Qom: Ayatolah Mar’ashi Najafi Library Publications, 1404, p. 50.

20. Avicenna, Abdollah, *al- Ta’lighat*, Qom: Maktaba al-‘Alam al- Islami Publications, 1404, pp. 69, 82.

21. *Al- Shifa, al- Ilahiyat*, p. 361.

22. *Al- Isharat wa al- Tanbihat*, vol. 2, p. 308.

23. *Ibid*, pp. 312 – 313.

reality can be either the known object itself or its form.

From this explanation, we understand that there are two kinds of knowledge: presentational and acquired. In the former, the existence of the known object itself is present for the knower with no need of a medium, while in the latter it would be present through a medium. Because the discussion is about acquired knowledge, and according to Khawjah's explanation, the reality embodied in acquired knowledge is 'the idea or the form of the thing', and for him the form is the very 'quiddity of the thing', acquired knowledge then would be the essential knowledge (knowledge belonging to quiddities). In Avicenna's account, quiddity is the very consistence of knowledge. Therefore, the definition of knowledge by the author of *Isharat* is the same definition given by other philosophers, and ultimately leads us to the theory of mental existence; if there is any difference, it will only be by matter of expression. It is on this basis that we can say Avicenna before Khawjah had suggested the theory of mental existence, but the title 'mental existence' does belong to Khawjah Nassir, or to Fakhr-e Razi before him.²⁴ In his commentary on Avicenna's words—"He that perceives sees it"—Khawjah says that this is a general expression. Instead of using the term 'perceiver', Avicenna has used the expression "he that perceives."

The reason for this is that perception from the viewpoint of Avicenna includes perception by the means of a device, and perception without the means of a device. For Avicenna perception without a device can be illustrated in two ways: knowing one's self²⁵ and intellection.²⁶ Besides these two perceptions such as sensory perception and imaginative perception, perception is acquired by means of devices and faculties. Of course, ascribing this to Avicenna is still a matter of some doubt.²⁷

Concerning Avicenna's definition of knowledge, we can say that this definition is more compatible with the fundamentality of quiddity rather than the fundamentality of existence. It should be noted that one of the most important Islamic philosophical questions that has been suggested since the time of Mulla Sadra, considered as his first philosophical question, is that

24. Tussi, Mohammad Ibn al-Hassan (the author), 'Allameh -e Helli (the commentator), *Kashf al- Morad fi Sharh-e Tajrid al- 'Itihad*, Qom: Mostafavi publications., p. 10.

25. *Al- Mabahith al- Mashrighya*, vol. 1, p.130.

26. *Al- Isharat wa al- Tanbihat*, vol. 2, p. 294.

27. *Al- Asfar al- Arba 'a*, vol. 1, p 38.

whether existence or quiddity is fundamental.²⁸

If we put forth a proposition and say, “Man exists,” we will clearly see that in this proposition the subject and the predicate are different, that is, man is different from existence and existence is different from man. The difference between these two is mental, and in the external world there is only one thing, and that is man who exists or human existence.

Now the question is, if we have two concepts in the mind, one is man, who is a quiddity, and the other is existence, and knowing that in the external context we have only one thing, which one of these mental things represent that one external reality; and this external reality is the original and true extension of which of those two mental concepts?

Of course, this one external reality cannot be the essential and original extension of both of them, for knowing that man and existence are two separate things, one external reality cannot be an extension to both of them otherwise one thing should combine in itself two things.

So, the requirement of this supposition is that one thing can be two things, which would be impossible. Therefore, only two reasonable and justified suppositions are left, one is that the external reality is the essential extension to quiddity-in this case quiddity would be fundamental and original-and the other is that the external reality is the essential extension to existence-in this case existence would be fundamental and original. On this basis, Mulla Sadra classifies the philosophers, holding that Sheikh Eshraq (Suhrawardi) had accepted the fundamentality of quiddity, whereas the Peripatetic philosophers believed in the fundamentality of existence.

Accordingly, Avicenna would be a believer in the fundamentality of existence, but we saw already that his definition of knowledge was more compatible with the fundamentality of quiddity. The reason for this is that prior to Mulla Sadra there was no such question as ‘the fundamentality of existence or quiddity’ in the Islamic philosophy. Studying the discourse and the principles of the philosophers, Mulla Sadra understood from them one of the two principles of the fundamentality of existence or quiddity, and attributed to them certain views. The result is that because central to Avicenna’s definition of knowledge is ‘form’ or ‘idea’, both quiddities, his definitions of knowledge are more compatible with the fundamentality of quiddities.

28. *Hikmat al- Ishragh*, pp. 39-40.

The Third Group: The Illuminationist View

According to Suhravardi, if man learns even one scientific point, he will definitely increase in knowledge. If man opens his eyes and sees something, or hears a sound through his ears, or touches something by his hands, or imagines a certain concept, in all these cases he will certainly lose nothing. Man's state of mind, before and after knowledge, would be different. So, at the time of gaining knowledge, something is added to man's mind. If the thing, which at the time of acquiring knowledge is realised by the mind, is knowledge, it should correspond with reality, otherwise it would not be knowledge, but only ignorance.²⁹ In other words, if we think of false cognition and understanding as knowledge, then we would not have differentiated between knowledge and ignorance.

If there is a difference between knowledge and ignorance, which certainly there is, and if we accept that knowledge is different from ignorance, then we should accept that, knowledge is that which corresponds with reality. In the end, Sheikh Eshraq refers to the views of philosophers concerning knowledge: The reality of knowledge is that the 'idea of things' should be realised in the mind. We clearly understand from this statement that if perception corresponds with reality, it is true and it is knowledge. Thus, if perception does not correspond with reality, we would not have knowledge at all. Therefore, the condition required by both knowledge and truth is correspondence with reality. That perception or cognition will be knowledge that is true, and the one condition of knowledge is its truthfulness. Suhravardi here has added [the requirement of] correspondence to the definition of knowledge. Correspondence, however, is true only of propositions and affirmation. Therefore, concepts will not be included in this definition. Moreover, this definition holds a place for only acquired knowledge and ignores presentational knowledge.

The Fourth Group: The View of the Transcendental Theosophy

Regarding the definition of knowledge, Sadr al-Mutallehin assumed that knowledge has no need for definition,³⁰ for him knowledge is self-evident. Proposing some arguments on this claim, his first contention is that, in general, definition contains at least two parts whereas knowledge is simple, having no parts. His second argument is that a definition should be clearer and more obvious than *explanadum* (the defined thing), but there is nothing

29. *Al-Asfar al-Arba'a*, vol. 3, p. 278.

30. *Ibid*, p. 292.

clearer to man than knowledge. If man suggests a definition for knowledge, he should know it, and we recognize that we cannot know knowing, by knowing. Before knowing what knowing is, we knew knowing.

Therefore, knowledge is self-evident and has no definition, as the existence and realisation of knowledge are also self-evident because all humankind understand intuitively that they know certain things; therefore, knowledge does exist. The result is that concerning knowledge we can say both its definition and realisation are self-evident.

Mulla Sadra continues by citing the definitions given by earlier philosophers and by studying and criticising them. He argues that even if we seek to give a 'semi-definition' of knowledge, it is better to say, "The best approach [for defining knowledge] would be that knowledge is existence free from positive matter."³¹ For Mulla Sadra knowledge is immaterial [abstract] rather than material. One of the central reasons supporting this claim³² is that one of the characteristics and qualities of matter is its divisibility, that is, every material thing could be divided. Of course, in certain cases we may not have the scientific instruments for doing this.

However, the point is that matter as matter can be divided, though we cannot do it right at the present time. Knowledge, however, is not like that. If we know something, we cannot halve or divide this knowledge while it is true that sometimes the known object, that is, the object of our knowledge is such that it can be divided, the knowledge itself cannot be divided, and because knowledge does not have the inseparable characteristic of matter, that is, divisibility, it cannot be material and it is immaterial. No doubt, the preliminaries of acquiring knowledge could be material, but these material preliminaries only furnish the background for the acquisition of knowledge, but knowledge itself remains immaterial.

On the other hand, for Mulla Sadra knowledge is of the origin of the existence. This comes in contrast to some earlier definitions that hold that knowledge is of the category of form and quiddity. Therefore, Mulla Sadra in this instance remains faithful to the principle of the fundamentality of existence, demonstrating quite adeptly its effect on the question of knowledge.

It seems that in this definition Mulla Sadra is mainly concerned with the 'existence of knowledge' and is seeking to prove the immateriality of knowledge, whereas the distinctive and important feature of knowledge is

31. Ibid, pp. 289- 297; *Nahayat al- Hikma*, pp. 237-234.

32. *Al-Asfar al-Arba'a*, vol. 3, p. 244.

‘unveiling’, for whenever man acquires knowledge, something is revealed to him, and through gaining knowledge he unveils certain truth. Mulla Sadra points to this essential characteristic of knowledge, namely unveiling, in the subsequent issue arguing that all degrees of knowledge, whether sensory, imaginary, illusory, or intellectual, are accompanied by presence, though he gives them an immaterial existence. The result is, for Mulla Sadra, knowledge is the ‘presence of an immaterial being’, and because an immaterial being can be realised by only an immaterial existent rather than a material one, the knower should also be immaterial. Accordingly, the human soul, which is the knower, will be immaterial, and this is one of the arguments for proving the immateriality of the soul. Finally, we can define knowledge as “the presence of the immaterial for the immaterial.”

One of the important effects of this definition is that the known should be immaterial; therefore, a material thing can never be the object of man’s knowledge except through a medium. In other words, man can never have presentational knowledge of the material world. The only knowledge that we can have of the material world is acquired knowledge. We know that acquired knowledge is that knowledge in which form acts as a medium. If we look carefully into acquired knowledge, we will find there are two kinds of knowledge and two kinds of known objects: knowledge of form which is the medium, and knowledge of the external world through the medium of form, as sometimes the external world is known but through a medium—this is why it is called the ‘known by accident’—and sometimes the form itself is the object of our knowledge, and that is knowledge without a medium, the ‘known by essence’.

Summing Up

So far, different definitions have been given of knowledge, which can be classified. Some define knowledge as “the acquisition of the form of an object by intellect or mind.” Ghazzali, Abhari, Avicenna, Sheikh Eshraq and some other philosophers have accepted this view. Some theologians, such as Baqillani, Ashaari, and Fakhr-e-Razi - in one perspective - have defined knowledge as “Perceiving the thing as it is.” Ibn Forak and Eedji have also suggested two other views, which were explained and analysed. Finally we have Mulla Sadra’s definition from the eleventh century AH and his understanding of knowledge being ‘the presence of the immaterial for the immaterial.’

We have two options to deal with this problem. We could suppose that knowledge has no need for a definition arguing for this view based on the

two quoted arguments presented by Mulla Sadra; “A is self-evident,” and accepting that ‘this judgment that A is self-evident is a theoretical one.’ Obviously that which is theoretical is capable of being demonstrated, and we can present some evidence to substantiate this. So, the first option is that we leave the issue of knowledge on the grounds of its self-evidence, saying that it does not need a definition.

The second option is that we decide to provide a ‘semi-definition’; in this case, among the five definitions given, Mulla Sadra’s is the best because contrary to all other definitions, this definition includes presentational knowledge as well as acquired knowledge. Secondly, secondary intelligibles, philosophical or logical, like primary intelligibles, are included in this definition and thirdly, regarding concepts and affirmations, it is a comprehensive definition, unlike the definitions given by the Mutazilites, which includes only affirmations.

We can add one more point here, that is, in contemporary epistemology; the current understanding is that “knowledge is a true justified belief.” This definition is true only of statements, propositions, and affirmative knowledge, and it does not include concepts; Mulla Sadra’s definition, however, has no such deficiency, for it also includes concepts. Finally, this definition does not fall into a vicious circle referring to the essential quality of knowledge, namely ‘presence’. This definition is also compatible with the principle of the fundamentality of existence.

The Arguments of the Sincere

Hussain Oshagi

Abstract

In theological discussions, arguments established on the grounds of concrete realities for God's existence are called the arguments of the Sincere. Besides discussing the arguments of the Sincere given so far by Avicenna and Mulla Sadra, the writer of this article will present a new analysis of those arguments.

In Islamic philosophy, the term 'the Argument of the Sincere' refers to the argument that proves God's existence on the basis of those realities that are His very existence, instead of referring to the principle of existence. In other words, it proves the existence of the Exalted God by means of the absolute existence—without considering the qualities of possibility, origination, motion, or any other qualities.

The importance of these arguments stems from the fact that proving God's existence by realities that are different from and other than God is not without logical problems. For an existent different from the existence of God is not out of these three possibilities: either it is the cause of the existence of God, or it is the effect of God, or it is neither God's cause nor its effect.

The first possibility is invalid, for in that case God should be the effect and the creature of another being, whereas nobody and nothing create God.

The third possibility is also invalid, for in that case there would be no existential relationship between God and that employed to prove His existence, so that on its evidence we can understand the existence of God.

The second possibility also has the problem that if the existence of the cause is questionable, the existence of the effect will be questionable, and a questionable existence cannot be the means of proving the definite existence of another thing. Accordingly, the arguments established for God's existence on the grounds of a different existence could be assuring only if the demonstrator can first be sure of the existence of the effect by something

other than the cause; however, such assurance is rare.

Because of this problem, the Muslim philosophers have sought to prove God's existence on the basis of realities that are identical to His existence.

Avicenna was one of the first philosophers, inspired by the Koranic verse (*Fussilat* /53), to grasp this kind of argument and tried to establish an argument with such qualities. Starting his argument with this presupposition that because sophism is invalid, the existence of at least one existent is definite and certain. This existent is either a necessary being or a contingent being. If the former is true, the desired conclusion is already proved; if the latter case is true, however, there should be a cause for its existence. If that cause is a necessary being, then once again the desired conclusion is reached, but if it is a contingent being then it should have a cause. Thus, there would be a chain of causes and effects. Based on the impossibility of a circle and an infinite regress he concluded that this chain should end with a cause that has no cause.¹

In this argument, Avicenna was successful in proving the existence of God, but insofar as meeting the condition of the argument of the sincere is concerned; he has not been successful. For in a part of his argument, he depends on the existence of the contingent being, which is different from the existence of the Necessary Being, and because of this, objections have been raised against his argument.

This problem was discussed for the first time in the words of Ibn Arabi and Qaysari, the commentator on Ibn Arabi's book, *Fusus al-Hikam*, and then in the discourse of other scholars.²

Therefore, though Avicenna can be considered the originator of the argument of the sincere, he could not offer an assertion to meet the merits of these arguments. Nevertheless, after him, his accomplishment produced the advances of other thinkers whose endeavours finally became fruitful. First in the words of the mystics and then in the discourse of the philosophers definite arguments were offered with the quality of the Argument of the sincere. The number of these Arguments now exceeds forty.

The General Forms of the Argument of the Sincere

The arguments of the sincere are divided into three main groups. In one

1. *Al- Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* with the commentary of Tussi and Ghotb al- Din Razi, vol. 3, p.18, (1379 AH), Daftar Nashr al-ketab.

2. *Matla' Khusus al-Kalim Fi Ma'ani Fusus al- Hikam*, vol. L, p. 364, Anwar al-Hoda Publications, 1316 AH.

group the ‘reality of existence’ is the way to reach the existence of God, in the second group the ‘reality of the existent’ is the path for reaching Him, and in the third group the ‘reality of the Necessary Being’ takes the wayfarer to the ultimate goal. In all of these three groups, at the end of the argument it is clear that the reality discussed is nothing other than the existence of God. Therefore, in these arguments the path and the goal are one, and, therefore, in its method the argument is that of the sincere.

The First Group

In this group of the Argument, the very ‘reality of existence’ becomes the basis of our discussion for concluding the existence of God. However, what is the ‘reality of existence’? On the basis of the principle of ‘non-contradiction’ it can be defined as that reality that by itself rejects non-existence and is essentially incompatible with non-being. It follows then that based on the evident principle of ‘non-contradiction, the combination of existence and non-existence is impossible.

Therefore, once existence is established, without requiring anything else, non-existence will be expelled. So, ‘existence’ is the reality that by itself rejects non-existence and negates non-being, and this is the same reality, which, first, the mystics and, then, the philosophers made the subject of their study. On this basis they concluded the existence of God. Abu Hamid Muhammad Isfahani, an eighth century AH mystic and philosopher, suggested a sample of these arguments,³ which was abridged and edited later by the thirteenth century AH philosopher, Sabzevari.⁴

Non-existence can never apply to the ‘reality of existence’; for non-existence is in contradiction with existence and one thing cannot accept its contradiction as it would necessitate the conjunction of the two contraries. It is on this basis that existence does not accept non-existence, and, therefore, it must necessarily and definitely exist.

On the other hand, existence does not reject non-existence because of a reality outside its essence it does so by itself. For existence itself rather than any other reality is in contradiction with non-existence; consequently, existence by itself rather than by depending on a reality beyond its essence rejects non-existence and negates non-being.

Therefore, because it rejects non-existence and repels non-being, the

3. Ali ibn Muhammad Turkah, *Tamhid al-Qawa'id*, The Islamic Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1360 (1982).

4. Sabzevari, *Asrar al-Hikam*, p. 46, Mowla Publications, 1361.

'reality of existence' necessarily exists, and because in itself it does not accept non-existence rather than by depending on others, it has this necessary existence in essence. Therefore, the 'reality of existence' is the essentially Necessary Being, and thus we come to our desired conclusion.

To further illustrate in another way:

On the basis of the evident principle of 'non-contradiction, the conjunction of existence and non-existence is impossible. Therefore, as was seen before, once existence is established, without the need for supposing anything else, non-existence will be repelled. Thus, for repelling non-existence nothing other than existence is needed. On the other hand, it is clear that existence is the criterion of repelling and negating non-existence, for if one thing does not exist, it will continue to be non-existent, and non-existence will be neither repelled nor rejected.

Accordingly, because without the need of anything else existence does repel non-existence by itself, then it must have the criterion of repelling non-existence in itself and in its own essence without the need for anything else, for without the criterion of repelling non-existence in its essence, existence itself would be not sufficient for repelling non-existence; rather it would be in need of something, first, to establish the criterion of repelling non-existence, and, then, to repel non-existence on its basis, whereas we have said that existence without anything else does repel non-existence. Therefore, we should accept that the 'reality of existence' exists and for its existence, it does not need any attribute additional to its essence. In other words, existence is equal to being existent, reality, and externality; and this is exactly what is called the fundamentality of existence in Islamic philosophy.

Once we have established that the 'reality of existence' exists without the need for an attribute additional to its essence, we may say that the existence of existence itself does not depend on any cause, for if the existence of existence had a cause, once the cause is lost, existence would not exist. Such a conclusion is impossible and absurd, since foremost, when the existence of existence is not an additional attribute to the essence of existence, but rather is the very reality of existence, it will not be the result of the reality of existence; depriving the essence of the thing of itself is impossible.

Secondly, if existence did not exist, it would also not repel non-existence and would be compatible with non-being, for existing is the criterion of repelling non-existence, which, supposedly, existence could not possess in this instance. Therefore, in this supposition existence would not repel non-existence, which is its contrary; rather, it would be compatible with it and

could be added to it. Consequently, in the mentioned supposition, the conjunction of existence and non-existence is possible; but this cannot be accepted, for the principle of 'non-contradiction is an evident and unquestionable principle'. Therefore, we must allow that the reality of existence, first, does exist, and, second, in its existence it is not dependent on any cause so we can conclude that it is the Necessary Being in essence.

The Argument of Mulla Sadra

Another argument founded on the 'reality of existence' is the argument put forth by eleventh century AH philosopher Mulla Sadra with its two premises. The first premise, the fundamentality of existence, was discussed to some extent and proven valid in the last argument. Therefore, here the main goal is proving the second premise of that argument. This premise is the uniqueness of the 'reality of existence'.

In the universe, we have various existents: Mountains, trees, human beings, planets, etc. All of these do exist, but are these existents the faces of one existence and the manifestations of one reality, or are each of these different and separate from the others? Most of the Peripatetic philosophers have accepted the second theory, but Mulla Sadra favoured the first theory.

Before discussing the argument for this premise, an example is required to illustrate Mulla Sadra's theory. If you drop an object from the top of a high building, as soon as this object is released it starts moving downward, but it increases its speed at every moment; initially, its speed is almost nil, but each passing moment its movement becomes faster and faster. Here we encounter a single existent, which, at the same time, is multiplied because motion, like a line or a surface has extension, with the difference being that both line and surface have spatial extension but motion has temporal extension.

The criterion for the unity and oneness of existents that possess extension is junction and connectedness. We can consider a one-metre line as one line only because the hypothetical parts of this line in its one-metre length are joined to each other. However, if we divide this very line into two halves using an instrument, we will no longer have one line but two. Therefore, in extended existents, connectedness is the criterion of unity and oneness. On this basis, concerning the motion of the falling object we could say that from the start until the end it is one existent, but the speed of this single existent in each moment is different from its speed in the preceding and the following moment. Therefore, in each moment this existent shows itself in a particular aspect. These various aspects and manifestations oblige us to accept that this

existent, despite its unity, possesses a kind of diversity and multiplicity. This is why we say that every motion, despite the unity of its reality, is a diverse and multiple existent each of its diverse aspects is one of the states of that single reality.

Mulla Sadra suggests that this is the condition regarding all existence arguing that the world of being, despite its multiplicity and diversity, returns to one reality and is one and united, so that we can say there is no more than one reality in the universe, though this reality has different modes, levels and aspects.

Having said that, now we discuss two of the reasons established for proving this premise.

A. The Way of the Law of Purity

This law tells us that a thing in its state of purity is only one, that is, if we purify the reality of every thing of matters which are of foreign and different nature, such a reality cannot be diverse or multiple because the condition of multiplicity is the presence of a distinguishing feature in each individual to distinguish it from other individuals. In this case, the supposed reality will lose its purity and will be touched by impurity. Therefore, unless the feature characteristic to this individual is present for this individual, it will not be different from other individuals, and there will be no multiplicity.

Nevertheless, as soon as we imagine this individual beyond its special distinguishing feature, it will be a compound of the original reality and some additional matter, and thus it will fall from purity. Therefore, for a reality to remain pure it should not be diverse or multiple, but it must be one and single.

The reality of existence is pure existence, for beyond existence is non-existence, and non-existence has no portion of reality so that it could be added to the reality of existence. Therefore, the reality of existence is pure existence and pure reality. On the basis of the above premise this reality can only be one.

B. The Way of the Law of Homonymity

This law tells us that a thing shared commonly between a few things cannot be multiple; it must be only one, for if the shared thing is diverse then each of its individuals should have a distinctive feature by which it is differentiated from other individuals. However, when it finds its own special characteristic, others will not share this characteristic, and it will be specific to that individual but this contradicts our supposition. Therefore, in order

that a reality can be shared it should not be diverse or multiple.

Alternatively, the reality of existence is shared by all realities, for all realities have existence; therefore, all realities are common in existence. Accordingly, and on the basis of the above premise, the reality of existence, which is shared by all realities, is only one.

Having explained the two premises of Mulla Sadra's argument, now we discuss the argument itself.⁵ Based on the first premise and according to 'the fundamentality of existence', the reality of existence is existent. This existent is either a necessary being in essence or it is not a necessary being. In the first case, we have reached our desired conclusion, and in the second case, it will be a reality dependent on others. Nevertheless, based on the second premise, the reality is only one that we assumed to be dependent so, we have to say that a reality, which is only one, is the reality dependent on others. In consequence, such a reality, because of its dependence, should have a cause, and because this dependent reality is only one, its cause should not be dependent on others, otherwise the dependent reality would be diverse; this, however, is in contradiction with our supposition. Therefore, its cause will be the Necessary Being Himself. Thus, and in either case, the existence of the Necessary Being is proved.

The Second Group

The main issue discussed in this group of argument is the 'reality of existent'. Although based on the fundamentality of existence mentioned earlier the 'reality of existent' and the 'reality of existence' are united in their extension, conceptually the difference between the two is similar to the difference between white and whiteness, where the former is derived from the latter.

For our purposes we will refer to these arguments in two groupings. First, discussing the 'absolute existent' proving the existence of God, a tenth century AH scholar, Muhaqiq Khafri, puts forward such an argument: "The absolute existent does not have a cause, otherwise a thing must be prior to itself; therefore, the Necessary Being does essentially exist."⁶

To explain this argument, first one must understand the intended meaning of the 'absolute existent'. By 'absolute existent' we mean an existent that is free from any restricting constraints, even the constraints of 'being absolute'. Existents that we usually deal with are all restricted existents, that is, each of

5. *Al-Asfar al-Arba'a* vol. 6, p. 14, Mostafavi Publications, 1386.

6. *Ibid*, p. 40.

them is confined to a restricting quiddity. For instance, an existent such as a man or a tree, being a man or a tree limits its existence, and this restriction does not let our supposed existent apply to every reality and be true of it. A human being does not pertain to a stone, and we cannot say a stone is a human being. Therefore, 'absolute existent' is an existent free from any limiting constraints; even when we verbally associate with it the constraint 'absolute', we do not mean that 'being absolute' is a constraint to it.

The other notable point is that it is necessary to prove is the existence of the 'absolute existent'; that an absolute existent exists as do constrained existents like men, trees, mountains, etc. exist. This premise can be proven in two ways.

A. The Logical Law of Simple Conversion.

One logical formula tells us that when we have 'A is B', we can say then 'Some Bs are A'; for if none of Bs were A, then this statement along with the first statement would result in 'A is not A'. For, on one hand, 'A is B' and on the other we had already supposed that 'none of Bs are A', then A which is itself a subset of B, should be equal to B in effect, that is, A should not be A. Therefore, if some Bs were not A, the result would be that 'A is not A'; this is a manifest contradiction, and contradiction is impossible. Then, we should accept that if 'Some Bs are A' is true, then we should accept that the reality of an affirmative statement necessitates the reality of its simple conversion, and this in turn leads to the conclusion that when it is proved that the simple conversion of a statement is false and invalid, we can infer that in its 'original' statement itself is also invalid since if the 'original' statement is true, its simple conversion should also be true.

Having proved this premise, we may say that, 'The absolute existent does exist'; for if it were true that 'The absolute existent does not exist' then 'Some nonexistents are absolute existents' should also be true. But this converted statement is evidently false; it is clear that it is contradictory, because the subject of the statement is both a nonexistent and an existent, even an unconditional unlimited existent. Therefore, this converted statement is false, and on the basis of the above premise its falsity requires that the original statement, namely 'The absolute existent does not exist' should be also false and invalid. Therefore, the statement 'The absolute existent does not exist' is false, and when this is false, it will be true to say 'The absolute existent does exist', and this is what we sought in proving this premise.

B. The Law of the Concomitance between the General and the Particular Negation

This law tells us that if we have two meanings, one of which is a particular case of the other, then the negation of the general will entail the negation of the particular. For example, a right angle triangle is a particular kind of triangle. Now if we suppose that there are no triangles whatsoever, then we will also have to say that there is no right angle triangle, for if it exists, then it will not be correct to say that there are no triangles.

Considering these two premises we may argue that because it is assumed that the 'absolute existent' is an existence without any restriction, we must then say each of the various existents of the world in relation to the 'absolute existent' is a special case of the 'absolute existent, for each of them is confined with a restriction, while the 'absolute existent' is free from their constraints. In consequence and on the basis of the above premise, if the 'absolute existent' did not exist, then nothing should exist, for, as was said already, the negation of the general is collateral with the negation of the particular, so this conclusion is clearly false. Therefore, we must say that the 'absolute existent' does exist.

The third point to consider is that the realization of the meaning of the 'general' is prior to the realization of the meaning of the 'particular' (of course, this priority is not a temporal priority but a causal priority and is of the kind of priority which an inefficient cause has upon the effect). For example, the realization of an unbounded triangle is prior to the realization of a right triangle, which is a special case of the unbounded triangle. For, as was said in the previous premise, the negation of the 'general' necessitates the negation of the 'particular'; therefore, the realization of the meaning of the 'particular' is dependent on the realization of the meaning of the 'general'.

Therefore, unless the 'general' meaning does exist, the 'particular' meaning cannot exist. It is on this basis that we can say the existence of the 'absolute existent' is prior to the constrained and specific existents.

Turning now to the argument itself, on the basis of the second point, the 'absolute existent' does exist; now we say that in its existence this existent does not depend on a cause, for if it had a cause, this cause would be either that very absolute existent or a bounded existent itself. In the first case the 'absolute existent' should be prior to itself, for the existence of the cause is prior to the effect. However, we had supposed that the 'absolute existent' is the cause of itself, so it becomes necessary that the thing should be prior to itself, which is absurd. Therefore, the 'absolute existent' cannot be the cause

of the 'absolute existent'. In the second case, our treatment is the same; for, as explained in the third point, the bounded existents are posterior to the 'absolute existent'. Now if the cause of the 'absolute existent' were one of the particular existents, because the cause is prior to the effect, we must say then this particular existent is prior to the 'absolute existent'. But according to the third point, this particular existent itself is posterior to the 'absolute existent', and consequently we should say that with two levels of priority the 'absolute existent' would be prior to itself:

The 'absolute existent' → the particular existent → the 'absolute existent'.

In either case if the 'absolute existence' had a cause for its existence, it would become necessary that it should be prior to itself, and this is absurd. So, no cause can be imagined for the 'absolute existent', and, thus, it both exists and for its existence needs no cause. Such an existent, therefore, is an essentially a Necessary Being.

The other argument of this group is grounded in the discussion of the 'pure existent'. The 'pure existent' is that existent whose whole identity is constituted by existence and includes no element of non-existence or non-perfection; rather it is pure existence.

Here we claim that 'the pure existent does exist', for if 'the pure existent did not exist', the simple conversion of this statement should also be true, that is, we should have 'Some of the nonexistent are pure existents,' and evidently this statement is contradictory. For on one hand the subject of the statement has been assumed to be nonexistent, and, on the other, on the basis of the predicate of the statement, it is assumed to exist. It should be then both nonexistent and existent, and this is incongruous. Finally, this converted statement is false, and, therefore, the original statement itself should also be false. In other words, we should say that the statement 'The pure existent is nonexistent' is false and invalid, and when this statement is false then we have to accept that 'The pure existent does exist.'

Having proved that the 'pure existent' does exist, we may say that it cannot have a cause, for if it had a cause, then, when the cause is absent the 'pure existent' would be absent too because a negation of the cause requires a negation of its effect. In this case, again, we return to the contradiction explained at the beginning of the argument. So, necessarily we have to accept that the 'pure existent' has no cause; thus, the 'pure existent' both exists and in its existence has no cause, and, therefore, it must be the Necessary Being.

The Third Group

In this group, the reality of the Necessary Being is the focus of the discussion. We will also discuss two arguments presented by this group. The first argument known as *Kompany*, was established by the contemporary philosopher Muhaqiq Isfahani.⁷

As an introduction we need have to point out that regardless of the external factors the extension of each concept in itself is either of the following; it either has a necessary existence in itself, or it has no necessary existence with two possibilities: either it is necessarily nonexistent in itself, or it is not necessarily nonexistent. If the supposed extension has a necessary existence in itself, it would be an essentially Necessary Being; if it is necessarily nonexistent in itself, it would be an essentially impossible being; and if it is neither necessarily existent in itself nor nonexistent, it is an essential being.

The other point is that each nonexistent has only two states, for when it is supposed to be nonexistent, it will have no necessary existence, and in that case it will be either necessarily nonexistent in itself or not necessarily nonexistent in itself. In the first case, it will be an essentially impossible being, and in the second case, it will be an essentially possible being. Therefore, every nonexistent is either an essentially impossible being or an essentially possible being in essence.

In light of these points we can explicate the argument itself. We may argue that 'the Necessary Being does exist', for if the Necessary Being were nonexistent, then, He would not be the essentially Necessary Being. For each nonexistent is either an essentially contingent being or it is an essentially impossible being; in consequence, if the Necessary Being were nonexistent, He would not be the Necessary Being any longer and this is in contradiction with our supposition. Therefore, the essentially Necessary Being must exist.

The Second Argument

The second argument is grounded on the premise that the essentially Necessary Being cannot be nonexistent, for if the statement 'The essentially Necessary being can be nonexistent' were true, its converted statement would be true, too; that is, it would be true to say 'Some of the nonexistent are the Necessary being.' But this statement is, evidently, contradictory, for when a thing can be nonexistent; it will have no necessary existence. But, on the other hand, it is assumed in the predicate of the statement that such a

7. *Tohfah al-Hakim*, p. 71, Al al-Bait Publications, 1377.

thing has a necessary existence; such a subject, because it can be nonexistent, should not have a necessary existence, and because it is a necessary being it should be necessary in its existence.

Then it would be a necessary being and would not be a necessary being, and this is a manifest contradiction. Therefore, the converted statement, namely 'Some of the nonexistent are Necessary Being' is false, and because this statement is false the original statement 'The Necessary Being can be nonexistent' is also false. Therefore, we must say that the Necessary Being cannot be nonexistent. Having proved this premise we may say that now that the Necessary Being cannot be nonexistent, He must invariably exist, which is the very conclusion we wanted to arrive at.

Personal Identity

Amir Divani

Abstract

The question of the immortality of man is grounded on two fundamental and rather difficult questions: 'the relationship between the soul and the body' and 'personal identity'. Muslim philosophers and theologians, who all believe in the immortality of man, have often meditated deeply upon these two questions, and on the basis of these ideas have not only proved the immortality of man, but also described its quality. In this article, concerning the question of immortality and personal identity a report is given on the endeavours of some theologians, such as Abu Hamid Ghazzali, Qadi Azod Iji and Khawjah Nassir al Din-e-Tussi, and some distinguished philosopher of the three philosophical schools, the Peripatetic, Illuminationist, and Transcendent Theosophy, like Avicenna, Sheikh Eshraq, Mirdamad, Mulla Sadra, and Modarris Zanuzi.

The subject of this article is the study of the theories presented by Muslim scholars regarding man's immortality in relation to the question of personal identity. This article is simply an exposition and a report rather than a critique of the theories. As the question is structured we invariably have to begin by discussing two issues:

1. Explaining the question of personal identity
2. The relationship between personal identity with the question of [the quality of man's immortality

Concerning the first question, personal identity can be explained in following way: If at two different times we come across (allegedly) one thing such as A, by what criterion we can say that this thing at t1 would be the same thing which we met at t2? Concerning the question of personal identity there is one metaphysical and one epistemological debate. The metaphysical debate is related to the criterion of identity. By what criterion can we say today's A is the same as yesterday's A, while we know for certain that the A has undergone changes during this period? The

epistemological debate is related to the ways in which we perceive that today's A in relation to yesterday's A. Notably, the metaphysical debate is concerned with the whatness of the criterion of identity, and the epistemological discussion is concerned with the way that we understand that this criterion is perceived.

This question can be discussed in respect to every existent, but our concern here is only 'man'. What is our criterion for saying that person A in front of us today is the same person who lived 20 years ago, and how can we understand that the person opposite us is the same person whom we saw earlier?

Using a hypothetical scenario to understand the origin of this question often in identifying individuals, we employ criteria that are related to the body of the concerned individual. However, in certain cases and states these criteria do not seem sufficient. For example, suppose today we meet a person; because of the physical similarities that this person has with our brother, we judge that this person is our brother. Of course, the question of how much these physical similarities could be so great that we infer the identity of two things is open to debate, but aside from this issue, we naturally benefit from these criteria on a daily basis in our lives, and in this identification we do not err. Now suppose that when we approach that person calling him, we realize that he does not know us, and this surprises us.

The more we look at him we become more certain that he is our brother, but when we speak to him, we realize that he neither knows us, nor is he aware of any of the issues that have passed between us and our brother. If the person in front of us is accurate in his claim, will we still judge that this person is our brother, or will we at least have doubt and hesitation?

Using another example, we are walking in the street, and somebody approaches us greeting us intimately, calling us by name and referring to some events from our life. At this point we think that the person opposite us must be an old friend who, because of the time lapse, was hidden in our memory and we try to revive his dead memory in our mind. Our mind, working with astonishing speed suddenly stops upon hearing a more astonishing claim by this person that he is our brother, a brother whom we had left this very morning. His face and other physical features, the criteria for assessing the situation, do not correspond with the physical features of our brother at all. We absolutely reject this person's claim. However, by referring to issues that only our brother and we are aware of, he would continue to persist in his claim. In this situation, will we still judge that this

person is not our brother, or we will at least have some doubt?

So, are the physical criteria (such as the way of walking, the shape of the face, the quality of the voice, etc.) together with the criterion of memory the necessary and sufficient conditions for identity, or they are only a necessary condition, or are they neither of the two? In fiction, we may read for example that one day a prince wakes up finding himself in the body of a shoemaker but he does not remember anything of the shoemaker's life. Conversely, a shoemaker wakes up to find himself in the body of a prince and also has no idea of the previous princely life of this body. Now if the shoemaker's body (which in fact carries the soul or the memory of the prince) approaches the gate of the palace and claims that: "I am the prince," revealing things that are known only by the king and the prince, would the king judge that this person is his son? Or, would he say that his son was in the palace, and contend that this shoemaker present in front of him had somehow discerned certain information known only between the king and his son?

Alternatively, with no idea of the previous life of the prince, only conscious of the shoemaker's profession and life, the prince's body would now bear the soul or the memory of the shoemaker. The king might think that this person was his son who possibly had been taken ill or had forgotten his past, or he might think that this person was not his real son but the person standing outside the palace was.

These questions focus on personal identity and the ways in which it is recognised, which has a unique place in many of the philosophical realms, for example, in the realm of ethics, we are concerned with praise and blame, or reward and punishment. We should be able to claim that the doer of good or righteous deeds is the same person who has been rewarded or praised, and the wrongdoer is the one who is blamed and punished, in a way that both the agent and the observer would admit the assumed identity.

For example, suppose that you have arrested somebody who has been condemned as a war criminal for committing numerous murders during the Second World War. However, at the time of committing these crimes, he was only a youth with the mentality and attitude of an adolescent, but now he is a pitiable old man. Would it be morally just to condemn such a person? Should he endure the severe punishment prescribed for such crimes by moral codes although he regrets his past and confesses to his ignorance and stupidity at the time?

Among other realms related to the impact of the question of personal identity is that of the philosophy of the soul, especially in respect to the

‘immortality of man’, which is also relevant from religious aspects. For example, if the body were the criterion for the identity of the present man and man after death, we would not be able to say that after the disintegration of the body, he would continue his life and deny that his corpse decomposed. Nevertheless, if we attribute the criterion of identity to the ‘soul’, memory being one of its characteristics, we can speak of the subsistence of that individual. For though the body is destroyed, still the memory of having a body exists, and this memory would fulfil the criterion of identity. In short, according to the doctrine of the immortality of man, the reality of the human individual that identifies him should remain preserved after death.

The Views of Muslim Philosophers and Theologians Concerning Immortality

In general, the theories presented on the immortality or mortality of man presupposes a certain view on ‘the nature and reality of man’. Even if this presupposition is not discussed in respect to the possibility of life after death, it plays an essential role in the realisation of this life. Therefore, from a logical point of view, the question of ‘the nature and reality of man’ has priority, and the theories of immortality or mortality are dependent on this question.

In respect of its direct impact on the question of immortality, differences over ‘the reality of man’ can be summarised as follows:

1. The view that consider man existing in this world to be one-dimensional being considering the body as the reality of man; in other words, it is the hardware made of cells, tissues, etc. Of course, among this group there are those who admit that there is a sort of dualism in the states and attributes of man. They acknowledge such a dualism due to the invariable difference that dominates the human states and attributes. To divide these attributes to ‘physical’ and ‘psychological’, we have to apply certain criteria in identifying them. For example, people have a direct or immediate or intuitive knowledge of their psychological attributes, but they have no such knowledge of their physical attributes. For instance, our knowledge of our headache is present and direct, and it does not require further evidence other than this knowledge or awareness. Therefore, no one would ask us how we knew that we had a headache. However, our knowledge of the existence of the tumour that may be causing such a headache is a mediated and an indirect knowledge.

Thus, when somebody asks us how we understood that we had a tumour, we would think it as a reasonable question and would try to answer it. For

example, we would say, “The physician has said so, or it has been verified by an X-ray.” In short, this view holds that human psychological attributes are dependent on physical attributes and follow them, and the psychological characteristics are determined by the physical characteristics. A corollary of this theory is that all of the psychological capacities such as memory will perish following the destruction of the body, for all man’s attributes and capacities are dependent on his body.

2. The view that considers man exists in this world to be bi-dimensional holds that reducing the mentioned states and attributes to one dimension would be impossible. By two dimensions, we mean those dimensions that in respect of the existential state and attributes are incompatible with each other. In other words, man has a physical dimension and another dimension that is beyond and is free of the corporeal body. Thus, besides admitting dualism in attributes, this group invariably holds that dualism in substance is necessary as well. By dualism in substance we mean that though these two dimensions are somehow intermixed and are related to each other, they can subsist without each other; for example, the existence of the body without the soul, and the soul without the body is possible and can be realized. Although the exponents of this view agree on this point, they differ substantially regarding the reality of man:

A. Those who consider man existing in this world to be bi-dimensional, but hold that after leaving this world only his abstract incorporeal dimension will remain, indeed, holding that the only reality of man is his incorporeal dimension.

B. Those who hold that the reality of man is the result of the combination of his physical and spiritual dimensions (the soul and body), so that in all the realms of existence his two dimensions will be preserved.

Considering the above issues, because all Muslim philosophers and theologians have accepted the immortality of man on the authority of the revelations and the discourse of the infallible Imams, peace upon them, in their theories Muslim philosophers have to explicate the identity of man in this world and in the other world. Thus, the first group have to prove the identity of the bodies of this world and the other world, and the other the identity of the two dimensions of the soul and the body. Now considering the views on the ‘reality of man’, we can give a summary of the theories of the philosophers and theologians on immortality:

The First Theory

After death, the human body, which is the entire reality of man disintegrates

and perishes, but on the day of Resurrection God once again revives the disintegrated body and reconstructs the man of this world. This theory, believing in the renewal or the 're-creation' of the human bodies, can be called the theory of 'Resurrection or Physical Renewal'. In this theory, certain points have to be considered, including:

A. Even if it is not true in its recognition of the reality of man since it ignores the incorporeal soul, this view is fundamentally important because almost all Muslim scholars accept the corporeal resurrection; the revival or resurrection of the body becomes a serious issue. So, if there are some objections to this view, the same objections could also be made about the views of the believers of the physical and spiritual resurrection, and suggestions for solving these doubts in their theory should be presented.

B. This conception reflects the understanding of life after death by the masses, even if religious texts had not elaborated on the concept of immortality.

C. This view argues that the death of the body is equal to one's death. The point is that concerning death, we can follow one of the two accounts: Death of the person and the body's death. Those who hold that man possesses an immortal aspect, the soul, can admit the death of the body, but they cannot accept that the body's death would be the death of the person; they rather foresee a kind of life for the deceased person. On the other hand, though all Muslims accept the possibility of 'life after death', some of them, such as the followers of this view, do not believe in the immortality of man after the body's death.

D. According to this view, there is a distance and a purgatory or isthmus between this world and the resurrection of the bodies. However, this does not mean that in that distance the existents would be conscious of themselves or others; rather, it is an interval between the life of this world and that of the other world in which the human individual as a as a conscious active being is nonexistent.

The Hereafter	Purgatory	This World	Prior to This World
X conscious & active is reconstructed	X is neither material or active	X conscious & active	X does not exist at this stage

H - For this group, resurrection is either renewal of 'the nonexistent' or the resurrection of the human body.

The Second Theory

After death, the human body disintegrates, but man’s incorporeal substance, the soul, continues with its life in the immaterial world forever. By resurrection, believers in religion who hold to this view mean ‘the return of the soul to God or the world of the immaterial beings’. According to this view, the relationship between the soul and the body, at least in subsistence, is a possible rather than a necessary relationship. For the soul constitutes the reality of man, and the body has no place in this reality. Immortality, therefore, is spiritual only and cannot be corporeal.

After this World	This World	Prior to this World
X with no Body	X (the soul)	There is no X (Some opinion contends X exists minus body)

Other views can be called synthetic theories, for each of them is the result of combining the first and the second views.

The Third Theory

After death, man’s decomposed body perishes, but his soul, which has no relationship with the remaining body, will continue with its incorporeal life in an immaterial world: At Resurrection God will reconstruct the earthly bodies and will bring back the souls to them. Thus, life after death comes in two stages: the stage when the soul is alive and active with no body, and the stage when the soul and the body once again are related to each other. By Resurrection, this group means ‘the return of the souls to the bodies’.

Resurrection	Purgatory	This World	Prior to this World
the body of X + the soul of X the soul of X		the soul of X +	X does not exist the body of X

The Fourth Theory

After the death of the earthly corporeal body, the soul will step into the other world with its refined body of the world similitude: It will live with this body forever, even though life after death shall be divided into Purgatory and Resurrection.

Resurrection	Purgatory	This World	Prior to this World
the soul + the imagined body	the soul + the imagined body	the soul + the earthly body + the imagined body	

According to this theory, the reality of man is a corporeal-spiritual entity, and corporeality will never abandon it. Evidently, during the stages of substantial perfection, the human body will be allowed to enter the stage of immateriality, so that it will be a substance with three dimensions of length, width, and depth, but with no matter. According to this theory Resurrection is ‘the return of the soul along with a body other than the worldly body to God’. Of course, this picture is only an explication of the theory of the association of the soul and the imagined body in the world after death. In this respect, there is another theory, which will be discussed later.

The Fifth Theory

After the body’s death, the soul along with its body belonging to the similitude will enter purgatory, and its relationship with the body, though not marked by management or attachment, will be structural and constitutional: At Resurrection, through the mediation of the general substantial movement, the natural corporeal body will transform into an otherworldly body, and once again it will regain its relationship of attachment and management with the soul. This view defines Resurrection as ‘the return of the bodies to the souls’. Thus, the body in reaching for substantial perfection achieves corporeal perfection, but it will never be immaterial. It is clear that the third, fourth, and the fifth views hold that immortality and Resurrection are both corporeal and spiritual, mainly because they assume that the reality of man is a combination of two incongruent dimensions.

Therefore, if man is to be immortal, all his existential constituents should contribute to this immortality, rather than that he should enter the everlasting abode with only a part of his reality, leaving some other parts behind to perish.

A Point: It is noteworthy to mention here that Islamic philosophies are those philosophies established and founded by Muslim philosophers in their commitment for guarding and preserving the principles of Islam in its entirety. The views of these philosophers were designed in such a way that in the first instance, at least, it should not be opposed to the mentioned principles, and, in the second, to enable them to complete and develop their philosophical views by applying those principles. No doubt, their knowledge of the principles and rules of Islam is manifested in the nature of their views. Some typical examples of these principles and rules are the discussions on

Creation, prophet logy, and eschatology. This commitment in observing Islamic principles is such that whenever the Muslim philosophers cannot demonstrate those principles, they abandon their philosophical approach submitting themselves to the words of Revelation and the words of the infallible leaders of Islam. In short, in practice they were aware that their philosophies could not and were not efficient enough to explain some religious issues since human knowledge has always been limited and needs the necessary and definite knowledge of the infallibles.

In this regard, Mulla Sadra writes: "In its attributes and precepts, never can the divine pure truth be in conflict with the necessary definite knowledge, and the philosophy whose laws do not conform to the holy Koran and the Prophetic tradition must perish."¹² With this view, the function of Islamic theology becomes clear; theology is the discipline designated to defend the truth of the propositions in the religious texts against possible objections. The speech of the learned Lahiji refers to this point: "In their definition of theology, later scholars have said that it is the knowledge of the states of the existents according to the religious laws."¹³

This point is central in that the theories of immortality should include those features on various issues explained in the religious texts, and to the extent that it cannot explain or explicate those features, it will be deficient and incomplete. For example, if certain characteristics are listed for the otherworldly body in the Koranic verses or Prophetic traditions, such as the not growing old or decaying, enduring the otherworldly chastisement, or not becoming tired, thirsty or hungry, the body described in those theories should be such as to attribute these characteristics to it.

Having explained this point, we will detail these theories.

The Theory of the Resurrection of the Body

Theologians who have embraced this theory argue that the reference of the word 'I' is nothing other than this body, and, therefore, they admit no room for an incorporeal entity, called 'the rational soul'. Of course, by 'body' some of them understand the main parts of the body rather than those parts, which become more or less or changed as conditions change. The main parts are those parts without all of which man's life will not continue.

By nature, the main elements are subject to sense experience, though they are not actually sensed now. However, in defining the main parts the same theologians differ with each other. For example, Ibn Rawandi argues that it is a part within the heart that has no motion, and Nazzam believes that it is a delicate body which flows within the organs of the body, so that if one organ

is amputated, its delicate parts will be transferred to other parts of the body, and if the amputation is done in such a way as to amputate the delicate body, too, man will certainly die. For some physicians, the blood and some of the four humours constitute the main parts.¹⁴

How will a human individual such as A, who lives in this world, be the same reconstructed individual in the hereafter?

1. That which constitutes the personal identity should be present in the reconstructed individual.
2. Human individuals should know that they are the same persons as they were before death. This identity and verisimilitude should be established through their consciousness of their identity and also the presence of their true memory concerning their previous life.

It seems that this is the interpretation people have of immortality. At the time of Revelation, human beings have shown this kind understanding by their behaviour, and the holy Prophet did not refute this understanding. For example, God in the holy Koran says: “He gave us an example, but forgot his creation, saying who would revive the bones when they have turned to dust. Say He would revive them Who had created them for the first time, and He is aware of all creation.”¹⁵

In this verse, God’s answer shows that the mentioned person’s question concerns the identity of the acting agent of such a great matter—and God refers him to that Agent on Whom the origin of the primordial life is dependent—rather than that he essentially has misunderstood the question itself.

Therefore, in order to present a coherent theory on immortality, or ‘resurrection’ as they call it, in the way that they understand it, Muslim theologians have always included in their discussion the belief in God, Who is all Knowing and all Mighty, to justify their theory, at least, in the level of possibility.

We should, however, note that sometimes one theory might include certain beliefs that cannot be understood, or may be incompatible with each other. Logically, such a theory cannot be real, for reality is free from any contradiction or logical incongruity. However, the logical possibility of a theory, namely its freedom from any contradiction or logical incongruity, cannot be a sufficient condition for its reality. In our discussion, the theory of the resurrection of the bodies must be free from any contradiction, and only then, we can speak of its reality and demonstrate it. Of course, though there may be no contradiction in the system itself, yet on the basis of accepted principles and laws its reality may only be a very weak possibility.

It is very much like a person who, considering the natural laws, would think that the way of immortality and survival after death in the form of reconstructing the human body is only a very weak possibility.

A Point: Concerning corporeal resurrection, the believers in the possibility of ‘resurrection of the nonexistent’, at least insofar as human beings are concerned, express different views on the definition of ‘the nonexistent’ to be resurrected on the Day of Judgment.¹⁶ Some hold that God first annihilates or destroys the parts of the body and then confers existence on them once again. As God originally has brought all substances and particles of things from non-existence into existence, He will annihilate and destroy them only to confer existence on them once again. This group brings as evidence such Koranic verses as “Everything perishes except His face,”¹⁷ “Everything on it will perish,”¹⁸ “It is He Who begins creation and once again renews it,”¹⁹ and “He is the first and the last.”²⁰

Some other group holds that the subject of resurrection is the ‘composition’ of the parts of the body, rather than the particles and the substances of the bodies, and, thus, the annihilated part is that very composition. This group argues that the separation of the parts is annihilation, for the annihilation of anything is the losing of its expected attributes; the decomposition of the corporeal parts would invariably put an end to the functions of those parts, and, therefore, decomposition is annihilation.

Some others do not accept either of the two possibilities, because neither is supported by unequivocal arguments.²¹

Fakhr-e-Razi, however, in his discussion of this question not only defines the ‘resurrection of the annihilated’ as the composition of the parts and organs of the body, but also argues that the belief in resurrection is dependent on the possibility and the permissibility of the resurrection of the annihilated. Concerning the latter he says, “unlike the philosophers, our friends hold that the resurrection of the annihilated is possible;”²² and concerning the former he argues that “all Muslims agree that resurrection is the aggregation of the parts after their separation;”²³ and finally he states that “resurrection in the sense of bringing the corporeal parts together is possible only by admitting the possibility of resurrecting the annihilated.”²⁴

The reason he gives is that the body does not make the whole identity of the individual; it is made by the body and certain accidents, and at the time of the disintegration and the decomposition of the body these accidents are destroyed. Therefore, if the resurrection of the annihilated were impossible, the resurrection of every human individual as he is would be impossible, too.

Of course, evidently the holders of the first view need not assume that accidents are the grounds for the personal identity of each individual. For it can be said, for example, accidents are in constant change and alteration, and no accident is necessary for personal identity, so that following its alteration one's individuality should change as well.

As was seen, according to the view of some of the exponents of the first view, we can divide the parts of the body at least into major and minor parts. The major parts are those that remain unchanged throughout the course of worldly life and on which human life is dependent, and the minor parts are those, which are neither essential to human life nor enduring. Thus, their amputation would do no harm to human life, and in natural conditions, they are also in constant change and alteration. On the basis of this scheme, the mentioned theologians stood against those problems that apparently had defeated those theologians who remained faithful to the first view and did not divide the parts into major and minor groups.

The transmitted proof of those theologians who define resurrection in terms of the aggregation of the corporeal parts or at least interpret the corporeal resurrection in these terms is the following verse: "And [remember] Ibrahim when he said, 'O my Lord! Show me how You revive the dead!' God said, 'Do you not believe that?' He said, 'Yes, my Lord, but I want my heart to come to certainty.' Then God said, 'Take four birds, and then you grind them, and put some of them on each mountain. Then call them, and they will come to you in haste, and know that the Lord is Almighty and all Aware.'²⁵

Considering this verse, we can say:

First, annihilation is accordingly understood in the sense of the separation of the parts. Second, in this verse, God has demonstrated the way the dead are resurrected in the hereafter, for in this verse God shows the way the dead are resurrected in this world, whereas Ibrahim's question was on resurrection in the other world.

Third, although Ibrahim's question is brief, the details given in the answer show that the question includes those details, which in reality are related to the conditions of resurrection. Thus, God orders the Prophet Ibrahim to take four birds and to cut them in pieces, etc. Once they are called, God will separate the parts of each bird from the parts of other birds, and will bring together the parts of each of them in a way that its body will be the same as it was before, complete and alive, or, in the words of the believers in the immaterial soul and spirit, the spirit will blow into that body and the body once again will become alive. So, we see that in that picture the

parts are not annihilated, and only their accidents are changed, and this change is unimportant.²⁶

This idea of the exponents of the view of the resurrection of the bodies is not incoherent, but when we take other measures into account, this proposal becomes less coherent and its deficiencies become more apparent. For example,

1. Each of us has psychological and moral characteristics, and these characteristics at least like our physical and corporeal characteristics, play a role and contribute to our identity. Now, would the presence of only the major parts on the Day of Judgment be enough to convene our mental and personal characteristics? Moreover, if it can convene them, which of the characteristics of our life would it bring with it? Will all the mental and personal characteristics of our life be present once the major parts are present? This is not possible, for sometimes two mental characteristics in the course of our life cannot bond together; separated in this world by the factor of time—or only the characteristics of a particular period of our life—for example, those we have at the time of death—and this is also impossible, for the characteristics of a particular period need a cause—or none of the mental or personal characteristics will be present. This also cannot be justified, for at least the attributes of belief or disbelief should exist, on the basis of which reward or punishment, or paradise or hell is determined, and the existential interpretation of faith and its connection with the simple existence of the major parts seems to be impossible.

2. As was mentioned, the otherworldly bodies have certain characteristics, and the simple aggregations of the parts of the bodies of this world do not amount to those characteristics. In other words, the picture given by the statements of religious texts of the hereafter is certainly not a kind of renewal of this world. In drawing the scene of the hereafter, the mentioned scheme shows that God, by bringing together the corporeal parts, the separation of which has led to the annihilation of human beings, once again confers existence and life on human beings. However, is this not a return to worldly life? Moreover, if this renewal is something different from the renewal of worldly life, what will be the difference? How can the otherworldly body, which is simply the aggregation of the separated worldly parts, have characteristics that the present body cannot possess, and how is it that its dominating laws have no congruity with the laws dominating the natural body?

3. As was mentioned briefly in relation to the first view in section D, this theory cannot concede that there is life for human beings between death and

resurrection. If, however, the mentioned purgatory is a stage where man is possessed with life and consciousness, according to religious texts, another deficiency will emerge. In those texts, when it is said that there is reward or punishment between death and life in the hereafter after resurrection, the inference is that there is life there. Thus, other theologians have accused thus those theologians who believe in the chastisement of the dead and who do not think their revival is necessary, of holding an unreasonable belief.²⁷

This is the claim of those who hold that pains and torments accumulate in the corpse of the deceased without their knowing with the body suddenly feeling the pangs of remorse upon revival. In fact, this group has denied chastisement before resurrection, whereas this issue seems certain.

As is seen, although the reasoning of theologians in explaining immortality in general, or immortality and corporeal resurrection, has internal coherence, when other religious statements are added to these beliefs, coherence diminishes. The explicatory and explanatory power of their thesis even becomes irrelevant. Only when rationale and theory concerning one subject is plausible, perfect, and unassailable does the power of reasoning stand up to scrutiny in the context of other statements. Coherence and harmony in our statements at epistemological institutions is vital if we are to ascertain the truth. Of course, there have been some theologians who, by denying certain metaphysical principles, had to admit the possibility of any issue simply because of the divine power and will, and have purported that all ideas are sound and correct. That being said however, the preferable idea is that which besides preserving the evident metaphysical and physical principles can accomplish its goal.²⁸

The Theory of the Return of the Spirits to the World of the Immaterial

This view and all the views that follow, commonly hold that the 'spirit' or the 'soul' has a certain place in the reality of man. Holders of this view first prove the distinction between the soul and the body, and then, by enlisting certain characteristics, which the physical body can never be their predicate or subject, emphasise the immateriality of the soul. They state that the soul is a substantial entity that has no congruity with what is corporeal, and therefore, it has no dimension, space, or size.

Of course, we face a problem here, which has engaged the minds of scholars both in the West and in the East, throughout the history of theology and philosophy. This problem is known as 'the question of the relationship between the soul and body'. The summary of the question is as follows:

How can one pure material substance such as the body come under the influence of an immaterial and incorporeal substance called the soul, and how can an immaterial substance be influenced by a material substance?

Though the theory discussed here considers man in this world an existent made of body and soul, it states that the reality of man is his soul. Sometimes it considers the body a cage for the soul, which at the time of death breaks this cage and is admitted to its world and the realm of the immaterial. According to existing philosophical texts, Plato is the philosopher who emphasised this view explaining and elaborating it in various ways (in his *Phaedo* and other works). Based on his explanation, at the time of death the soul returns to that world where it lived before its attachment to the body.

Accordingly, the body is not a condition for the existence of the soul; rather it is the condition of the soul's manipulation of the body. The soul is an existent outside the body, which at the creation of the body it finds a sort of attachment to it and an entanglement in its management.

Explaining Plato's theory here is important, for the Muslim philosophers and theologians have given much attention to his views, and in respect of this question, though, in general, they do not share his immortality doctrine (research and studies so far have shown that almost all Muslim scholars accepted the immortality of the body. Whereas Plato in his theory introduces the soul as the only truth and explains that the immortality of man is only spiritual). Muslim scholars have nevertheless accepted some parts of it. None of the eminent Muslim philosophers, such as Farabi, Avicenna, Suhrawardi or Mulla Sadra believe in the partial existence of the soul before the body; unlike Plato, they do not believe in the pre-existence of soul. However, some philosophers, such as Qutb al-Din-e-Shirazi, accept this claim and hold that it is in agreement with religious arguments.²⁹

From the account given by Mulla Sadra, we understand that some of the Muslim philosophers hold that the immortality of man is purely spiritual. These philosophers admit that many of the Koranic verses undeniably discuss the resurrection of the body and the corporeal states, but in their interpretation, they hold that these verses discuss spiritual issues. Mulla Sadra argues that, "The gates of interpretation are opened to the heart of some of the Muslim philosophers, and, thus, they interpret the verses which openly speak of the resurrection of the body, and interpret the otherworldly terms commanding the body as spiritual issues; their reason is that this group of verses is addressed to those who have no knowledge of the spiritual issues, such as the common people, and the Arabic language frequently employs the metaphor", (the Holy Koran is written in Arabic).³⁰

Mulla Sadra is astonished at these philosophers who nevertheless believe in the Prophet and the Holy Koran, and holds that the secret of their tendency to accepting this theory is their impotence in demonstrating the corporeal immortality; because of the difficulty of reaching this goal, they were unable to prove the possibility of the corporeal immortality and resurrection. Had they, like Avicenna, only failed to prove the possibility of corporeal resurrection, they would not have had to resort to interpretation, but because they declared, on the basis of their convictions, that the principle of corporeal resurrection was impossible, they opened the door of interpretation. For whenever a Koranic verse seems in discord with one of the self-evident principles of reason, the self-evident intellectual principle will be preserved, and that verse needs to be diverted from its apparent meaning. For example, if the appearance of some verse speaks of the corporeality of God, knowing that the intellect does absolutely deny the corporeality of the Creator, those verses must be diverted from their appearance, and then 'the hand of God', for example, must be interpreted as 'the power of God'.

Ghazzali in his explanation of this theory writes: "They say the human soul has an everlasting subsistence after death, either in a pleasure whose greatness is indescribable or a pain whose intensity cannot be described. This pain is everlasting for some, but vanishes after certain time for some others." The truth is that the soul of the ignorant is in pain for the absence of spiritual pleasure, but because of its engagement with the body, it becomes oblivious of itself and forgets its pain, much like a terrified person who is momentarily unconscious of his pain, or a drunkard who cannot feel the heat of the fire.

Similarly the soul is defective in its knowledge until its involvement with the body ceases, as a drunkard's face does not feel the heat of fire it touches, as soon as drunkenness is lifted feels the sudden attack of intense pain. Therefore, the soul, which has become perfect by knowledge and has been released by death from the diseases of the body and its cares, is similar to a person who had all the delicious food and the most sweetly-scented victuals all to himself, but because of illness could not enjoy these pleasures, but suddenly is cured from that illness and can now savour this great sudden joy. Compared to those intellectual and spiritual pleasures these petty pleasures are much inferior and insignificant, but man cannot understand those pleasures through what he has experienced in this world, thinking he who dies will be immediately resurrected. In contrast, the corporeal forms spoken of in the divine laws are analogies; because of the impotence of the intellect

of the common people to understand these pleasures, the latter are given by analogy, and then people are told that the intended pleasures thus described are much superior to these analogies.³¹

Ghazzali holds that many of the beliefs of this group are not incompatible with the religious texts, but their denial of a few issues, he believes, cannot be in agreement with these texts: The denial of the resurrection of the body, physical pleasures in paradise, the corporeal pain in hell, the existence of paradise and purgatory as they are described in the Holy Quran.

Of course, the approaches of philosophers such as Mulla Sadra and Ghazzali to this theory differentiate,³² though Ghazzali in some places comes very close to Mulla Sadra's views.³³

Now, if according to this view the soul is the criterion of the identity of the individual in this world and the hereafter, and even the stage prior to this world, we should define then its characteristics or its peculiar constituting parts that are not related or compatible with the body. In doing so it should be noted that in this world man may possess these three characteristics:

1. Purely physical characteristics, which are not shared by the soul at all, such as complexion, stature, countenance, etc.
2. Purely spiritual characteristics, allegedly not shared by the body at all, though it not be an obstacle to the soul, such as grasping the universals.
3. Spiritual characteristics that allegedly cannot be acquired unless through the body, such as physical pain or pleasure.

Clearly, the first category of characteristics will not accompany the soul because the body will not exist but the second category of characteristics will certainly accompany the soul. Therefore, our concern is the third category of characteristics. Will these characteristics accompany the soul in the world after death? If the answer were affirmative, the personal identity of the individual in this world and the individual in the hereafter would be due to the characteristics of the second and the third categories. Of course, it should be demonstrated that these characteristics are created by the body in this world, and the body plays a role in creating and preserving them in general, and the soul after its release from the body in some way will be able to preserve those characteristics without the help of the body: In other words, the body will not be a necessary condition for man to acquire those characteristics in all the stages.

If the answer, however, is negative the personal identity of the individual in this world and the individual after death would be dependent only on the second group of characteristics; after the death of the body, the soul would be released from all the processes and characteristics in which the body is

involved.

For example, is memory one of the characteristics of the second or the third category? If we assume that memory is dependent on the body, like many of our psychological functions related and dependent on the body, it would invariably be left behind after the death of the body, and accordingly man after death would be much different from man before death. On the basis of this view, the reality of 'I' constitutes only that reality which produces the characteristics of the third category, by which 'I' identifies itself. In many places in his works, Plato speaks of the different parts of the soul, and because of internal conflict, he holds that it constitutes reason, will, and lust; he further states that among the three mentioned components, only the rational part is immortal and the other two parts are mortal.³⁴

Aristotle also initially speaks of the different kinds of souls (the vegetative, animal, and human souls). He holds that the vegetative soul performs the functions related to digestion and reproduction, and the sensory soul possesses the three faculties of sensation, desire and eagerness, and spatial movement. The imagination is the product of the sensory faculty, and memory is the further extension of this faculty. The rational soul, however, is distinguished by the intellect. Except for the intellect, all the faculties of the soul can be separated from the body and are mortal. Aristotle contends that because the intellect is essentially actual (an act), it is immaterial, active (immutable) and is free from any combination, and that it alone is immortal, eternal and everlasting.³⁵

The Theory of the Return of Spirits to the Body

Avicenna is the most prominent among Muslim philosophers supporting this theory. By his systematic research regarding the soul and its related subjects, he advanced this idea to be taken up by future philosophers. Mainly outlined in *al-Shifa*, 'the book of soul' and some chapters in *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*; Avicenna proved the existence of the human soul, proving the soul's presentational knowledge of itself, the immateriality of the human soul, the unity of the substance of soul and its faculties in the organs of body, and the different faculties of soul. He also discussed dividing the cognitive faculties of soul into cognitions which need instruments and those which do not need instruments, different kinds of perceptions, enumerating the cognitive faculties, enumerating the faculties of the rational soul, proving the immortality of soul and spiritual bliss and misery. These discussions are important because they identify the threefold characteristics mentioned previously so, they are related to the question of personal identity.

As we see, the direction of Avicenna's philosophical efforts leads him to the immortality of human soul and the illustration of the bliss and misery of this substantiated existent. However, the question is whether the body accompanies the human existence in this immortality. Philosophically, Avicenna considers himself unable to prove the immortality of the body possessing human. On the other hand, he believes that the religious texts very clearly denote the immortal somatic life so unlike the proponents of the previous theory, he refuses the way of interpretation (*Ta'wil*), and accordingly accepts the immortality and resurrection of the body, citing the truthful sincere Prophet's speech as his reason. In *al-Shifa*, in the chapter about resurrection, he says:

Here, it deserves to study human souls while separating from their bodies. Then we say: it is necessary to know that some part of resurrection is that which is narrated by the Sacred Law of Islam, and there is no way to prove it except through religion and acknowledging the Prophet's speech. This part is related to the resurrection of the body. The bliss and misery of the body are clear and do not need to be learnt. The true religion brought to us by our lord and master Muhammad (S.A.) - peace be upon him and his progeny - displays the bliss and misery of the body in detail. Another part of resurrection is that which is understood by reason and demonstration and also confirmed by the Prophet. This part is the same bliss and misery that exist for souls (=spirits), though the intellects are unable to perceive it for some reason. Divine philosophers are more inclined to reach this kind of bliss than the happiness of the body.

Rather it seems that they do not care for it even if it is endowed to them. In comparison to closeness to God, they consider this happiness trivial. Therefore, our attempt is to identify the bliss and misery of the soul, for the bliss and misery of the body are set aside for religious reasons.³⁶

Why does Avicenna find himself unable to prove the resurrection of the body, and consider any road to prove it impossible? This point must be highlighted to see whether there is a solution to removing this obstacle. How do the philosophers after Avicenna, believing that proving the resurrection of the body through reason and demonstration is possible, remove this obstacle from their approach?

It seems that Avicenna's problem regarding the resurrection of the body is brought forth as an antinomy with both sides leading to a philosophical impossibility. If the resurrection of the body is presented in the way illustrated by Avicenna, its results are not consistent with the principles of philosophy. If it is so, since these principles cannot be ignored, there is no

way to prove the resurrection of the body. The related problems are either the possibility of transmigration or the collection of two souls in one body that are both in contradiction with the philosophical principles of the Peripatetic. Accordingly, we must either do as Avicenna does and believe that the rational way to prove the resurrection of the body is closed; or, keeping those philosophical principles, we must add other principles to demonstrate the resurrection of the body; or basically we must substitute some other principles for those philosophical principles so that there would be no obstacles to proving the resurrection of the body.

To explain, by transmigration, it is meant that the human soul, leaving its material body, enters another one. Avicenna rejects this theory, which has many followers among the believers in immortality of the soul. Other prominent philosophers are also in agreement with him. In rejecting the transmigration, Avicenna argues: The predisposition of a body for accepting a soul requires that the soul, composed of a non-material substance, be bestowed on the body. If we accept transmigration, it means that the body has two souls: One soul which consists of a non-material substance – by evolution of the predisposition of each body, this non-material substance which is the soul, is bestowed on every body without exception. The other soul, presumably, enters the body upon transmigration. Yet such an event is impossible, for each body has only one soul.

Of course, this argument hinges on the impossible existence of two souls in one body, which is required in transmigration. However, there are some other arguments in rejecting transmigration offered by Avicenna and other Peripatetic in which there is no such dependence.³⁷

Now according to this theory, if on the Day of Resurrection material bodies are reconstructed, by evolution of the predisposition of receiving a soul, each body is required to be endowed with a soul by the non-material substance. In addition, if the previous originated souls are supposed to belong to the bodies, we will face the problem of transmigration that is the existence of two souls in one body.

Confronting such a problem, theologians like Ghazzali admit the possibility of transmigration in a special way to prove the resurrection of the body. Of course, he addressed those who argue for the impossibility of the resurrection of the body, and not philosophers such as Avicenna because firstly, he does not deny the possibility of the resurrection of the body; rather, he merely believes that it is not possible to prove this according to his philosophy. Secondly, without paying attention to the philosopher's comments on the impossibility of transmigration, Ghazzali sticks to religion

for its possibility and finally reduces the resurrection to the transmigration. In this case, it is better to follow Avicenna, that is, when transmigration is rejected, such an impossible thing will not occur on Resurrection Day.

Therefore, if the resurrection of the body is true according to traditions, certainly, it is not transmigration. Consequently, it cannot be said that we accept the resurrection whether it be called transmigration or anything else. Phrasing is not important, but it is the reality of the resurrection of the body and the return of souls to them that is in contradiction with the theory of transmigration. Therefore, we accept the resurrection of the body according to the truthful prophet without depending on any kind of transmigration.

Thirdly, both Ghazzali and Avicenna admit that life after death has two phases: One phase in which the spirit is active and alive without body (called *isthmus* in religious texts), the other phase in which the spirit will again belong to the resurrected body. Avicenna does not state this explicitly, although considering the proof he offers for the immateriality of the soul from its origination to its immortality after the death of the body, and considering the acceptance of the material dimension in the Day of Resurrection; inevitably, the spirit must exist in *isthmus* without any body – neither a material one nor one belonging to the world of similitudes – in the interval of abolishing the body and its resurrection. (According to Avicenna, body is the condition for the origination of the soul; in other words, the soul does not exist before the body. Rather, by predisposition of the body for receiving the soul, non-material substance endows it with a body. The soul is devoid of matter from its origination; and depending on it, the body possesses life and acts under the dominance of the soul in the material world). The Peripatetic philosophers not only reject any proof for the existence of the world of similitudes, but also offer arguments for its impossibility. For instance, they argue that a body belonging to the world of similitudes has a quantitative form and each quantitative form is divisible and each divisible thing needs the existence of matter.

Now as Ghazzali stipulates, one of the implications of the third point is that man's personality among intervals of the world, *isthmus* and hereafter is only dependent on his soul or spirit; and the body has no role in the reality of man and his identity. Therefore, we can suppose that the existing man in the world with the specific body has no body in *isthmus* at all; and connects to another body in the hereafter, while at the same time, he is the very man who has been in the world. Unlike Ghazzali, Avicenna does not stipulate this supposition; nevertheless, considering his other statements this supposition can be attributed to him. (We can refer to the situation in which he describes

the naïve.)

He says that if the naïve are pious and purified, they will reach their deserved bliss when leaving their bodies. Perhaps in that situation, they may not be needless of bodies, which are the subjects of their imagination; and it is not impossible that those bodies be celestial or semi-celestial).³⁸

Now we face this question: according to this theory what are the characteristics of the human soul in which the body does not share, that accompany the spirit in all phases and at the same time, with regard to the mentioned characteristics, the identity dependent on the soul is considered?

Concerning the soul or the spirit and its branches in the body organs, Avicenna says: "The substance of soul is one in you; rather, it is really you there are branches and faculties for that substance that are spread throughout your organs."³⁹

Then, in the chapter about the kinds of perception, on the basis of the perfection and imperfection of the perceiver's faculties in immaterializing the known (= the intelligible), he first divides the perception into four kinds: Sensation, imagination, fantasy and intellection. Sensation is a kind of perception whose object is material and also surrounded by special mode of being and sensible accidents such as space and time, position and quality. This kind of perception is particular. However, in imagination, the presence of matter for the perceiver is exempted from the three mentioned features. Fantasy is a kind of perception whose objects are particular meanings, which are not sensible, and so two features that are the presence of matter, and having special mode of being and sensible accidents are exempted from it. Nevertheless, intellection is a universal perception and acquisition of concepts, which are devoid of matter, is not conditional upon any of these three features of sensation.⁴⁰

In explaining the inner faculties, Avicenna divides them into two groups: *The perceiver faculty* and *the assisting faculty in perception*. What is significant is that Avicenna introduces bodily instruments for all these perceptual faculties- that are indeed perceptual faculties of animal soul. For instance, the instrument of common sense is a spirit located in front of the brain. (This spirit, called vaporous spirit, is different from the soul). The instrument of imagination is a spirit located in the front middle part of the brain in its last part. The instrument of fantasy is all the brain, but its special position is the middle crevice. The instrument of imagination is located in the part of the middle crevice. The instrument of memory is located in a spirit in the last crevice of the brain. Avicenna's rationale that these faculties are corporeal is that by observation, we find when one of these crevices is

injured the faculty related to that crevice is also effected.

However, Avicenna believed that only intellectual faculties (practical and theoretical) do not need corporeal instruments considering them as completely pure faculties of human spirit.⁴¹

Moreover, Avicenna reasons that the faculties of imagination and fantasy are material.^{42, 43}

These views of Avicenna have some implications:

1. The human soul after the death of the body loses most of its worldly functioning such as most perceptions, at least in the way they occur in the world.

2. How does the human soul after eradicating the body keep past memories despite the fact that the faculty of memory is so dependent on the body, that without bodily instruments, the spirit does not have such a power? Inevitably, the faculty of memory, at least in the world and after it, has no role in personal identity.

3. The role of personality or personal identity belongs completely to the spirit; the body and the somehow dependent faculties have no share in personal identity.

4. If after the death of the body, there were any pleasure or pain (those belong to isthmus not to the hereafter) it would be spiritual. Corporeal delight and pain exist only after the resurrection of the body in the Greater Rising because they are conditioned to the perceptual faculties that are somehow dependent on the body.⁴⁴ However, it is not possible to believe in corporeal delight and pain after death and at the same time not to accept the isthmus immateriality of imagination and to insist on materiality because conceiving the particular delightful and painful forms depends on a particular faculty to discover them showing a desire or hatred towards them. Now if the soul conceives the particular by bodily instruments, and supposing that after death, it loses its bodily instruments, how can one consider there would be corporeal delight and pain? However, if religious texts confirm such delight and pain after death, the philosophical views of Avicenna are not helpful in explaining it.

5. If in Avicenna's philosophy regarding the discussion of personal identity the role of the body and its relation to spiritual faculties is proved, the problem arises for Avicenna that when death comes one part of a person's of the personal identity will depart; that part which is the soul.

The difference between the human soul and the animal soul is only in having the intellectual faculty and since only the intellectual faculty is immaterial, destruction and corruption have no way into it, unlike the faculty

of imagination which is material. Therefore, all animals are destroyed after death. He says, "Since it becomes clear that all the animal faculties are dependent on the body they are active only when they are in the body and consequently animal souls will not survive after the destruction of the body"⁴⁵

What follows from the sixth point and is also related to our discussion is that if some souls do not reach the level of the immateriality of the intellect it should be determined that they could not survive after the death of their bodies. Nevertheless, Muslim philosophers unanimously agree that all human souls are immortal.

That is why in his works, Avicenna presents this problem of the relation between this group of souls with the theory of celestial and non-celestial body.⁴⁶

Of course, the way of spiritual life after death, i.e. life in the form of spirit without body, and the quality of its conception of itself and others needs explanation, especially in the philosophy of Avicenna, but this is not related to our present discussion. Briefly, it is clear that the quality of this life does not lead to egoism, either metaphysically or epistemologically.⁴⁷

The Theory of the Spirit and a Body Belonging to the World of similitudes

The distinguishing factor of the theories in this section from the first and the second theories is that the former introduce spiritual together with corporeal immortality and resurrection.

However, the distinguishing factor of these theories from the third and the fifth theories is that in the discussion of the corporeal resurrection, they deal with a kind of body which is devoid of matter, unlike the elemental body which has matter. Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra are the notable philosophers who present theories in this section, although their theories differ in other respects, even in the quality of the relation between the soul and the body belonging to the world of similitudes.

The summary of Suhrawardi's views about the reality of human and the quality of his immortality can be stated as follows:

1. Human temperament is the most complete – temperament is a moderate quality which is acquired from the contrary qualities of different bodies in parts; and when the human body achieves this temperament, it prepares to receive immaterial light from the knowledge-granter (=Gabriel). This light governs and controls the human body.

This light is an administrator named "the Lord of the World of the Bodily Forms" (*Isfahbud Nasut*) which refers to itself by means of I-ness.⁴⁸

2. This administrator light (= rational soul) does not exist before the generation of the body; rather, its origination is conditioned to the existence of the body, while from the beginning of its creation it is immaterial and luminous.⁴⁹

3. Five senses have been created for man and other complete animals: Senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight.

4. Every attribute of the soul of Lordly Light (*Nur Isfahbudi*) has a counterpart in the body. For instance, the Lordly Light observes the isthmus forms and abstracts them from their natural matters and changes them to luminous universal forms and then conceives them as their substance of essence deserves; like a person who observes Zayd and Amr and then abstracts the universal form of humanity from them and predicates it on the others as well as these two persons. Likewise, a nutritive faculty must necessarily exist in the body breaking down all the different kinds of food to a nutritive substance. In the same way, the status of the complete light is to become the cause and origin of another light.

So, power is achieved in the human body from Lordly Light by which the body possesses another light that is a generator power. The survival of the human species depends on this power.⁵⁰

5. The lordly light does not administer the material body, except by a proper thing. This is the relation that the lordly light has with a subtle substance called vaporous spirit posited in the left ventricle of the heart. The animal spirit is the subtlest elemental body created similar and proper to properties of light. There is a great relationship between this spirit and the lordly light; this relation is spread through the body and is the result of its luminous faculties. The lordly light administers and illuminates the human body through this relation. Thus, although the lordly light has no space or dimension, it owns and governs all darknesses of the body (i.e. bodily faculties).⁵¹

6. What the Peripatetics say about the five senses can be criticized.

The fact is that imagination and fantasy are one thing and one faculty from different considerations, interpreted in various terms.... However, the faculty of Reminding is in the celestial world (i.e. the faculty of Reminding comes from the celestial world where all the forms and meanings are gathered completely and it does not come from the fantastic resource of memory). However, it is justified to have another faculty in the human body to which reminding belongs, and that is the faculty of remembrance (regarding that predisposition of Reminding belongs to it not that fantastic meanings can be reached to in it).⁵²

7. The fact is that the imaginative and reflexive forms are not impressed in the mirror of imagination and the like; rather, these forms consist of suspended bodies (in the world of similitudes) that have no corporeal position (in other words, these forms stand by themselves and have no position). Sometimes these suspended bodies have some manifestation, but they are not real (i.e. they have manifestations like imagination and mirror, yet they are not in imagination and mirror). Therefore, the source of the form in the mirror is the mirror and those forms are suspended and have no position; also, the source of the imaginative form is the imagination, and those too are suspended imaginative forms ...⁵³

8. Beside the intellectual and the material world, there is the world of similitudes. The world of similitudes is a spiritual world made of a substance that from one respect is similar to the corporeal substance and is similar to the intellectual substance from another respect. This substance is like the corporeal substance in that it is sensible and has dimension and extension and its commonality with the intellectual substance is that it is devoid of matter.

9. After the finitude of its body, the administrator immaterial light cannot be abolished; for it does not cause the destruction of its own essence, otherwise, it would not come into existence. The cause of its existence - the omnipotent light - does not destroy it since there is no change.⁵⁴

10. When the administrator light is not dominated by the worldly and material occupations, its desire for the holy luminous world exceeds its desire to for the darkness of the material world (*Ghawasigh*)... and when the administrative lights are infinite in their effects, the attraction of worldly occupations will not conceal the luminous horizon from them.

Thus, when the lordly lights dominate the essences belonging to the darkness of the material world and their desire for the luminous world is intensified, they reach to a unity with the world of pure light. If the body of those lordly lights are destroyed and, concerning their complete power and intensified attraction to the source of life, they are not absorbed in another body (i.e. transmigration; but, Suhrawardi may not mean transmigration in its common sense), then they become free from the human body, travelling to the world of pure light, settling there, and joining the holy lights.⁵⁵

11. When from their corporeal bodies the blessed who are moderate in knowledge and practice, and the pious who are pure, join the suspended world of similitudes which is manifested in some supreme world their souls gain such power that they create spiritual suspended forms of themselves. Then they will prepare themselves various delicious foods, beautiful faces,

pleasant music and so on which are more perfect than what we have in this world.⁵⁶

12. When the unblessed leave their corporeal bodies, according to their tempers they gain some shades from the suspended forms which are not the same as the Platonic forms, because the latter are luminous and stable in the world of intellectual lights while the former are suspended in the world of ghosts some of which some are dark while others are luminous. The luminous forms in this world are special to the blessed by which they enjoy themselves. These forms are like beardless, fair boys while the suspended forms of the unblessed are dark.

13. Suhrawardi says, "We call the world of suspended forms with all the mentioned characteristics "the world of immaterial ghosts." The resurrection of the body and the lordly ghosts and all the promises of the prophets are actualized by the existence of the world of ghosts.⁵⁷

14. A body belonging to the world of similitudes administered by the soul is similar to a sensible body in that all the internal and external senses exist for it. This is because the perceiver existent is a rational soul, either it belongs to a sensible body or to a body belonging to the world of similitudes.⁵⁸

In brief, in the Illuminationist philosophy an attempt is made to prove both the resurrection of the body and the spirit. However, the body intended by Suhrawardi is completely different from the definition of the body in the first and the third views. This difference hinges on being able to prove the world of similitudes in the Illuminationist philosophy. The spirit does not perish after the death of the body and there is no duality in the spirit before or after death. Indeed, the spirit after separating from the worldly material body, in the world of similitudes joins a body belonging to this world which is similar to a form reflected in a mirror, except that it is a substantial form dependent on its essence and unlike the worldly body, its life is essential. Therefore, the criterion for the identity of the spirit is the same since the spirit belonging to the world of heavenly forms (i.e. the world of similitudes) is exactly the same as the one that exists in the material world. The criterion for the identity of the body exists by unity with the spirit; that is, the same spirit that has belonged to the material body, is now possessed by a body belonging to the world of similitudes.⁵⁹

In this view what is resurrected, as the body after death is not exactly the personal worldly body; rather, it is another body different from the first one. In other words, that body belonging to the world of similitudes is not the body existing in this world and their individuation is not made in the same

way.

Now, regarding Avicenna and Suhravardi's views and their attempts to clarify and explain the resurrection of the body and the spirit, we consider Mulla Sadra, who came after these esteemed philosophers and reviewed their earlier ideas and commented on their imperfections:

1. Both Avicenna and Suhravardi believe that human beings in this world were composed of material and pure spiritual dimensions called body and spirit. The material dimension is the condition for the existence of the immaterial dimension that is the body of the spirit, although this not the condition for the survival of the spirit after its origination. Consequently, if after reaching a specific predisposition, for some reason the body perishes after the origination of the spirit, it will continue to exist forever because of the survival of its cause, which is the immaterial substance. The reason for this survival is the immateriality of the spirit. Therefore, from its origination, the spirit or the soul is an immaterial existent. Mulla Sadra does not agree with this view and he does not interpret the relation between the body and the spirit as such. Some of his objections are as follows:

A. How is it possible that an immaterial existent, an actualised substance without any potentialities, belongs to a material body and becomes a place for accidents?

B. How is it possible that a soul be an unchanged substance from the beginning of its belonging to the body up to the stage it reaches perfection, and meanwhile, there is no transformation in its essence and the only differences between souls are in their accidents?

C. If from the beginning, the soul is pure immaterial, why does it not possess any perceptual perfections?

D. If the soul is a pure immaterial existent, how is it that it is originated by the origination of the body?

E. How is it possible that bodily instruments exist before the existence of their users?

Mulla Sadra's view is briefly that the existential position of the soul in origination and survival is not the same. On the one hand, the reasons for immateriality of the soul are valid; on the other hand, in the beginning of its existence, the soul does not possess different kinds of perceptions. Therefore, at the beginning, the soul is a material existent that reaches the level of immateriality by its substantial movement. Accordingly, the substantial existents are placed in three groups; and before the advent of the theory of the substantial movement, only the first two groups were considered:

A. The beings, which immaterially come into existence and do not need matter in their essences and actions, such as the ten intellects of the ancients.

B. The beings, which materially come into existence and remain material to their end such as material forms.

C. The beings that come into existence materially but reach the level of immateriality by substantial movement, such as human souls.

2. The Peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophers argue for the unity of the human soul and prove some faculties for the soul through the soul's effusion of different actions some of which are prior to the others; also, some of these actions are disturbed while some others are effective. Since these faculties are not independent by themselves and are used by the soul, they have been called the branches of the soul in the body; therefore, the human soul does the work, which deserves its own attention, whereas the faculties do the vegetative and the animal works.

According to Mulla Sadra, while simple, the rational human soul is comprehensive of all perceptual and inciting faculties.

These faculties are not instruments for the soul by which the soul acts, for in this supposition, the sources of perceptions and movements are in fact the faculties and through them, the soul is the source. Rather, the soul is present in all the three levels of sense, imagination, and intellect, and like common sense in which the external five senses are gathered, all the faculties are also gathered in the simple soul and it is united with them. Mulla Sadra says:

A human being is an existent who has different worlds and stations. The existence of the soul begins from the lowest level and gradually develops toward intellectual immateriality. The relation between the soul and the body is not a desirous one so that their composition finally becomes one by way of annexation; rather their relation is a composition by way of unification. So the body becomes one of the levels of the soul because the corollary of the existential connection between two things is as referred to. Therefore, if the human soul descends from its immaterial and transcendent level to the level of nature or sense, then it will be the same as the nature and sense; that is, when it feels, it is exactly the touching organ and when it smells it is the same as the smelling organ⁶⁰

3. As seen, Avicenna relates the five external senses and the internal senses to the material body and only believes in the immateriality of the intellectual part of a human. However, in two phases of criticizing the reasons for materiality of faculties like imagination and of proving their immateriality, Mulla Sadra believes that all the perceptual faculties of the soul are immaterial.⁶¹ So after the death of the body, man only loses interest

in the natural world and material forms, although not forfeiting all relation with bodily forms. By moving in two dimensions of knowledge and action, the soul is actualized and through gaining good habits and true beliefs or bad habits and wrong beliefs, it transforms substantially. By infiltrating into the soul, the soul takes those characteristics and transforms into an existent that only has a formal face and is devoid of potentiality and predisposition.

4. By accepting Suhrawadi's theory about the existence of the world of similitudes, Mulla Sadra presents some premises in explaining the accompaniment of the soul and the body in the world after death.

A. Quiddities have no limitation for having numerous instances when a quiddity comes into existence in the garment of the external matter, it will be accompanied by some accidents additional to the essence of the quiddity and merely show the way of its existence. In fact, the external existence of man is exactly his accidents; it is not that these accidents are additional to the material existence of man. Since they are changeable and man is constant, it can be concluded that they are additional to the quiddity of man, yet they are exactly the way of his material existence.

B. The criterion for existential immateriality is the perfection and intensification of the existence; it is not merely the elimination of the addenda.

C. The nature of everything tends and moves towards its perfect end.⁶²

Regarding these premises, among material natures man has this characteristic, that by keeping his personal identity he can develop from the lowest phases to the highest existential levels by substantial movement. Man possesses various existential levels some of which are natural, some which are spiritual, and some which are intellectual.

Therefore, from infancy until reaching the level of the stabilization of imagination, man remains in the natural level, and then he reaches the spiritual similitude level by existential movement and intensification.

In this level he gains appendages belonging to the world of similitudes, which do not require matter. Unlike the body belonging to the material world in which different acts arise from different organs, the substance belonging to the world of similitudes whose existence is more intensified, possesses an existential comprehensiveness and one of its appendages can cause various perceptual and insightful characteristics.

In brief, the soul in comparison to its levels of immateriality is like an external perceiver that has passed the levels of sense, imagination and intellect and becomes sensible, imaginative and intelligible.

As the immateriality of the perceiver is not merely the eliminating of

some characteristics and keeping some others – rather, immateriality is really the transformation of an imperfect existent to a superior and more perfect one – the immateriality of man and his transmission from this world to the other worlds is a transformation of his existence and identity to a more perfect existence; that is, by the perfection of the soul's essence, all its faculties also gain the levels of perfection and by its intensification, its unity and comprehensiveness are also intensified, its body becomes subtler and its connection to the body becomes stronger. If we accept that man enters the world of similitudes without having a body, then one must accept that either all his reality is the soul or all of his reality does not enter the world of similitudes. Both alternatives are not acceptable.

5. Consequently, one can recognize that unlike the Illuminationist views, the body belonging to the isthmus and the hereafter are not prepared in advance. So, the souls belong to them after leaving their material bodies. This raises questions about both the personal identity in the domain of the body, and transmigration with these bodies being the concomitants of the souls; every spiritual and immaterial substance is accompanied with a body belonging to the world of similitudes, which originates from the spiritual habits and forms of substances. Although it has dimension this body does not possess the movements of matters and transformation. Therefore, the existence of the isthmus body in the world of similitudes is not prior to the soul; rather, these two accompany each other like a shadow and its owner.

In his works *Shawahid al-Rububiya*, *Mafatih al – Ghayb* and *Asfar*, Mulla Sadra details eleven, six, and seven principles to prove the objectivity of the body belonging to this world and to the hereafter.⁶³ These principles are:

1- The subsistence of every existent depends not on its matter but on its form; so the effects of that composite depends on its form with the matter only having the possibility and potentiality of accepting that form; it is a subject for the movements and actions of the form so that if we suppose that the mentioned composite can keep its form without the matter, all its reality will be maintained.

2- The individuation of everything depends on its existence whether it is immaterial or material. Other things like colour, and other accidents are among the existential concomitants and signs, which make being 'A' what it is. Therefore by keeping A's identity one can assume the changes are its accidents.

3- In the individuation of every human what is valid is his unity of soul, although his bodily organs change from childhood to adolescence and from

that to old age. Therefore as the individuation of man depends on his soul which is the substantial human form, the individuation of the body and its organs also depends on the same soul whose faculties flow in those organs. Thus, so long as the faculties of a particular soul flow in them the hand, foot and other organs belong to it despite the changes in their characteristics.

As a result, if in the substantial movement of the soul, the body also reaches existence, the world of similitudes from the natural elemental existence of the unity of the body is still maintained.

4. Existence is a reality having weak and strong levels and composition ... has no way to it.

5. Existence has weaknesses and strengths; that is movement is among the attributes of existence. In its substantiality, the existence of material substances are constantly in motion, while at the same time from the beginning to the end of the substantial movement, they are continuous mobile existence and personalities, not that every supposed part of this movement which is one level of the existential levels of a thing exist separately.

6. The individual unity of every existent is provided by its existence, for this reason the individual unity of all existents are not alike. For instance, the individual unity for a line is the very connection and extension and for all time is renewal and transformation. At the same time the individual unity of immaterial beings is different from that of material existents.

7. Worlds are divided into three: The world of mobile material forms, the world of sensible immaterial forms and that of intelligible forms.

8. The faculty of imagination does not penetrate into any part of a body organ; rather, it is an isthmus-like immaterial faculty.

9. All imaginative forms, even every perceptual form, depends on the soul and not on the body organs, for the soul is considered as the agent of perceptual forms.

10. As the agent sometimes makes things quantitative and shapes them with the contribution of matter, sometimes it does so without matter using only its efficient perceptual aspects.

We can conclude that the human goal is a transformation from a material worldly existent to a formal otherworldly one, for the relation of this world to the other world is the relation of imperfection to perfection. Also, the otherworldly body is exactly the same as the worldly one, not something similar nor anything other, because the existence of the soul individuates it and the soul accompanied with the body belonging to isthmus and the hereafter is the soul accompanied by the worldly body. These three bodies

are three levels of one body that are distinguished from one another, that is, one is worldly, and the other two belong to isthmus and the hereafter. They are distinguished from each other through their weaknesses and strengths; indeed, they are the levels and transformations of one individual in the same way that in the world a child's body is distinguished from his adolescent and the old age body; yet they all are the levels of one body.

Mulla Sadra's approach is more complete than other approaches in proving the identity of a person existing in this world, its levels and the hereafter. First, the identity of the worldly and the otherworldly body is maintained. Second, by proving the immateriality of the spiritual faculties, the spirit or the soul enters another world with all its levels; in other words, the whole man leaves the natural world in a way that nothing of his reality remains in the world of nature and so the whole man enters the next world.

Why does Mulla Sadra declare that the elemental body is invalid in the resurrection of the body? Perhaps one reason is that if by the arrival of death the soul separates from the body and loses all its relations with the elemental body, and if the resurrection is to be interpreted as attaining the predisposition of the body renewed for the return of the spirit, then it will raise the problem of transmigration and the false belief caused by it; that is the return from actualization to potentiality. In fact, in his view, by the arrival of the natural death, man travels the distance of the world and reaches his destination, which is the next world.

Another rationale cited by Mulla Sadra is that if the resurrection is considered to be the return of the spirit to the elemental body, the next world will be nothing more than this world, whereas the laws of the next world are different from those of this world and the hereafter can not be defined as a renewal or reconstruction of this world.

The Theory of the Attachment of the Body to the Spirit

Using Mulla Sadra's principles, Agha Ali Modarres Zanuzi offers this theory as a complement to Sadra's theory.

A tradition from the Prophet's infallible Progeny inspired him. This tradition is as follows:

The spirit is in its own position: The righteous spirit is surrounded by light and comfort while the evil spirit is in darkness and pressure. As it has been created from dust, the body returns to dust. Bodies that are eaten by the wild and worms and then excreted, all are kept in the earth by One from Whose knowledge nothing is hidden in the darkness of the earth and he knows the number and the weight of all things. The spirituals' dust is like

gold in the earth; so when the time for the resurrection comes, the rain of life showers the earth and it grows, then it shakes severely like a leathern bottle so that the man's dust becomes like the gold taken from the washed soil or like the butter taken from the stirred milk. Therefore, the dust of each body is collected by the permission of the Mighty God and transmitted to the place of the spirit. Then forms return to their previous shapes by the permission of the form-granter God and the spirits enter them. The human beings are so reconstructed that no one can deny himself.⁶⁴

Modarres Zanuzi believes that in resurrection, the elemental dust of the body exists with the body belonging to the world of similitudes without the problem of transmigration and the unity of the worldly and otherworldly body. His account of the resurrection of the body is as follows:

1. A composite is divided into real and subjective. The real composite has a real unity and in this respect it is included in one of the real kinds. This composition occurs when there is a relational causality and dependency among its parts and because of a real unity those parts exist as one. A subjective composition is a composition in which merely some parts are placed near others without any real unity dominating this real plurality. A human being who is composed of the soul and body and whose soul is composed of various levels of spiritual faculties is an example of a real unity.

(From this premise to prove the unity of the soul and the material body, he wants to claim that the body and the soul accompany each other in all worlds of existence.)

2. Because of its substantial characteristics and the essential habits gained through action, the soul is the agent of the body while the body is the grounds for the spiritual habits that the soul gains by proper actions. As in the beginning of the soul's existence the forms of the organs in a substantial movement lead the way towards the proper soul (for in its origination, the soul is corporeal), the soul also makes some forms in its organs proper to the spiritual aspects (which, in fact, the body organs descend from that world). So there is a substantial cognation between the soul and the body so that there are some exchanges of the effects from the soul to the body and vice versa.

After separating from the world, the soul leaves some effects in the body through some substantial aspects and essential habits gained in the natural world. Therefore, after the soul leaves the body, it will indeed be separated and distinct from other bodies.

4. After the separation from the body, the soul joins the universal soul

suitable to its substance and habits. Also, the body is moving like the other mobiles by substantial and perfectible movements toward its essential destination that is the next world. Of course, the mover of this body (that is its director toward its destination) is the universal soul that affects it through the particular soul that is cognate with the body

5. When essential movement gathers the dispersed parts of the body and its plurality changes into unity it is unified with its soul.⁶⁵

According to this theory, principally after the death of the body, the spirit only loses its administrative and dominant relation with the body, but the relation itself is never cut because the relation of the soul to the body is essential and the very survival of this relation moves the body toward the position of the spirit.

This prevents the raising of the problem of transmigration, for the body is only its own soul and is always dominated by it.

In addition, in this theory it is not assumed that the spirit returns to the body, so the body moves toward the spirit and for this reason, the world in which they are unified is not the material world.

It should be mentioned that Mirdamad, the last famous Peripatetic philosopher, agrees with Modarres Zanuzi that after the death of the body the spirit does not completely lose its relation with the body. Although his theory can only partially answer Mulla Sadra's first objection and the second objection can only be solved by Modarres Zanuzi's approach. With regard to visiting the graves and shrines of the righteous Mirdamad says:

- The rational soul whose substance is from the world of Dominion (*Malakut*) administratively dominates the material body in two ways.
- One with respect to the personal matter and the other with regard to the bodily substantial form. The former is always remaining while the latter is generated and corrupted. Death destroys the administrative relation of the soul to the personal with respect to the form only. But, concerning the matter, which continually accepts different forms, its administrative relation to the body remains and never corrupts. It is from a material respect that this relation provides the attachment of the spirit to a form similar to the present form when by God's permission the spirit returns to the body during the corporeal resurrection.

It is from this materially remaining relation of the soul to the personal body that emanation and blessing are gained by visiting the graves and shrines.⁶⁶

However according to the literal meaning of religious texts, the theory of Modarres Zanuzi can be regarded as a development in philosophical

explanation, spiritual and corporeal resurrection and immortality, though there are some queries that hopefully future generations will confront and answer.

Summary

The importance of the question of personal identity for Muslim philosophers and theologians in the discussion of immortality is clear. One can see that Muslim scholars for the most part agree that a human being is composed of a body and an immaterial entity with the majority of them calling the latter substance, “the spirit, or soul”. For this reason, they deal with the problem of personal identity in the discussion of immortality more than the others because in the two realms of the body and the spirit personal identity of every human being in this world and the hereafter should be known. Most importantly here is proving the identity of the body in this world and the hereafter; for the bodily characteristics and its pertinent spiritual features are all related to this issue. Accordingly, there are various explanations of this problem and the discussions are so arranged that they agree and are in accordance with the religious texts regarding the body in the next world.

NOTES

1. *Ilahiyyat Shifa*, Bidar Publications, p.444.
2. *Tajrid al – Agha'id*, p.35; *al – Muhassal*, p.518; *Shawarigh al- Ilham*, p.52.
3. *Sharh Tajrid al – 'Agha'id*. pp. 14,24.
4. *Anwar al-Malakut fi Sharh al – Yaghut*, p.47; *al – juwhar al – Nadid*, p.20.
5. *Majmou 'a Musannafat sheikh Ishragh*, vol. 2,p.119.
6. *Sharh Hikmat al – Ishragh*, p. 210.
7. *Al – Hashiya 'Ala Shuruh al – Isharat*, vol. 2, p.86
8. See *Rahigh Makhtum*, section 1, vol. 1, p. 258.
9. See *al- Asfar al- Arba'a*, vol. 1 p.65; *Usul Falsafeh va Ravesh Realism*, vol. 3,p.385.
10. See *al- Asfar al- Arba'a*, vol. 1 p. 64; *Shua Andishe va Shuhud Dar Falsafeh Suhravardi*, p.289.
11. Agha Ali Modarres, *Risala Hamliyya*, p. 39.
12. *Asfar*, vol.1, Mughadama.
13. *Guzida – y-Guhar Murad*, Abd al – Razzagh Lahiji, p.19.
14. *Naghd al –Muhassal*, Khaje Nasir Tusi, Dar al – Adwa', pp. 378-9.
15. *The Koran*, 36: 78- 79.
16. See *Naghd al – Muhassal*, p.360; *Sharh Mawaghif*, vol .8, p.289 17.*The Koran*, 28: 88.
18. *The Koran* 55: 26.
19. *The Koran*, 27: 27.
20. *The Koran*, 57: 3.
21. See *Sharh Mawaghif*, vol. 8, p 297.
22. *Naghd al – Muhassal*, p. 390
23. *Ibid*, 392
24. *Ibid*, p. 395.
25. *The Koran*, 2: 260.
26. Allameh Hilli, *Kashf al – Murad*, Muassasa al – Nashr al – Islami, pp . 402-3.
27. See *Sharh Mawaghif*, vol. 8, p.318.
28. See *al-Asfar*, vol. 9, p.158.
29. Ghutb al – Diin Shirazi, *Sharh Hikmat al – Ishragh*, pp. 447 – 451 30.*Al – Asfar*, vol. 9, pp.172-3, 214-215.
31. See *Tahafut al – Falasafa*, trans. Ali Asghar Halabi, pp. 284-291 32. See *al- Asfar*, vol. 9, p.215; *Tahafut al – falasafa*, p.307.
33. Mulla Hadi Sabzevari, *al – Asfar* (Marginal Notes), p. 215.

34. *The Republic*, book 4, from article 435 onward: *Timaeus*, articles 69-70.
- 35.
36. Avicenna, *al – Shifa (Ilahiyyat)*, article 9, chapter 7, p 423; *Guzida-y-Guhar Murad*, pp. 336-7.
37. See *al – Isharat wa al – Tanbihat*, Namat 8, chapter 17.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid, Namat 3, chapter 6.
40. Ibid, chapter 8.
41. Ibid, chapter 9-10.
42. *Al – shifa (Tabi'iyat)* , vol .2 , article 4,pp.167-171 .
43. See *al – Mabahith al Mashrighiyya*, vol 2, p. 340.
44. *Guzida-y- Guhar Murad*, p.113.
45. *Al Shifa (Tabi'iyat)*, article 6, chapter 4.
46. *Al- Isharat wa al – Tanbihat*, vol.3 Namat 8, chapter 27.
47. The word solipsism generally refers to any theory that emphasizes the self. In metaphysical solipsism it is sometimes said, “only I exist” or “the whole reality “is I.” The reason for this theory is that every claim concerning existence and non – existence has its basis in experience; the experience belongs to a person who owns it. So the existential claims cannot be true unless they exist through the experience and the states of the self. In epistemology the concept of the self and its states are considered as the only real object of knowledge and the origin for the possible knowledge of the existence of others. Unlike the metaphysical solipsism, this epistemological theory has many adherents. However, the philosophers often do not consider this theory reasonable though it is not easy to reject it.
48. *Hikmat al – shragh*, pp.199-200.
49. Ibid, pp, 201-3.
50. Ibid, pp. 203-6.
51. Ibid, pp. 206-7.
52. Ibid, pp. 208-211.
53. Ibid, pp. 211-216.
54. Ibid, pp. 222-3.
55. Ibid, pp. 223-4.
56. Ibid, pp. 229-30.
57. Ibid, pp. 234 –5.
58. Ghutb al – Din Shirazi, *Sharh Hikmat al – Ishragh*, p. 518.
59. See Mulla Hadi Sabzevari, *Manzuma*, p. 346.
60. Mulla Sadra, *Asar*, vol .8, pp. 133-6.
61. Ibid, pp. 234 – 41.

62. Ibid. , vol. 9. pp. 94-100.
63. Mulla Sadra, *Asar*, vol. 9, pp. 185-196; *Mafatih al – Ghayb*, pp. 59 5 – 60; al *Shawhid al – Rububiya*, pp. 261 –7.
64. Tabarsi, *al – Ihtijaj*, p. 350.
65. *Risala Sabil al – Rishad*.
66. *Mirdamad, Ghabasat*, pp .455-6.

The Basic Principle in Ibn Sina's Ontology

Dr.Reza Akbarian

Abstract

The study of existence is the pivotal principal of Ibn Sina's philosophical system. Ibn Sina's opinion about existence is based upon the difference between "quiddity" (mahiyat) and "existence" (wujud). This principle is so important that he builds much of his discussions on theology and ontology upon it. Following al-Farabi, Ibn Sina considers "existence" a metaphysical element, distinguished from "quiddity." From his point of view, "quiddity" is exactly the presence of the contingent within the knowledge of God. Unless God grants his existence, essence will never come into existence.

Ibn Sina was well aware of the religious concept of creation. Having been inspired by religious texts, he establishes a principle in his philosophy that has been followed by the Islamic philosophy thereafter. To know God as the only existent, within whose realm non-existence is not allowed, means the acceptance of God as the pure existence, and that nothing may be found beyond Him. The logical requirement for such a sentence is to prove the existence of God by means of a new reasoning which Ibn Sina names the veracious reasoning (Burhan Siddiqin).

It is inconceivable to claim that such reasoning is presented by philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, who do not consider God the very existence and do not present the relationship between God and the universe as the central reason for existence and who do not believe in creation.

This article studies the question of existence from Ibn Sina's point of view in order to clarify the reason why the metaphysical difference between "quiddity" and "existence" neglected by Aristotle, was Ibn Sina's main concern and the reason why Islamic philosophy have taken grand steps toward correcting the consequences of this problem. This was the basis of Ibn Sina's ontology.

Introduction

Ibn Sina's metaphysics deserves thorough study. In his works, there are lots of conclusive and genuine material concerning the manner of belief in the Supreme Existence and His Attributes, the distinction between the First cause and the world of existence, the question of creation and perpetual creation (*creatio continua*), immateriality and eternity, and the immortality of the soul.

It must be recognized that Ibn Sina explained the most fundamental concepts in metaphysics and epistemology and has delineated their limits precisely.

Ibn Sina considers the question of existence as the most fundamental problem in his philosophical meditation. Undoubtedly, a true understanding of his philosophical system rests upon an exact analysis of this question. What distinguishes Ibn Sina's philosophy from Greek philosophy is that he bases his philosophy on a conception of the Divine existence, while Plato and Aristotle never did so. From Ibn Sina's point of view, God, or the pure existence, is the source and creator of all objects. Such a conception of God has a total relationship with his view on existence. As a result, by proposing new philosophical principles Ibn Sina reconstructs the intellectual and theoretical heritage of Greek philosophy and attempts to explain many religious principles and subjects through reasoning.

What follows in this article is a brief survey of Ibn Sina's views on the question of existence. Consisting of three sections, the first section studies the relationship between existence and the subject of metaphysics, the second section analyses the distinction between "quiddity" and "existence" as the most fundamental principle in Ibn Sina's ontology and in the third section, the philosophical consequences of this principle are presented.

A .The Concept of Existence and the Subject of Metaphysics

One of the important points that can be both studied comparatively and analyzed historically is "existence" as the subject matter of metaphysics. Ibn Sina's answer to the question of existence, which is the main issue of philosophy, differs from that of Aristotle. Ibn Sina considers metaphysics as the knowledge of existence, and divides existence into the necessary and the contingent. From his viewpoint, a philosopher analyses both the Necessary Existence and its attributes, and the contingent existence.

Ibn Sina refutes the theory that God is the subject of Divine knowledge.¹

In his opinion, the subject of metaphysics is “being qua being” (*Mujud bema-howa Mujud*), that is “the general or absolute existence” and not “existence in the absolute sense”. Such existence is absolute and free from all restriction. So metaphysics is not a science whose subject is one of the existents like the sensible existent or the intelligible or even the absolute existent; rather, its subject is the absolute existent that neither has a physical restriction, nor is a mathematical being, nor even a Divine Existence.²

Aristotle considers metaphysics as the science of existence as well, but he considers the existent, as substance.³ For Aristotle, the existent and the substance are the same. Aristotle, sees in substance all forms of being, – intellect, soul, matter, form and body – and does not consider accidents independent of substance, but establishes substance as the subject of metaphysics. As a result, he defines philosophy as the science of substance and of the essence of objects. But Ibn Sina didn't consider substance as the subject of philosophy. He contended that since substance, being quiddity, is a contingent existent metaphysics should not to be confined to the study of only the contingent.

On this basis, Aristotle considers the ten categories, as categories of existence and not categories of quiddity, while Ibn Sina following Farabi, takes contingent existents to be consisting of two intellectual analytical parts, namely “existence” and “quiddity.” Then, based on quiddity, he divides them into ten categories of substance and accident. One should not consider this division as a minor change in one of the branches of philosophy, since this division turns out to be the source of many fundamental issues in Islamic philosophy, which cannot be found in Greek philosophy.

A word playing a key role in Ibn Sina's ontology and considered the pivotal point of his philosophical discussions is the word “existent” (*mujud*), and not “existence” (*wujud*). By dividing existent into the necessary and the contingent, Ibn Sina introduces the concept of the existent since it functions as a pointer to the existent itself. This is because the pure existent, without considering other aspects, is not divisible into the necessary and the contingent. What can indeed be divided into the necessary and the contingent is the concept of the existent insofar as it points to an existent that may be essential or non-essential. Thus one must accept that Ibn Sina remains within the domain of Aristotelian metaphysics, which is primarily and directly concerned with the “existent” and not “existence.” Transition from the “existent” to “existence” is Mulla Sadra's existential characteristic. This reveals the primary importance that he places on existence as the actual

existence.

Not considering the distinction between “existence” and “quiddity” and the division of the existent into necessity and contingency sufficient for explaining philosophical problems, Mulla Sadra establishes the notion of the principality or the fundamental reality of existence as the basis of his metaphysical system.⁴ On this basis he moves from frequent conceptual discussions in past philosophies to discussions of “existence.” He consistently emphasizes the necessity of differentiating between the two meanings of existence, that is, the existent, which is the philosophical secondary intelligible, and the concrete and external reality of existence.⁵ By transition from the concept of existence to the reality of existence, he ceases to consider the combination of existence and quiddity as the criterion for the contingent need and its difference from necessity. He propounds possibility in the sense of need (*imkan-i faqri*) for essential possibility (*imkan-i mahuwi*), and instead of the distinction between the referents of necessity and contingency, which are both considered existent, he proposes the distinction between the stages of the reality of existence.⁶ Moreover, not finding the distinction between existence and quiddity consistent with the basis of the principality of existence, and neither finding it sufficient for the need of the world to God, he sets out the above principle as the foundation of “Burhan Siddiqin” in his philosophy. In this way, he inspires the spirit of Ibn Sina’s argument in its principality of existence and through this recreation releases himself from dividing existents into the necessary and the contingent, which is related to the principality of quiddity.

B. The Distinction between “Quiddity” and “Existence” as a Fundam-Ental Principle in Ibn Sina’s Ontology

Ibn Sina’s theory of existence is based on the distinction between “quiddity” and “existence.” According to Aristotle, this is a logical distinction⁷; but Ibn Sina extends this distinction, altering it to an ontological one. There is no reason for Aristotle to move from the domain of logic to the domain of metaphysics.⁸ The world, from his point of view, is both eternal and necessary so that in the other world proof of the reality of an essence means proving its existence. In this regard, E. Gilson says that in the rationale of the Islamic philosopher Ibn Sina, it is not like that; he is well aware of the Jewish – Christian concept of creation and with the concept of the real gap which exists, both in reality and in logic, between essence and existence. Essence is exactly the presence of the contingent before the knowledge of

God, and that essence, in itself, does not contain the reason of its real existence. If God does not grant him real existence, essence shall never come into being. To understand the concept of God, one must conceive of Him as an existence in whose case this problem does not apply, and the only way to fulfil this point is to think of God as if he has no essence, or, using Ibn Sina's word, quiddity.⁹

To emphasize the distinction between "existence" and "quiddity" or "essence,"¹⁰ Ibn Sina follows the idea of Farabi. Based on this distinction, he introduced into Islamic philosophy the concept of existence as a metaphysical element distinct from quiddity. Doing so, he has gone much further than Aristotle and has led the analysis of the concept of existence beyond the domain of substance into the domain of actual existence.¹¹ He shows that appending a non-individuated and general quiddity to another non-individuated, general quiddity does not prompt its individuation. From his perspective, the criterion of individuation may not be sought in the appending and conjunction of quiddities. Individuation is the essential property of existence and quiddity is only determined within the domain of existence.

This statement is considered a turning point in the history of philosophical thought, since before its time philosophical discussions were based on the idea that external existents must be identified only by means of quiddities. In fact, quiddity was the fundamental basis of philosophical discussion, while after Farabi, the attention of philosophers turned towards existence, and they came to understand that concrete existence has special properties that cannot be understood by means of essential properties.

While discussing existence in his *Metaphysics*,¹² Aristotle explicitly distinguishes two kinds of existence. By existence, he means substance. The theory of existence in Aristotle's philosophy cannot be studied independently of his theory of substance. Substance, in Aristotle's opinion, is either pure form, if it is non-material, or it is the unity of form and matter, if it is body. According to Aristotelian philosophy, each of them, is an existent by itself, which is independent of others in order to survive. Aristotle considers the contingent a mobile existent composed of potential and action, which in the end leads to necessary existent, that is the first Unmoved Mover the great cause of actualizing potential. The first mover is the everlasting principle of the everlasting motion, which moves the world as the final cause, meaning that it belongs to desire and love. In Aristotle's view, if the first mover, as the efficient cause, were the cause of motion, then

it would undergo change as well.

As a result, one must not take the relationship between the necessary and the contingent in Aristotle's philosophy as if the contingent were the created thing of the necessary and the necessary its creator and creative efficient cause.

Specifically attributed¹³ to some Mu'tazilite scholars who do not believe the contingent essence having subsistence before its existence,¹⁴ contingencies, in the sense that Ibn Sina attributed to beings is not the same contingency that Greek philosophers believed in. Undoubtedly, in Plato's view, the multiplicity of the visible world with regard to the unity of the world of Ideas is like a contingent subject. According to Aristotle, those existents subjected to the process of realization in the world are in the process of being contingent in relation to the necessity of the first immovable mover. But we have no way of proving the equivalence of contingency for Ibn Sina and for Greek philosophers. The conception of contingency in Ibn Sina's philosophy is not possible before realizing the special belief in the Lord creator, who brings objects into existence from non-existence by the simple word "Be".

2- Ibn Sina theory of Causality differs from that of Aristotle in that Ibn Sina considers the agency of the Truth as a creative and inventive agency. Invention is something that becomes the origin as a creative and inventive agent. Invention is something that becomes the origin of the existence of another thing without the intermediary of matter, tool, or time. When analyzing the relationship between the sensible, changing world and the pure actuality, Aristotle considers pure actuality as the final cause of existents.¹⁵ The pure act is not the efficient cause of the world rather He is the pure thought having knowledge of himself, which means that He is thought of thought, but has closed the door to the world and has nothing to do with it. Aristotle considers the world eternal.

Ibn Sina accepts this idea but interprets it according to his own philosophy. Naturally Ibn Sina does not accept Aristotle's theory, because for him God is the creator of the world and the source of the existence of everything,¹⁶ and that is why he rejects the theory that the world is eternal and uncreated. Ibn Sina challenges Aristotle on this point. On the one hand, he takes God as the creator, the guardian, and the intelligent Designer of the world and, on the other hand, he rejects the infiniteness and the eternity of the world.

Ibn Sina's idea about the origination of the world is closely related to his

conception of the possible (contingent) and the necessary existent. In his opinion, the origination of the world exactly means that between two totally different existents – that is, that which is necessary in itself and that which is contingent in itself, but becomes necessary through relationship with the necessary existent – there is an intermediate process known as origination. As a result, the world is contingent and God is pre-eternal.¹⁷

Origination, in this sense, could not have been conceivable for Aristotle, since the world he is concerned with is one whose non-existence is inconceivable. There is no place for the concept of distinction and of the relationship between the necessary and the contingent in such a metaphysical system.

In criticizing and challenging the views of theologians, whose arguments on the existence of the creator is based on the temporal contingency of the world, Ibn Sina considers the combination of existence and quiddity and the precedence of existence over non – existence as the necessary condition for the potential of an object to be created.¹⁸ In Ibn Sina's opinion, invention is a higher stage of creation and evolution. So the existence of the world, be it eternal or non-eternal and whether having a temporal beginning or not, in any case, requires a Maker. Both in origination and in survival, the world requires a Maker.

3- In Ibn Sina's ontology, the discussion of the necessary and the contingent has a close relationship with his theology. Ibn Sina's theology, based on the ontology of the necessary and the contingent, has been presented in various ways in *al-Shifa*, *al-Nijah* and *al-Isharat*, and his other writings.¹⁹ The basis of this division is the distinction between existence and quiddity, which is regarded as one of the central philosophical problems. In Ibn Sina philosophy, the discussion of the necessary and the contingent naturally leads to the discussion of the necessary existence in itself, which is beyond the world of contingencies, and is exempted from any type of composition, including the composition of existence and quiddity. In Ibn Sina's opinion, the essential characteristic of such a being is the necessity of existence and the reason for his existence has a logical relationship with this attribute.

Ibn Sina establishes the concept of the “necessary existent” as the foundation of his theology. Among the names and attributes used in religious texts, the one closer to “necessary existent” is “self-sufficient” or “intense.” He always emphasizes that the necessary existent is pure existence and absolute entity and does not consist of quiddity. This is because whatever

has quiddity is a cause, while an absolute existence, which is essential in it, is not a cause. Such a being is the Truth and anything other than Him is false. The Truth is the one whose existence comes from Him.²⁰

In his interpretation of “Surat -al-Tawhid”, which contains his viewpoint concerning the knowledge of the Truth, His Names, and Attributes, Ibn Sina points out the above-mentioned truth.²¹ Then, under the Holy verse “*Allah-al-Samad*” (Allah is he on whom all depend), he attempts to interpret the meaning of “*samad*”, the impenetrable, which is totally compatible with the concept of “Necessary Existence.”²²

In this way, inspired by religious texts, Ibn Sina proposes a principle in this philosophy, which is then followed in Islamic philosophy. He considers God as the sole being in whose realm there is no room for non-existence, meaning that quiddity and existence are identical in God. This principle became an effusive source for Islamic philosophy, so much so that all studies done afterwards can be considered as its results. Such an idea cannot be found in the philosophical systems of Plato and Aristotle so the source of this idea must be sought in Farabi. Existence in this metaphysical system is something that cannot be explained and accounted for by means of the essential nature of quiddity. This is true in the case of all contingent existents. God, and only God is absolutely simple in his existence.

By simple, Aristotle means a form, which is not mixed up with matter. He considers the first mover pure actuality in which one can find no composition, no potential or matter, no change or motion, and no recipient or agent. In Ibn Sina’s philosophy, and after him in all Islamic philosophy, simplicity is proved more precisely for the supreme God, which requires rejection of any type of compositions, even composition of the rational analytic parts. On this basis, the necessary existent is neither to be made definite nor to be proved; no composition of existence and quiddity exists in his essence and no composition of genus and differentia is attributable to his essence.²³

4 – The concepts of unity and creation are concepts explicitly presented in Islamic philosophy. Ibn Sina’s philosophy, the discussion of unity and multiplicity inevitably leads to the discussion of the First principle of existence, which is the same as the one in the absolute sense,²⁴ and there is nothing like him. “*laysa kamithlihi shaiy*”²⁵ (Nothing similar to likeness).

Ibn Sina did not acquire the concept of monotheism from the prevailing tradition in Greece. In none of the philosophical systems of Greece, does one find a single existence called God upon whom the existence of the whole

world depends. Never was such success was achieved, even through the Divine knowledge of which Plato and Aristotle boasted.

According to Plato in *Timaeus Dialogue*, there is the Demiurge who cannot be considered the principle of principles, since ideas are above and beyond him, and the Demiurge, by considering the ideas as a prototype, designs the world by copying them.²⁶ The *Timaeus* indicates Plato's attempt to recognize a God, who even though he occupies the first rank amongst the Gods, nevertheless counts as one of them. The Demiurge, according to what we see in the *Timaeus*, cannot be a religious God. One cannot obtain the concept of creation from Plato's view of the Demiurge.

The same holds true with Aristotle; even though the concept of a single God may be found in Aristotle's works, in the 10th book of *Metaphysics*, one encounters polytheism.²⁷ Aristotle's God, compared to the God of Islam is a separate, immovable mover who is pure and has not brought our world into existence,²⁸ while the God of Islam is pure existence, and the giver of existence to the world, and the creator of the world. From a philosophical point of view, the multiplicity of the immovable mover is not impossible, while in Ibn Sina's philosophy the Necessary Existent is essentially free from any kind of multiplicity.

5 – To prove the reality of monotheism, which is a rational issue in nature and is one of the most important intelligible concepts, Ibn Sina makes attempts to grasp an accurate concept of God. This is because the nature of this truth, which has a decisive effect on the evolution of philosophical thought, becomes clearer by the attempt to relate the question of the essence of God to the question of his unity. The reason that Greek philosophers were not able to understand the unity and the oneness of God and make it the basis of their principles is that they did not recognize God in the true sense, which is incompatible with plurality. God in Aristotelian philosophy is the first mover and is devoid of any change and motion; that is, God is the pure actuality and separate from matter.²⁹ In Ibn Sina's opinion, instead, God is a being without any kind of need and dependence on another and is self-existent and self-sufficient. Ibn Sina goes beyond the distinction between material and immaterial, as stipulated in Aristotle's philosophy, and grasps to the distinction between necessity and contingency. The criterion presented by Aristotle to clarify the distinction between material and non-material substance cannot explain the distinction between God and material and immaterial substance. Ibn Sina considering God as necessary, and all other than God -be it material or immaterial- as

contingent, is able to prove the belief in God philosophically and intellectually.³⁰

The God, which Ibn Sina seeks to know and considers the source of all objects, is not itself one of the abstract universal concepts, neither does its content in any way conform to such concepts. God is beyond all imaginable and sensible forms and all concepts that we may have of him. There is no possible definition for his essence, since he does not have genus and differentia.³¹ No reference to him is possible but through pure intellectual Gnosticism.³² God is the actual absolute existence with regard to pure actuality. Reason cannot apprehend his innermost core and the truth of such an existence. He has a reality without a Name. His necessity of existence and the absolute unity are either lexical explanation of that reality or a requirement of His requirements.³³

Ibn Sina considers the perfection and the infiniteness of the Divine Truth, which are interdependent, as two necessary aspects of an existence who is necessarily existent and for whom existence is essentially necessary. To prove the infiniteness of the essence of the truth and his names, Ibn Sina begins his contemplation from the concept of existence and concludes that one must accept the necessity of an existence, which is the first being. Afterwards, he meditates upon other attributes of the first being and proves that he is the efficient cause, and has knowledge and will; he is knowledgeable about his own essence and about all the objects in the world.³⁴

Ibn Sina's opinion in this regard differs from that of Aristotle. Aristotle asserts that the subject of God's knowledge is the same as the Divine essence,³⁵ and proposes God's knowledge as his knowledge of his own essence. But Ibn Sina is a Muslim sage and does not accept such a concept of God, which is totally inconsistent with the omniscient, present and observant God of the Koran. Ibn Sina explicitly claims that God is aware of his essence, and because He is the efficient cause of every thing, He is knowledgeable about whatever emanates from him; He even knows particulars. In the language of the Quranic verse, he declares: Not the weight of an atom becomes absent from Him in the heavens or in the earth.³⁶

Ibn Sina accounts for such knowledge by recognizing the first causes of particulars. Since particulars necessarily originated from their cause, "the First existent, who is knowledgeable about these causes and their consequences, is necessarily knowledgeable about particulars themselves."³⁷

In addition to proving knowledge, will and other attributes of God, Ibn

Sina also proves that His essence contains these attributes infinitely. To achieve such a conclusion implies having the most perfect conceivable concept about God.³⁸

6- Ibn Sina regards God as the pure act of existence, while Aristotle considers him the pure act of thought. Ibn Sina always emphasizes the point that if by pure act one means the pure act of existence, then the totality of the actuality of existence makes the infinite existence, one beyond which nothing may be found. The logical necessity of such an idea is the proof of God by a new argument that is called *Burhan – i – Siddiqin*, the first version, which was presented in chapter four of *al-Isharat wa'l – Tanbiha* (Remarks and Admonitions). In the words of earlier scholars and Ibn Sina's contemporaries, the arguments in this book were unprecedented and were for the philosopher a great source of pride.³⁹

With the arguments detailed in this book, Ibn Sin opens a new chapter in Islamic philosophy in proving the existence of God, paving the way for the appearance of a fundamental theory in the discussion of God; a theory enabling us to conceive the existence of the world, assuming the existence of God.

Not a trace of this argument can be ascertained from the Greeks. Plato and Aristotle, who did not consider God as the very existence, were not able to present such an argument to prove the existence of God; this idea was wholly initiated by Islamic philosophers.. Utilizing a pure rational analysis and independently from the interference of objects and created beings, Ibn Sina both proves the existence of God and states God's pre-knowledge over all incidents at the same time, he shows that the whole world is contingent and becomes necessary by assuming the existence of God.

7- Ibn Sina's approach to interpreting the world is completely related to the distinction between the necessary and the contingent, and the ensuing distinction between quiddity and existence. Ibn Sina founds his ontology upon this distinction. This distinction is important because on this basis, Ibn Sina regards God as the very existent.

Inevitably, our interpretation of the world changes. It is only God whose existence is real. Apart from Him, all are contingents and do not hold a position higher than a contingent position. In every moment of their existence, they require a necessary existent who, by perpetually shining his light upon them, bestows the station of existence on everything.

The world that Ibn Sina conceives of on the basis of the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadiths, which is presented by Islamic philosophers in a

philosophical language, differs from that of Plato and Aristotle. The Aristotelian world is an eternal and everlasting one and has an everlasting necessity where a Supreme God has not created the world; such a world is actually existent and the possibility of its non-existence is inconceivable. In contrast, Ibn Sina is aware of the Islamic concept of creation.

He constantly attempts to reveal the contingent aspect of all created beings with regard to the necessary creator; in this way, he remains faithful to a principle, which is fundamental in Islam. That is why Ibn Sina's conception of such a world can be regarded as one of the chief elements of Islamic philosophy.

As a result, the world in his view is a contingent existent which requires a cause, if it is attributed to existence. It is not the case that the world comprises a pre-eternal matter with forms bestowed from the Giver of forms or that the world simply owes its motion to the First Principle. Rather, the world owes its total entity to God. In Ibn Sina's opinion, God, and only God is necessary in his existence, and the existence of other objects is contingent. That is why they all emanate from the existence of God.⁴⁰

8 – After the problem of necessity and existence, there is hardly a problem more important than the problem of motion in Islamic philosophy. This is one of those cases that show how, because of delving into some issues common to both philosophies, Islamic philosophy has been more fruitful than Greek philosophy. Ibn Sina came to believe that motion does not simply mean the possibility of various modes of existence in beings that come into being constantly, and then disappear. Rather, he believes, motion means the essential possibility of existence in the very being, which undergo change. He, who believed in the God of Islam, introduced the distinction between existence and quiddity in order to illustrate the eternal world, which according to Aristotle persisted outside of God and without God. In this way, he managed to prove that the world was in fact created. In his opinion, all contingent and sensible beings possess a kind of decline (*u'ful*), since their existence depends on another. In *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, Ibn Sina refers to the opinions of thinkers concerning the necessity and the contingency of external existents and states the truthful word based on the holy verse “*la ohib al-afilin*” (I do not love the setting ones).⁴¹

This essential contingency makes the world – be it material or immaterial, but owing to its connection to the metaphysics – gain a new manifestation which is very important, and we come to realize its importance when we propose the problem concerned with the existential agentives of the Truth.

9-By accepting the problem of creation, which is explicitly found in religious sources and texts, Ibn Sina totally departs from Greek philosophy. In numerous verses, the Qur'an refers to God as the creator of everything and emphasizes His absolute power. Also, in contrast with the gods of the polytheists, it regards creativeness and power as the exclusive attributes of God.⁴² The first verse sent down upon the Prophet of Islam in order to declare to him the mission bestowed upon him on monotheism starts by pointing out the problem of creation.⁴³ The Holy Qur'an regards creation and command as the sole property of God,⁴⁴ and states so about the manner of creation. "(His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it: Be, so it is)"⁴⁵

There is no sign of philosophy in these verses, yet meditation upon these verses, which denote His action, has had a deep influence upon the philosophical thinking of Muslims.

Belief in creation must not be attributed to Aristotle and Plato, because accepting the first principle of the whole existence, as Plato and Aristotle believed, only provides the answer to the question of why the world is as it is, but it does not clarify why the world exists. In *Timaeus*, Plato portrays the Demiurge as giving everything to the world without giving its existence.⁴⁶ Plato, contrary to Muslim philosophers, cannot accept that God may bring an object from non-existence into existence simply by saying, "Be". In Plato's view, the activity of the Demiurge is giving form, not giving existence. At the same time, the first immovable mover, in whom Aristotle believes, is considered the cause of all other than God. However, one should not attribute the belief in the origin of the creation of the world to Plato. In his philosophy, he does not discuss the relationship between the first cause and existence. He reaches the truth that God is the final cause of the world. Aristotle however, did not comprehend that God is the very existence, so it is possible to excuse him for his ignorance in accepting creation.

10- In Ibn Sina's philosophy, the world is conceptualized in such a way that God not only grants existence to it, but also maintains it at each moment. Such a world depends on a will that is permanently determined to create it. Ibn Sina is completely aware of the Islamic concept of the permanent relationship between God and the world.

Based on such an interpretation of the world, one must note that objects, not only based on their forms and the combination of these forms with each other, but also based on their existence, are not confined to essence. Since

the created world has possibility by itself and is essentially preceded by non-existence, it is continually and automatically heading towards non-existence, and at no time can it get rid itself of non-existence, unless an existence is granted to it, which it can not grant itself, nor can it maintain for itself. In this world nothing may exist, be it the cause of an action or be it exposed to a reaction, without its existence and realization and its action and reaction having originated from an absolute, self-subsistent, immovable, infinite existence.

11- Ibn Sina's opinion about the relationship of the world with God differ from that of Greek philosophers, which is why the arguments for the existence of God attain new meanings. Since Ibn Sina accepts the creativeness and the essential possibility of the world as two fundamental principles in his philosophy, one can clearly interpret the arguments to prove the existence of God based on the recognition of the world. Sometimes quoting from Aristotle exactly, nevertheless Ibn Sina advanced his ideas differently than Aristotle. In the world portrayed by Aristotle, God and the world are parallel to each other from pre-eternity to eternity. Unlike Aristotle, Ibn Sina's view denotes an Islamic tradition, for the God of this sage is not considered as the first being of the world; rather, he is the "First" with respect to the existence of this world and is its causer and creator.

Proving the existence of God through His artefacts implies accepting His existence as the creator of the world, and it implies the acceptance of the idea that the efficient cause of the world cannot be anything but its creator. The point to be accepted as a general chapter in Islamic philosophy is that the concept of creativeness is the foundation of any type of argument proposed by Islamic philosophers to prove the existence of God. Like any other Islamic thinker, Ibn Sina establishes a relationship between cause and effect, which is the means of connecting the world to God by taking existence into account.

In his view, there is no doubt that whatever exists owes its existence to God. In Ibn Sina's opinion, the creative power of God, with respect to any act, does not involve any matter to which that act applies. Being a potential existence, how can matter be considered a condition, making the act of existence conditional upon itself? In fact, everything, including the matter itself, is subject to the act of creation. Thus, one must accept that God is the cause of the existence of nature before being the cause of any other event in nature. As a result, all the arguments put forward by Farabi and Ibn Sina and following them, by all other Islamic philosophers to prove God as efficient

cause, prove the creative power of God as well.

12-Even though he uses of wordings of Aristotle's argumentation, the argument proposed by Ibn Sina to prove the existence of God under the title of the First mover has its own specific meaning, which cannot belong but to any other but Ibn Sina's philosophy. Aristotle's argument on motion does not imply the proof of the existence of a God who has created the world preceded by non-existence; it only proves the existence of a God who is the ultimate end of all beings;⁴⁷ and attracts beings towards himself.⁴⁸

In Aristotle's view, what set skies and stars into motion is their own desire towards God, while in Ibn Sina's view the affection and the favour of God towards the world is the origin of creation. The same kind of distinction existing between the final cause and the efficient cause also exists between these two kinds of causation. Even though Ibn Sina refers to Aristotle regarding the problem of the efficient cause, since the concept of efficiency does not have identical reference within these two philosophies, it must be acknowledged that the argument proposed by him to prove God as the efficient cause totally differs from that of Aristotle.

The result of his argument is that beyond a series of causes whose effect shows up in the form of motion and change, there exists a cause, which is the first source of existence, and that is God. So the act of God is not confined to the causation of motion and change; rather, it is the granting of existence.

13 – Ibn Sina attempts most explicitly to differentiate between the Natural Agent and Divine Agent. The former is the granter of motion, but the latter is the granter of existence.⁴⁹ That is why Ibn Sina does not accept any argument to prove God by simply relying on the knowledge of nature. He only accepts those arguments that are related to existence by its very nature of being existence. Ibn Sina regards Aristotle's scientific and intellectual status too high to attempt to prove God through natural phenomena like motion. So he comments on it thus: It is very hard for me to accept that belief in the origin and His unity is based on motion and the unity of the mobile world. It is conjectured as such in Aristotle's metaphysics. Such a conjecture, though not surprising on the part of a beginner, is surprising on the part of the great scholars of the field.⁵⁰

14- Nature, in Ibn Sina's philosophy, is a domain of reality, created for a specific, ultimate goal, and all its phenomena are meaningful, and the wisdom of its creator is evident every where.⁵¹ Nature has been created under the design and the Divine system, and its ultimate goal is the realization of the best order.⁵²

In Ibn Sina's opinion, since the Divine essence conceives of itself as the pure intellect and as the origin and source of all contingent beings, he brings the created world into existence directly and without any intermediary, and order permeates throughout the world. What Ibn Sina is looking for is the cause of the existence of order, if there is in fact an order. In the same way that his argument for the existence of God as the first mover does not mean that he considers Him as the principal mover of nature, proving his existence as the final cause does not mean that he is only a regulator of this entirely orderly and exact world either. His words can be well understood if we join the stage of making with the stage of creating. Belief in such a designer, thus, is not the result of our attention to the precision in the order of the world, since we may consider nature without such a precision in many respects: rather, it is because wherever there exists order, there must also be a cause to bestow its existence.

NOTES

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3. Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle* translated in English, ed. W. D. Ross, II Vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931) *Metaph.*, VII-II, 1028b2.
4. See: Mulla Sadra, *al-Mash'air, le livre des pénétration métaphysiques*, ed and trans. Henry Corbin (Tehran and Paris, 1964), pp.9-27; *al-Shawahid alRububiyyah*, ed. Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani,(Tehran , Markaz Nashr-e Daneshgahy Press, 1360 H.S.), p. 6; *al-Hikmat al – Muta alliyah fil-Asfar al-Arba' ah* , 4 ed., Vol. 1 , (Beirut-Lebanon, Dar Ahya Attrath Arabi Press , 1410 A.H., 1990A.D.), p.53.
5. Mulla Sadra, *al-Masha'ir*, p.4.
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7. See: Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, II, C., VII 92b 10
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9. See: Gilson Etienne, *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, (New York, Garden City Press 1960), p.178.
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11. Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr, *Fusus al-Hikmah*, (Qum, Bidar Press, 1405 A. H.), pp. 47-50; *al-Ta'liqat*, ed. Jafar al-Yasin, (Tehran, Hikmah Press, 1371 H.S.), p. 139; *Uyun al-Masa'el*, (Cairo, 1328 A. H.) p. 50; *Al- Da'awi'l – Ghalbiyyah*, (Heidar Abad Dakan, *Da'erat al Maa'refe'l – Osmaniyyah*, 1345 A.H.), pp.2-3.
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- 21- Ibn Sina, *Rasa'il, Surah Towhid*, pp. 313-4.
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26. Plato, *The Works of Plato*, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed, (UK, Oxford University Press, 1892), *Timaeus*, 30 b; see: Copleston Frederick, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Greece and Room, (Image Books, Garden City, 1962), *Plato, the doctrine of forms*, pp. 192-7.
27. Aristotle, *Metaph.*, XII, 7-8; *Physics*, 285b11, 259b28-31.
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30. Ibn Sina, *al-Isharat*, Vol. 3, pp. 472-3.
31. *Ibid*, 63.
32. *Ibid*, 65.
33. Ibn Sina, *al-Ta'liqat*, pp. 185-186; *Ibid*.34.
34. For a detailed discussion of God's Attributes, see: *al-Shifa, al- Ilahiyyat*, pp. 344-69; *al-Najah*, pp.280-2.
35. Aristotle, *Metaph.*, XII, IX, 1074b15-35.
36. *Qur'an, Saba*, 3.
37. Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa, al-Ilahyyat*, p. 360.
38. Ibn Sina, *al-Najah*, p.282.
39. *Qur'an, Ha'mim*, 53, *al-Isharat*, Vol.3, p.66.
40. Ibn Sina, *Rasa'il, al-Rasalat wa'l-Arshiyah*, p. 254.
41. *Qur'an, Ana'm* 76, Ibn Sina, *al-Isharat*, Vol. 3, p. 127.
42. *Qur'an, Rum*, 40.
43. *Qur'an, Alagh*, 1.
44. *Qur'an, Araf*, 54.
45. *Qur'an, Yaseen*, 82.

46. Plato, *The Works of Plato*, Timaeus, 30b; see: Gilson, Etienne, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, translated by A. H. C. Downes, (London, University of Notre Dame Press 1991), p. 68.
47. Copleston Frederick, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, part II, philosophy of nature and psychology, pp.62-4.
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The Analysis of the Relationship of Generation

Rasool Abudiyyat

Abstract

In this article, the relationship between the effect and the efficient cause is discussed. By the efficient cause or agent we mean the generating cause. So, initially a comparison is made between the existential exchange (generation) and other exchanges with their difference explained. Then an analysis is made of the concept of cause's attribute of generation. Analysing the infinitive concepts, including the concept of generation, the emphasized conclusion is that the generation of the cause is nothing other than linkage to the cause, and in its relation to the cause, it has an inhering existence.

A frequently asked question is, 'What is generation (existence-granting)?' What do we mean when we say that the efficient cause generates the effect? What do we mean when we assume that the efficient cause gives existence to the effect? Does it mean that there is a reservoir full of existence, and whenever the efficient cause intends to give existence to an effect it takes existence from that reservoir and gives it to the effect, and thus, the effect, which did not exist previously, becomes existent? Such a thought is too naïve and simple. Nevertheless, to come to an exact understanding of the issue it is better to start our discussion with this naïve thought, analysing it to make its contradictions clear. After pointing out each contradiction, we will improve upon the illustration discussing ways in which the contradiction can be removed. Finally we will arrive at an exact picture of generation.

To elucidate the discussion, let us suppose that A is the generating cause and B is its effect.

In our naïve picture, the relationship of generation is assumed to be similar to for instance giving and taking money; in short, it is similar to all other exchanges of which we are familiar. For example, a person such as Hassan gives money to another person such as Reza, four realities and external things are involved:

1. The giver: Hassan

2. The receiver: Reza
 3. The thing given: money
 4. The act of giving: The act and movement done by the giver, Hassan
- Of course sometimes the act of taking can be analysed as the fifth element in the same way that the act of giving is analysed but for convenience we have not discussed it. Therefore, the presence of at least four things is necessary. Now supposing that the relationship of generation is similar to that of giving and taking money, we can then say when the generating cause gives existence to the cause four things and external realities are involved:
1. The giver: the generating cause (A)
 2. The receiver: the effect (B)
 3. The thing given: Existence
 4. The act of giving: Generation (the act accomplished by the generating cause)

Thus, it is supposed that in the external A, the cause, is one thing; ⁴ B, its effect, is another thing; existence, given by A to B, is a third thing; and generation, the act of giving existence to B (the act of A), is a fourth thing. If the effect were one existent and the existence, which it receives from the cause, were another existent, our supposed effect then should not be an effect. That is, B should not be the effect of A because if B were itself one existent and the existence which it receives from A another existent, it should exist without receiving existence from A. The existence of B without receiving existence from A means that B is not the effect of A, and A is not the generating cause of B, whereas we had supposed that A is the generating cause of B. This is a contradiction and is impossible, for the supposition that 'A is the generating cause of B' is incompatible with the supposition that 'in the external the existence that A gives to B is different from B itself.' Therefore, when we assume that A is the generating cause of B, to avoid a contradiction we have to accept that the effect in the external is exactly the same existence given by A, and that the effect is not different from the existence which is given to it. The effect is nothing other than the conferred existence. Thus, the first amendment that we introduce is that the relationship of generation the receiver (the effect) is equal to that which is given (existence). Outside the mind there is no multiplicity; there is one simple single existence. It is our mind that in its analysis of this one simple single existence divides it into two concepts: the existence of the effect and the effect itself. It supposes then that the first (existence) is given to the second (the effect itself) by the cause, and the second receives it from the cause.

Now we move to the fourth thing, the analysis of the act that is done by the cause, namely giving existence to the effect. We have proved that the supposition that A is the generating cause of B requires that the existence of the effect and the effect itself in the external should be one rather than two things. Considering this point, giving existence to the effect would mean that we give the thing to itself. But is this intelligible? Clearly not, since if one thing lacks something we can give to it through the act of ‘giving’, but if it already has it, how could we give the thing itself to it again? We can of course give it something similar, but it is impossible to give the thing to itself again. It is also supposed that the existence of the effect to be equal to the effect itself and there is no diversity. There is pure oneness to the extent that even we cannot say “the effect has existence,” but we must say, “The effect is existence itself.” In that case, how could the cause give the effect to itself? To logically solve this problem we have to follow one of these three solutions:⁵

1. We have to unravel what we have already weaved, that is, we have to accept that in the external the effect is one thing and its existence is another thing. In that case, giving existence to the effect would become meaningful. However, as demonstrated, this will be against our supposition and it will be contradictory and impossible; therefore, this solution cannot be accepted.
2. We have to accept that no act of ‘giving’ has been done, on the grounds that giving the thing to itself would be meaningless and contradictory. The bearing of that statement would be that the cause has done nothing, namely, it has given no existence to the effect. In other words, A is not the generating cause of B, whereas we had already assumed that it is, so this would be against our supposition and it would be contradictory and impossible. Therefore, besides solving the problem by erasing the form of the question, this solution will lead to contradiction and, therefore, it cannot be accepted.
3. We have to accept that as the existence of the effect in the external is the same as the effect itself, in a similar way it is also the same as the act of the cause. In other words, the effect in its existence is nothing other than the act of the cause. According to this solution, the act of ‘generating’ [giving existence] and the existence of the effect, which is the same as the effect itself produced following the act of the cause, are not two different things. In fact, the effect is the very act of the cause itself. Therefore, we do not have four things in the external—the cause, the effect, existence, and generating (giving existence); we have only two things: the cause and the activity and the functioning of the cause, which we call ‘the effect’, ‘the existence of the effect’, and ‘giving existence to the effect or generating the effect’. This

solution involves no contradiction, and considering that logically we have no other solution, we may conclude that the supposition 'A is the generating cause of B' is equal to the supposition 'B is nothing other than the activity and working of A'. In other words, either we should not accept the existence of the generating cause, which would be incompatible with the principle of causality, or if we accept it (and logically we have no other choice), it should mean that the effect is nothing other than the activity and working of the cause. Accepting this point amounts to another amendment to the naïve picture mentioned already. Following this amendment, we have to renounce forever this supposition that the generating cause does something and due to its activity another thing is produced, which is the effect. The 'existence of the effect' is the same as 'the generation of the cause', and the 'creature' is the same as 'the creator's creation itself.'

This aforementioned concept is difficult to grasp. Perhaps it might become clearer with the following example. Throughout our life all of us have exercised our will many times. In fact, our soul is the efficient cause of the will, that is, it is its generating cause and the will is its effect. But how is the will produced in our soul? 1. Is it in the way that the soul, first, does something called 'willing' and then in the wake of this activity something is produced in us by the name of 'the will', in such a way that when our willing comes to an end, still it will exist in us? 2. Or, is it that our will is equal to our willing—they are not two things, one to follow the other, but one thing called 'willing' from one perspective and 'the will' from another perspective—and this is why as soon as we stop willing there will be no will? By giving brief consideration to this spiritual activity it will become obvious that the latter option is valid.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF GENERATION

We came to the conclusion that the effect is the same as the cause's generation. Now we have to take another step, and that is the analysis of the concept of generation. What is the reality of generation? We should say that the concept of generation is an infinitive concept, and like any other infinitive concept, it demonstrates two characteristics in its extension:

1. This concept shows that its extension is a sort of linkage: linkage to the generator, linkage to the efficient cause.

So what is the meaning of the statement 'A is linked to B'? To answer this question we have to note that concerning the linkage and dependence of A on B there are three possibilities: a) The accidental linkage and dependence of A on B; b) The essential linkage and dependence of A on B; c) The linkage and dependence of A on B.

In the first state the need and dependence of A on B is not the same as the existence and reality of B so that without B it should not exist; rather this dependence is imposed on A from the outside. The emergence and the occurrence of a certain state in A causes the dependence of A on B. The need of a car for oil could be an example. Its need for oil is not the same as the existence of the car so that without the oil it should not exist; rather it is an accidental need that occurs to the car when it begins to move. This kind of need is called ‘accidental need, linkage, or dependence’.

In the states of b and c the need and dependence of A on B is the same as the existence and reality of A, and is not imposed on it by another thing from the outside. Naturally, A would not exist without B; otherwise there would be a contradiction. In philosophical terms, in these two states the existence of A in itself and essentially is in need of and is dependent on B. Nevertheless there is a difference between these two states.

In the state of b, the dependence of A on B is so that the mind can consider A without considering its dependence on B. From this perspective it analyses A in terms of two things: one thing by the name of ‘the essence of A’ or ‘A itself’ which shows no trace of need for or dependence on B, and another thing by the name of ‘the need for, dependence on or linkage of A to B’. Following this analysis it decrees that A is an essence dependent on, and in need of B. In other words, it decrees that in this state A is in need of linked to, and is dependent on B. In this state it is said that A is linked to B, and technically it is said that the existence of A is ‘an inhering existence’.⁶

In the state of c, the mind cannot make such an analysis. In this state, the mind basically does not see any essence or self for A; rather it sees it as one piece of linkage and dependence. This is why in this state it does not judge that A is in need for or is linked to or is dependent on B, but it judges that A is the very need of and linkage to and dependence on B. In this state only B exists along with its linkage, which is A. In this state it is said that A is linked to B, and technically the existence of A is called ‘copulative existence’.⁷

Considering the difference between “inhering” and “copulative” or the difference between the copulative existence and inhering existence, and considering that generation (= giving existence) is of the kind of a copulative existence rather than inhering existence (it is linkage and not linked to). If we do not understand the external existence and reality of the effect to be the same as the cause’s generation, it would mean that the effect in one way or another is independent of its cause and it has a self against the self of the cause, and a linkage by the name of ‘generation’ links it to the cause.

According to this view, the effect is not an independent linkage to the cause, but it is linked to the cause. But now that we understand the existence of the effect to be the same as the cause's generation, because the cause's generation is nothing other than a linkage to the cause, the existence of the effect is the same as a linkage to the cause rather than being linked to the cause. In that case, the effect has no independence from the generating cause nor has it a self against the existence of the cause. Therefore, the external reality of the effect is not linked or dependent on the cause, and it is not in need of it; rather it is the very linkage to and the very dependence on the cause. It is the same as the need for the cause. It is because of this characteristic that we cannot imagine that there could be generation without a generator. Generation without a generator is a contradiction and is impossible. It is the same with all other infinitive concepts: going somewhere without your person or arriving somewhere without your person would be impossible because going or arriving are nothing other than linkage to the person who goes or arrives. As was said, every infinitive concept reflects two characteristics in its extension. Now we turn to the second characteristic.

2. This concept demonstrates that there is a sort of change or alteration in its extension. Perhaps this characteristic is more obvious in the extensions of other infinitive concepts. For example, *going* is a movement that occurs gradually over a passage of time, and we know that movement is the same as the gradual change. *Arriving* is a matter that happens instantly and it remains thereafter. In other words, the change is instant and sudden. Every other infinitive concept that we consider shows a kind of change, or gradual or sudden alteration in its extension. It is the same with generation. When we hear that a cause has generated an effect, usually we imagine that it has generated something that sometime was nonexistent; in other words, it has created something (creation in time) or has caused a movement (moving). In short, the concept of generation shows that its extension has two characteristics: 1) A linkage to the generator, 2) Having a kind of change or gradual or sudden alteration.

Now, when we say that the effect is the same as generation do we mean that every effect necessarily should have these two characteristics? Should every effect be a linkage to the cause and have a kind of change? If something is fixed or pre-eternal and has no change or alteration or any kind of origination in time or motion, and at the same time its truth is a linkage to the cause will it not be an effect? If something were an effect would it not be enough to be a linkage to the cause?

Considering this subject in the discussion termed 'The yardstick of the Need for a Cause' Muslim philosophers have proved that the origination of a thing in time has no effect on its need for a cause,⁸ (and knowing that motion is nothing other than the gradual origination in time and gradual disappearance)⁹ we understand that in order for a thing to be an effect, it is sufficient to be in need for a cause in a way or another. Therefore, if something is a pure linkage to the cause and has no motion, origination or change it will nevertheless need a cause. To be more exact, it will not need a cause, but it will be the very need for a cause. Thus, in order to be an effect, the simple linkage to the cause will be enough.

From this we understand that to be an effect is linkage to the cause, and the reality of the effect is nothing other than linkage to the cause. Therefore, everything whose existence is a linkage to the cause is an effect, whether it is fixed or changing, pre-eternal or originated in time. It is on this basis that Mulla Sadra, who was the founder of this theory, has used the term linkage or the copulative existence to show the reality of the effect. Instead of saying that the effect has no mode other than the cause's generation, working or activity, he says that the effect has no mode other than linkage to the cause. The effect is the copulative existence. Naturally this theory came to be known as the 'theory of the link's existence of the effect' or 'the insufficient existence of the effect'. Likewise, this is why, to show the reality of the effect, the concept of linkage is clearer and more to the point than the concept of generation, working or activity, for it eliminates the illusion that the effect must have originated in time or it should be a sort of motion or a process.

What has been said so far concerns the effect whose existence is the same as the cause's generation. Now what can be said concerning God Who is supposed to be the generating cause of all things and is the effect of nothing, and, consequently, His existence is not equal to generation? It is clear that such an existence is independent, absolutely sufficient, and has no dependence on, or need for, or linkage to anything. For these entire characteristics stem from the fact that the existence of the effect is the same as the cause's generation, and supposing that the existence of God is different from the generation of any cause, it will have then none of the mentioned characteristics.

It is important to note that when we say that the existence of the effect is not linked to the cause but it is a linkage to it, and that naturally it has no self or independence against the self and independence of the cause. We do not mean that the effect is the same as the cause because the will of a person or

his willing is not the same as his own person. Therefore, we should not take the linkage to the cause and dependence on it, as being equal to the cause.

NOTES

1. Before Mulla Sadra, Avicenna hinted to Mulla Sadra's claim concerning the copulative existence of the effect, but neither he nor his followers worked on it nor did they conclude the desired results from it.

He said:

“ Because an existent acquired from the other is dependent on him, the latter will be an existence-granting cause for the former, as self- sufficiency of the other is a necessary attribute for the Necessary Being in essence; because this attribute cannot be separated from Him; for He has it essentially. (See *al-Ta'liqhat*, Markaz al-Nashr, 1404 A.H., p. 178).

Also he said:

“ Either the existence is dependent on the other in which case dependency is essential, or it is independent of the other, in which case its independency is essential. The dependent existence cannot be independent as the independent one cannot be dependent. Otherwise, their realities would be changed and transformed.” (See *al-Ta'liqhat*, p.179, and Mulla Sadra, *al- Hikma al-Muta'aliyya fi al-Asfar al-Arba'a al- Aghliyya*, Mustafawi Publications, Qom: 9 volumes, vol. 1, pp. 46-47). Therefore, it can be claimed that in Islamic philosophy Mulla Sadra first introduced this subject. Anyway, in this article, only his views are considered. (See *al-Hikma al-Muta'aliyya fi al-Asfar al-Arba'a al -Aghliyya*, vol. 2, pp. 299 - 300)

2. This Kind of agent is also called “divine agent.” So, by divine agent is meant existence -granting cause. There is also another expression: natural agent. By natural agent is meant a cause which makes changes in bodies; in other words, it is a cause that forces bodies to change. It should be considered that in this chapter, agent is regarded as an existence-granting cause, not as a cause for change.

3. In this article, to prove the copulative existence of the effect the approach of Motahhari with some modification is used, not Mulla Sadra's approach. (See *Majmou'a Asar*, Tehran: Sadra, 1371, 19 volumes, vol.6, pp. 580 – 583).

4. In this article the terms, “reality,” “existent,” and “thing” are used for the same meaning.

5. The reason why logically there is no other solution except these three is that logically or principally the cause has done nothing; that is, there is no generation and the cause does not grant existence to the effect. Or, there is

generation and the cause has granted existence to the effect. The latter state is logically possible in each of the two forms: either the generation by the cause is the existence of the effect itself or it is not. The latter state is only conceived when the existence of the effect is not the very effect itself and the cause grants existence to the effect by its generation. Therefore, logically, we face one of the three solutions: 1) Denial of generation; 2) Acceptance of generation so that the generation by cause is the very existence of the effect and is the very effect itself; 3) Acceptance of generation so that the cause grants existence to the effect by its generation which necessitates that the effect itself be something other than the existence of the effect. In the text, these three solutions are mentioned, except that the third solution is mentioned first, then the first one and finally the second one.

6. See *al-Hikma al- Muta 'aliyya fi al- Asfar al-Arba 'a*, vol. 1, pp.78- 82 and 303.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid, pp. 206 - 207.

9. Ibid, vol. 3, p. 37 "The motion is the gradual origination of a thing in time and its gradual vanishing. (*Al- Hikma al- Muta 'aliyya fi al-Asfar al-Arba 'a al- 'Aghliyya*, vol. 3, p. 37).

The Argument from Necessity and Contingency In Islamic Philosophy and Theology

Mohsen Javadi

Abstract

Although the argument from necessity and contingency is not the only way to philosophical theology, it is the most important. Because among the different versions of this argument, in terms of accuracy, validity, and also recognition, Avicenna's is of special importance, in this article his version is the central focus. Its various critiques have been discussed, although some general points of other philosophical arguments have also been studied. If by the argument from necessity and contingency we understand any demonstration that takes the existence of the contingent as one of its premises, giving such a title to Avicenna's argument cannot be true, for in his argument the existence of the contingent is never discussed. But if by this argument we understand any demonstration that employs the concept of contingency (essential contingency) in a way or another, Avicenna's argument is one of the various forms of the argument from the position of necessity and contingency. A historical survey mainly confirms the first understanding, for in the works of the ancient philosophers and theologians Avicenna's argument has not been called by this name, but in the works of contemporary philosophers the second understanding is more conspicuous.

Introduction

Various accounts of the argument of necessity and contingency can be seen in the works of the Muslim philosophers and theologians; however, most of them can be reduced to a few basic forms, which we will discuss.¹ The common aspect of all these accounts is the use of *contingency* in the process

1. For instance, refer to Mahdi Mohaghigh, *Aram Name*, Anjoman Ostadan Zaban Farsi Publications.' "Ithbat al-Wajib", pp. 126, 133.

of demonstration. Before discussing them, however, we have to keep in mind certain points:

1. The different accounts of the argument of necessity and contingency fall into one of the one of two categories:

- I. Some begin with admitting the **existence of something** in the world, and on the basis of this analysis conclude the necessity of the Necessary Being. In this demonstration, accepting the existence of the contingent is not necessary to begin the demonstration, the claim is proven on the basis of our analysis of the existent that we have postulated (no matter what it is). Avicenna was the founder of this kind of demonstration and this account is named after him (the Avicennian argument).
- II. The second group of the accounts of the argument from necessity and contingency accepts the existence of the contingent, and then on the basis of some philosophical principles, such as ‘the need of the contingent and the effect for a cause’, tries to prove the claim. Some accept the existence of the contingent being on the grounds of its evidence, and some others have presented arguments of its existence.²

The advantage of Avicenna’s account is that it has fewer premises. Moreover, it has no need to consider the state of the contingent beings (creatures) and relying on them for proving the existence of the Necessary. The advantage of other accounts of this argument is that because they initially prove the contingency of the world of bodies, the world of matter, etc., and then continue with proving the existence of God, besides proving the existence of the Necessary, they confirm His difference from the world of matter, bodies, etc.³

Avicenna’s argument, besides being brief, is also the basis from which many other accounts of the argument of necessity and contingency are founded. Therefore, it is central to our thesis.

2. For instance, refer to Mulla ‘Abdol Razzagh Lahiji, *Gohar Morad*, Tahouri Publications, p. 235 (it considers the existence of the possible as evident); Katebi, *Hikma al-‘Ayn*, al-Sharh Le-Mobarakshah, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad Press, p. 134 (It raises some reasons for the existence of the contingent).

3. See Muhammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi, *Ta’ligha ‘ala Nahayya al-Hikma*, Mo’asseseh dar Rah-e Hagh, p. 407. Fakhr-e-Razi mentioned this point as a deficiency of Avicenna’s argument; see Fakhr-e-Razi, *al-Matalib al-‘Aliyya*, ed. Ahmad Hijazi, Sharif Publications, vol. 1, p. 56.

2. In respect to the impossibility of an infinite regress, the accounts of the argument from the perspective of necessity and contingency are divided into two groups:

- I. One group considers the principle of the impossibility of an infinite regress as a necessary premise of the demonstration for the existence of God, and holds that this principle itself is either self-evident and needs no demonstration or it is theoretical and needs demonstration in its right place.
- II. Another group holds that the argument from necessity and contingency is grounded on proving or accepting the impossibility of an infinite regress as a necessary issue.

The claim that the argument from necessity and contingency standpoint is not grounded on the principle of the impossibility of an infinite regress can be interpreted in two ways:

First, for the argument from necessity and contingency to be valid and complete there is no need to introduce the principle of the impossibility of an infinite regress in the process of demonstration, and without discussing it, the argument can be established. Of course this claim does not mean that even by supposing the possibility of regress the argument can also be established, but it only states that we do not need it for the integrity of the demonstration.

Second, to say that even by supposing the possibility of regress the argument can be established and defended. We would say that by supposing the possibility of regress the argument from necessity and contingency would also be impossible. Basically, those who hold that the argument cannot be grounded on the principle of the impossibility an infinite regress do not make such a claim, and they intend only the first meaning. In other words, the argument can be organised in such a way as it would have no need for the principle of the impossibility of regress, and this is different from establishing the argument in terms of the possibility of regress. The supporters of the view that the principle of the impossibility of an infinite regress can be avoided in their discourse do not mean that the demonstration could be valid even by assuming the possibility of regress, for many of them admit that by implication the argument of proving the existence of the Necessary also proves the impossibility of an infinite regress. In other words, they establish an argument that besides proving the existence of the Necessary proves the impossibility of an infinite regress as well, demonstrating that they would never believe that even by assuming the possibility of regress their argument would be valid and complete. Once the

possibility of regress is accepted as an option, this would leave no way to prove the existence of God.

It appears that the claim that the argument from necessity and contingency can be established without considering the principle of the impossibility of an infinite regress is true.⁴ But one can also accept the view that all the accounts of the argument of necessity and contingency are invariably grounded on the principle of the impossibility of an infinite regress.⁵ For in one sense of “grounding” we can say that the argument from necessity and contingency (at least some of its accounts) are not based on the principle of the impossibility of an infinite regress. But in another sense of “grounding,” that is, the impossibility of the argument in case of the possibility of regress, all the accounts of the argument from necessity and contingency are grounded on the impossibility of an infinite regress.

3. In some of the accounts, the method of demonstration is direct, that is, they offer arguments to prove what is being sought (the existence of God). In other accounts, the demonstration is indirect and is followed **by using the *reductio ad absurdum* argument**, which instead of establishing arguments for proving the desired conclusion, it tries to establish an argument for the impossibility of the contrary view (the non-existence of God). In other words, some of the accounts state that on the basis of such and such an argument, God does exist, and some others state that if there were no God, and all existents were contingents, there would be such and such an impossibility, and because the impossible cannot exist, its root (the supposition that there is no God) is also false and unacceptable.

In logic, **the *reductio ad absurdum* argument** is a compound syllogism, and though the scholars differ in their analysis of its nature, they logically give it great importance and validity.⁶

The Argument of Avicenna (The Argument of the Sincere)

The renowned Muslim philosopher Avicenna offers a unique account of the argument from necessity and contingency, which became known later as the

4. For instance see *Nour 'Ilm*, No. 2, Jame'a Modarresin Publications, “An Essay in Proving the Necessary”, p. 108. 'Abdollah Javadi Amoli, *Tabein Barahin Ithbat Khoda*, discussion series in Religious Philosophy, Nashr Isra, p. 148.

5. For example see Taftazani, *Sharh al-Maghasid*, Sharif Radi Publications, vol. 4, p. 18.

6. For instance see Sheikh Muhammad Reza al-Mudaffar, *Al-Mantigh*, Beirut, p. 260.

Avicennian argument; it had a great impact on philosophers and theologians that came after him. He explained this argument in some of his works, but is discussed in detail in several chapters of his *Kitab al-Isharat wa-'l-tanbihat* ('Remarks and Admonitions').⁷ Giving it the name the **argument of the Sincere** in that book denotes its accuracy and grandeur.⁸ The argument is based on some premises, which are discussed in the following manner.

The First Premise

The argument starts with the acceptance of a reality in the world, and admitting that existence is not all a dream and illusion, and at least there exist things that are real. Perhaps the first spark of doubt about reality was produced in ancient Greece while philosophers meditated on man's knowledge. When knowledge itself became the subject of meditation and study, it became clear that a part of that which was counted reality was no more than an illusion. Knowing that there are many errors in human knowledge and that there exists many illusions disguised as reality was a turning point in the history of ancient philosophy.

This accurate statement—there are errors in perceptions—caused many inaccuracies with many persons, for different reasons turning the glowing flame into a devastating fire destroyed all man's knowledge in its flames. As Allameh Tabatabaie writes:

To the extent that the reality is clear to us, the existence of these errors and the possibility of confronting these mistakes are also clear, and doubting the possibility of mistakes and mental errors is no less grievous than doubting the reality itself, which we call sophistry. For by putting an end to reality, sophistry steals from us the truth, which is our dearest friend; denying the possibility of error and mistake also leads us into illusion, and in both cases the truth will be stolen from us.⁹

Moreover, by denying and doubting the absolute existence and reality the sceptics and sophists undermine the foundation of science and knowledge,

7. See Avicenna, *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, Daftar Nashr Kitab, vol. 3, pp. 18 – 28, 66; *al-Nijat*, ed. Muhammad Taghi Danesh Pajouh, Tehran University, p. 566. (In this source, the proof of the impossibility of regress is dealt with in more details).

8. *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, vol.3, p. 97. Also Muhammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi, *Ta'ligha 'Ala Nahayya al-Hikma*, p.408.

9. Seyyed Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaie, *Usul Falsafe va Ravesh Realism*, Sadra Publications, vol. 3, p. 28.

expecting them to surrender themselves to God's will be in vain since scepticism has different forms; in its extreme form doubting everything, even the existence of the sceptic himself and in other forms denies or doubts the value of acquired knowledge, in the sense that the person accepts his existence and his thoughts (his notions and knowledge by presence), but he denies or doubts if there is anything outside his existence.

The second form is mainly known as Idealism rather than sophistry. Although Muslim philosophers call both of them sophistry,¹⁰ in the works of Western philosophers the first group (those who doubt everything, even their existence) are known as the sophists and the second group who accept the reality of their existence and thoughts but doubt other things are called the Idealists. In this historical context, Avicenna presented the principle of reality as the basis of his demonstration. To begin the demonstration and to avoid the extremist form of sophistry, it suffices to accept that there is something that exists. In other words, to demonstrate we can begin, even like an Idealist, by accepting the reality of our existence. Therefore, we can say that Avicenna addresses all people other than absolute sophists.

But why should we accept that there is a reality and the world is not all dream and fancy? The Muslim philosophers and many of the medieval Christian philosophers believed that all of man's affirmations are divided into two groups: the self-evident and the theoretical. In theoretical affirmations, searching for reason and argument is desirable, and it is unwise to accept a theoretical opinion with no reason or argument, whereas in self-evident affirmations, the self-evidence itself is an argument for the needlessness of reason and argument. The principle of the existence of a reality in the world is a self-evident principle and does not need any demonstration, and it is this affirmation or acceptance that makes demonstration possible; for we demonstrate in order to reach the truth, and truth and reality come hand in hand. If a person denies or doubts the absolute reality, he will have no grounds for demonstration.

Similar to the principle of non-contradiction, the principle of reality is one of those principles on which demonstration itself is dependent, and we cannot say it needs any argument. It is precisely because of this that we cannot argue with an absolute sophist (one who doubts everything), for offering arguments should be preceded by accepting principles such as the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of reality (Realism), which

10. See Seyyed Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaei, *Nahayya al-Hikma* Jame'a Modarresin publications, p. 253.

the sophist does not accept. Once reality is accepted, demonstration becomes possible; but if a person doubts everything, he will not be able to regain what he has lost through his doubts.

In the West the famous French philosopher Descartes is a good example of this, for through his doubt (methodological doubt) about everything he attempted to rebuild the edifice of man's knowledge, an aspiration that was never fulfilled¹¹ because if a person removes from the intellect all the instruments of intellection (the intellectual principles and facts) setting them to the fire of doubt, how would he be able to extinguish these flames of doubt in man's knowledge? Western philosophers for a time extrapolated many ideas from Descartes' fruitless endeavour. Presently the accepted view in modern epistemology is that we cannot argue for everything by presenting arguments and reasons; rather we have to admit that there are some principles and facts that needless of demonstration are certain and real, and even all demonstrations are dependent on them.

The modified form of contemporary epistemology shows that not only the principle of the existence of the world but also the belief in the possibility of knowing it and also tens of other truths are all real and needless of demonstration. In epistemology, technically they are called the fundamental beliefs.

It cannot be imagined that in the present age there could be a person who can doubt the absolute reality; the self-evident principle of realism makes it needless to present further details.

The Second Premise

Having accepted the existence of a thing, Avicenna makes it the subject of his philosophical study, and by employing the self-evident principles of logic, proceeds with his demonstration. Thus, according to the judgment of the intellect, an existent either is self-dependent and self-sufficient (the Necessary Being) or has taken its existence from, and is dependent on another existent (the contingent being). No existent is outside the two sides of this division. The characteristic feature of the logical division that always functions between negation and affirmation is its inclusiveness. Whenever the two sides of the division are contradictory, and it is said, for example, the

11. With the help of his reason, Descartes wanted to free himself from the doubt that even covered his reason itself, that is, the same "Cartesian Circle" which has been discussed by many critics. See Harry Frankfurt, "Validity of Reason from Descartes' View" trans. by the author of this article, *Keyhan Andishe*, No. 56, p. 28.

thing is either dependent or independent then everything will invariably be placed on either side of this restriction, for falling outside of this rational division would mean the possibility of the law of excluded middle. In logical terms, we can say that the division into the necessary and the contingent, which refers to the 'independent existence' and 'dependent existence', is a veritable disjunctive.

Our supposed and certain existent is invariably either a necessary being or a contingent being. If the existent in question is a necessary being then the desired conclusion is reached and there is no need for further demonstration, for the goal of demonstration is admitting the existence of the Necessary being, which was accomplished at the beginning of the discussion. But if it is a contingent being, then the demonstration has to be continued.

The Third Premise

If the concerned thing whose existence has been accepted is a contingent, according to the definition and the analysis of the concept of contingency, the existence of the contingent should have a cause, for the contingent is that being whose relation to existence and non-existence is equal and its existence or non-existence needs a cause. (Of course, that which really needs a cause is the existence of the possible, and its non-existence is only due to the absence of the cause and needs no separate cause. In other words, it is the same philosophical principle that the cause of non-existence is the absence of the cause of existence).

According to the principle of causality, the realization and the existence of the contingent are dependent on the cause; therefore, the supposed contingent being must also have a cause. Concerning the cause of the supposed contingent being, there are several possibilities that have to be studied.

The first possibility is that the existence of the contingent is dependent on its essence; that is, the contingent is the cause of its own existence.¹² This supposition that the contingent thing could be the effect of itself without an intermediary is termed 'the explicit circle' in philosophy jargon.

The second possibility is that the existence of the supposed contingent is taken from another contingent being, but that second contingent has taken its

12. When the existence of a thing is dependent upon something, its non-existence is also dependent upon the non-existence of that thing, because the cause of non-existence depends on the cause of existence. Thus, if something is the cause of its being, its non-existence depends on its lack of being.

existence from the first contingent. Here, without an intermediary the essence of the possible cannot be the cause of its existence, but the existence of the contingent is the effect of another contingent and that contingent is the effect of the first contingent. Philosophically this kind of dependence of the thing on itself via an intermediary is called 'implicit circle'.

In these two possibilities, the thing is the cause of its existence: in the first without an intermediary and in the second via its effect. The invalidity of the explicit and implicit circles is so clear that Avicenna in his *al-Isharat wa- 'l-tanbihat* ('Remarks and Admonitions') sees no need for discussing it as a reasonable possibility for justifying and explicating the existence of the supposed contingent being. However, we will discuss it briefly here.

Circle and Its Impossibility

There is circle when one thing without an intermediary or via an intermediary is the cause of itself. When A needs B and B itself is in need of A, there is an explicit or direct circle. But when A is in need of B and B is in need of C and C itself is dependent on A, there will be an implicit or indirect circle.

The impossibility of a causal circle is one of the negative precepts of cause and effect, for it argues that the relationship between the cause and the effect cannot be circular. The reason for this impossibility is the gathering of two contradictories; to be a cause one thing must have a portion of existence so that it can generate another, whereas according to our supposition, its existence itself is dependent on the existence of another being. Therefore, because it is a cause, it should exist, and because it is an effect, it should not.

The other account of the impossibility of circle is that circle necessitates the priority of the thing over itself. In an explicit circle the thing has to be one level prior to itself, for as a cause it has to be prior to its effect, which is none other than itself.¹³ On the other hand, as an effect it has to be one level posterior to its cause; and this means it exists both at the level of the cause and at the level of the effect; that is, it has to be prior to itself.

Although some prominent philosophers have accepted this view, it does not seem to be an independent account of the issue, for ultimately the argument of the impossibility of the precedence of one thing over itself is the same as the impossibility of the gathering of two contradictories.

13. Of course, it is not meant the priority in time, since the cause and the effect are temporally accompanied; rather it is meant in intellection that the position of the cause is prior to the effect, for, if it were not for the cause, there would be no effect.

Mulla Sadra gives a third account of the impossibility of circle. He argues that in every circle there is implied a sort of an infinite regress, and considering the many arguments offered on the invalidity of regress, a circle would also be impossible. In other words, though the essence of the cause and the effect is limited in the circle, regress occurs due to the description of being the cause and being effect, and the certainty of having regress in each circle is due to the fact that when A is the cause of B and B is the cause of A, the questions about the cause will be endless, and in answering regarding the cause one would refer to the other *ad infinitum*, and this is the very infinite regress. The reasons of its impossibility will be discussed later.

There is no further need to discuss the invalidity of circle since very few people question this invalidity.¹⁴

The third possibility is that the existence of the supposed contingent is the effect of another contingent which itself is the effect of a third contingent, and the third is the effect of the fourth, and so on, without imagining a place where this sequence of causes and effects would come to a stand still. In this supposition, the existence of the supposed contingent is not its own direct effect (explicit circle) or the indirect effect (implicit circle), but one is the effect of the other, and that other is the effect of another one, and so on. Philosophically this kind of assortment of the contingent beings is termed infinite regress.

Unlike his discussion on the circle, Avicenna discusses regress in more detail. The argument that he offers in rejecting an infinite regress is that of the *reductio ad absurdum* argument; that is, he shows that once regress is accepted, it will invariably lead to impossibility.

Avicenna argues that if we consider a chain whose links are all effects (that is, an endless chain in which every link is both a cause and an effect), such a supposition will invariably end with invalid conclusions. Either the total chain has a cause or it does not. The supposition that the links do not have a cause is incompatible with their being effects and their dependence; therefore, this chain should have a cause. Now we can discuss these possibilities: One possibility is that the totality of the links is the cause of the existence of the chain (the total whole is the cause), which is an impossible supposition, for the totality of the links is nothing more than the links of this chain themselves, and a thing cannot be the cause of itself. The other

14. See 'Abdollah Avadi Amoli, *Sharh Hikmat Muta'aliyya*, vol. 6, chapter 1, al-Zahra Publications, p. 212; Also, Mulla 'Abdollah Zunuzi, *Luma'at Ilahiyya*, Mo'assesseh Motale'at va Tahghighat Farhangi, p. 32.

possibility is that every one of the links is the cause of the existence of the whole chain, that is, each link of the chain plays a causal role in the generation of this chain. (Technically this kind of totality is called the overwhelming whole). This supposition is also incorrect, for each link can only be the cause of the links that come after it, and it cannot be the cause of the chain, which comprises the link itself. So, if every link were the cause of the whole chain, it should be the cause of itself and the cause of its causes, which is impossible. If we suppose that only a special link or links are the cause of the chain, in that case besides the problem raised in the last supposition, we will be entangled in the problem of preponderance without there being a preponderant, for all the links are equal in their being causes and effects (except for the last link which is only an effect). In consequence, this possibility is also impossible. Therefore, on the basis of the *reductio ad absurdum* argument, we may conclude that supposing the infinity of the chain leads to this futile consequence. We have to abandon this supposition and consider a final end for the chain of causes outside the chain, an end, which is not an effect, but the cause of the whole chain.¹⁵

There have been similar other arguments using a *reductio ad absurdum* argument in the works of theologians, such as Fakhr-e-Razi, Ghazzali, and Tusi¹⁶ offered against regress. Of course, Muslim philosophers have presented several arguments concerning the impossibility of regress, and we will refer to some of the most important.

The Argument of the Middle and the Side

This argument begins with a limited set of causes and effects as a model, and by analysis, proceeds by proving that the chain of causes and effects cannot be endless. For example, in one set made of three components, we have an effect that is not a cause for another, and a cause that has no effect, and a third component which from one perspective, is a cause, and from another

15. See Morteza Motahhari, *Maghalat Falsafi*, vol. 2, Hikmat Publications, pp. 20-26; Also Avicenna, *al-Nijat*, ed. Muhammad Taghi Danesh Pajouh, Tehran University, p. 556. And *Isharat*, vol. 3, p. 22.

16. For a comprehensive study of the proofs for the impossibility of regress see Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar al-Arba'a*, Dar Ihya al-Torath, vol. 2, pp. 141 – 169; *Aram Name* ed. Mehdi Mohaghigh, Anjouman Ostadan Zaban Publications, pp. 126 – 133; Fakhr al-Din Razi, *al-Mabahith al-Mashrihiyya*, ed. Muhammad al-Baghdadi, Dar al-Kitab, vol. 1, p. 596; Katebi, *Hikma al-'Ayn*, Ferdowsi University Press, pp. 178-192.

perspective is an effect.

A	B	C
(a cause only)	(a cause and an effect)	(an effect only)

In the above set, because B is both a cause and an effect it should have two sides so that one could be the cause and the other the effect while considering that circle is impossible and one thing cannot be both a cause and an effect to the same extent. Now we increase the number of the components of the set; for example, we add D. We see that this time D will be at the side of the set and that A and B will be in the middle. No matter how many components are added to this set, insofar as this set is limited, it will retain this characteristic, that is, it will have middle and a side. This is because we cannot have a middle, without having a side. Now in an endless chain we will have middles without a side, for all the components of that chain are the cause of something and the effect of something. (Except for C, which is only an effect and shows the side of being an effect). This means that all the components are middles without a side, which is an impossible thing. Some philosophers hold that the argument of the middle and the side is the most important argument for the invalidity of infinite regress.¹⁷

This argument may raise the question whether the claim for the impossibility of having a middle without a side is self-evident or theoretical. If it is self-evident then the impossibility of regress itself, which is the existence of a middle without a side, will be self-evident and will need no demonstration or argument. But if the impossibility of having a middle without a side is not self-evident and is known by reasoning and speculation, the argument of this judgment must be discussed.

If this judgement is grounded on our observation of finite sets, it may meet with the objection that in a set comprised of three or four components the matter is so arranged that some of the components are the middle and two of them are the sides of the set, but extending this judgement to include infinite sets will not be correct, and if we accept the possibility of thinking of an infinite set, the judgement that a side is necessary will beg this question. Essentially, the foremost question is whether we can have a set without a limit or side or not. The proof of judgement in having a side for every set is grounded on the mind's repose in the finite sets, and changing a finite set into an infinite one will be the cause of disrupting the equation. If in the set

17. Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 145.

of three components 'A, B and C', B is the middle, it is because we have already supposed that A and C are its sides; and if we again seek to conclude the necessity of having a side for the mentioned set from the centrality of B, this will be an explicit circle. Regress is an actual set made of infinite number of components where there is no middle at all to conclude from its existence the necessity of having a side.

On the other hand, if the argument of the necessity of a side for a middle means that every effect needs a cause, and that because the middles of one set are effects, they need a side or a cause, we must say that the content of the principle of causality is simply that every phenomenon must have a cause, and discussing the nature of that cause and whether it is only a cause or it may be the effect of something else has nothing to do with that principle. In other words, the principle of causality contends that every middle needs a side, but whether this side itself is a middle and needs another side is out of the scope of that principle and has to be proved. In the set of the three components 'A, B, and C' the principle of causality states that C must be the effect of B and B the effect of A, but whether A is the effect of something else, such as D, is not related to that principle and is dependent on the nature of A. Thus, if it is self-existent, it will not need a cause, but if it is not self-existent it will need a cause, so it is with the infinite components of a set. In short, stopping at one link of the chain cannot be understood from the principle of causality itself.¹⁸

The Argument of Correspondence

This argument argues that if we could think of an endless chain and then cut off some of its links, this question will be raised whether the supposed chain would be the same before and after cutting some of its links off. If the answer is an affirmative one, the whole should be equal to the part, which is impossible (the second chain is a part of the first chain, for it was generated by cutting off some of its links). But if the answer is negative then the first chain which is assumed to be infinite will be finite and limited, for a chain

18. In answering the mentioned problem, Fayyazi says whether one or more members are the middles is not merely naming or transmitting a judgment from one set to another; rather, being a middle is the necessary characteristic of everything, which is both a cause and an effect. For, unless it is in the middle, a thing cannot be both a cause and an effect and whether the sets are finite or infinite has no influence on this characteristic. A middle always needs sides; therefore, the infinite chain of causes is never accepted.

that has only one or a few links more than a finite chain (the second chain) it must be finite itself.

According to some philosophers, this argument is the most important argument of the impossibility of an infinite regress, and that other arguments are mainly reduced to this argument.¹⁹

The objection made to this argument is that the set of numbers is such that no matter how many of them are deleted it will remain infinite. In response some have said that the subject of the discussion is the links of a chain of causes and effects and not a mathematical chain such as a set of numbers. But this answer meets with the objection that an argument should be universal and must include every kind of chain, and especially its main instance, the chains of numbers. (In other words, this argument is grounded on the comparison of the components of the two sets, whether these components are the causes and effects, or other things).

The truth is that the argument of correspondence is incomplete and in infinite sets, deleting some limited components should not necessarily make them finite. On the other hand, the links and components of two infinite sets should not necessarily be equal; in fact, the concept of equality or identity is applicable to finite sets.

Farabi's Argument of the Most Solid and the Most Concise

In a compiled chain of causes and effects, each link can exist only if its preceding link exists. For example, in the set of 'A, B, and C' C will exist if B exists, and B will exist if A exists. This characteristic is applicable to all the links of the chain of causes and effects, unless this chain is finite and has an end, in which case the last or, according to another view, the first component of the chain will not depend on the existence of anything else for its existence. Now that all the links of the infinite chain depend on the links before them for their existence, their total whole will have the same characteristic, and without the existence of something outside this set it will not exist.

Of course, the totality of a thing is nothing other than its components, but the whole now is considered (the totality of all units); in fact, the point is that all of the components are equal having their existence conditioned by the existence of something else before them. In this case, their existence will be dependent on the existence of something that is not a part of them and that

19. See *Aram Name* ed. Mehdi Mohaghigh, Anjoman Ostadan Zaban Publications, p. 126.

thing should not be preceded by another thing and it must be self-existent.

By studying the characteristics of the links of a causal chain, Farabi concludes that these links cannot regress infinitely and necessarily would end somewhere.

The Argument of Allamah Tabatabaie

It has been proven that making (*Jaal*) and causality are the existential relationship among the existents (and not among nonexistents or Quiddities; in fact, employing the term causality in respect of them is metaphorical). It is clear that the existence of the effect in comparison to its cause is a copulative existence, and the cause is that self-subsistent existence on which the effect is dependent. Now if the chain of causes were infinite, the existence of the copulative beings, some of which belong to others, would become necessary, though there is no self-subsistent existence on which they could depend, and such a thing is impossible. It is true that each link is dependent on its preceding link, and the preceding link has a relative autonomy compared to the following link. But because this relationship between the cause and the effect is a real relationship, the relative autonomy would not be the solution and there should exist an existent whose autonomy is absolute.²⁰

However, this demonstration cannot be complete unless all the links, which, as effects, have a relative autonomy in comparison to each other, retain their copulative existence and dependence on the self-subsistent existence. In that case, the demonstration would have no difference from Farabi's argument of the most solid and the most concise, except for the analysis of causality. In Farabi's argument this is termed dependence and the need of the links for a cause and in Tabatabaie's argument it is called the copulative existence.

After rejecting an infinite regress, the fourth possibility that remains is that the supposed contingent should be, directly or indirectly, the effect of the Necessary Being, and this is the same reasonable and justifiable possibility which Avicenna sought to prove. In his strict analysis of the supposed contingent, on the basis of the principles of causality and the impossibility of circle and regress, he improves his argument of the existence of the Necessary.

Avicenna's criterion in this argument is the self-evident or nearly self-evident issues. The acceptance of reality and the existence of things (the first premise) are self-evident. The principle of causality is also self-evident. For

20. Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 166. (Marginal Notes)

many philosophers, the principle of causality, which is sometimes called ‘the effect’s need for a cause or a reason’ and sometimes ‘the need of every contingent being for a preponderant cause’, is self-evident and does not need any demonstration.

Self-evidence here may have the meaning of “analytical,” that is, the predicate is derived from the analysis of the subject. It may also denote that truth which is needless of proof, and, rather, demonstration itself is dependent on its prior acceptance. In any case, the principle of causality is undeniable, for its rejection leads from the atmosphere of realism to sophistry and doubt about the existence of the external world. In other words, if we consider of the principle of causality as a principle that cannot be proved and think of it as a presupposition, we should note that this principle is one of those presuppositions without which the foundation of understanding, knowledge, and human perception will be disrupted, for the edifice of understanding human perception is built on the principle of causality. The impossibility of the circle is almost self-evident, and has not much need for demonstration. The principle of the impossibility of regress has also been proved by many arguments. Because the premises of this demonstration are self-evident and are only a few, it deserves, according to Avicenna, the splendid name of the argument of the Sincere.

Look at how our explication of the subject of God’s existence and also His oneness and transcendence over any deficiency is needless of considering the creature or his deeds; though those could be another argument for the existence of God. But our way is more accurate and more valuable. If we call existence itself to witness, from the perspective of its existence it will give witness to God and thereafter it will lead to His attributes. The divine Book emphasizes our argument: “We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that He is the Truth.” This dialogue, of course, is related to another group; then it asks, “Suffice it not as to thy Lord, that He is witness over everything?” This method is specific to the people of certainty, that is, those who take God as a witness to everything and do not take anything as a guide unto Him.²¹

Avicenna’s argument of the Sincere is so important that most of the recent philosophers and theologians have accepted it, and some of them have limited themselves to quoting this argument in their works,²² demonstrating

21. Avicenna, *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, vol. 3, p. 66.

22. See ‘Allameh Helli, *Kashf al-Morad fi Sharh Tajrid al-E’tighad*, Jame’a Modarresin Publications, p. 280.

the magnitude and status this argument holds for them. The term the argument of the Sincere, which later was more associated with the name of the philosopher from Shiraz, Mulla Sadra, refers to that method in which existence and reality themselves give witnesses to the existence of God without referring to the creatures.

Problems and Objections

The objections made against Avicenna's argument in the Muslim religio-philosophical tradition are twofold. Some focus on the validity of Avicenna's argument, and some others refer to the claims of Avicenna about his argument. Some critics argue that the argument is incomplete, and some others, though they accept the validity of the argument, decline to accept his claim about the characteristics of the argument.

A. The Incompatibility of the Belief in the Pre-Eternity of the World with Proving the Existence of God

Imam Muhammad Ghazzali, Avicenna's well-known critic, argues that people like Avicenna who believe in the pre-eternity of the world cannot prove the existence of God, saying that accepting the pre-eternity of the world (that is, it has not been originated at any time) is incompatible with and contradictory to searching for its cause and origin.

The explanation of Ghazzali's objection is that Muslim philosophers such as Avicenna, Farabi, and Mulla Sadra usually hold that some realms and worlds of existence transcend temporal origination. The world of intellects, the primordial matter itself, or the matter of the world of nature whose movement creates time, according to these philosophers, are atemporal. The belief in the pre-eternity of the world reflects the influence of the Neoplatonic ideas on Muslim philosophers. Plotinus's theory of emanation, which was accepted by the Muslim philosophers, was adorned by religious evidence and approved in the milieu of Islamic intellection.²³ One of the important points in Ghazzali's attack on this philosophy is theory of emanation, which contends that the world of being is God's eternal and timeless emanation.

Ghazzali holds that the position of the philosophers in accepting the pre-eternity of the world and at the same time seeking its cause is more absurd than that of the atheists; for the atheists explicitly deny the origin of the universe, which while being false is nevertheless intelligible, while these

23. See *Islamic Great Encyclopedia* (in Persian), vol.4, p. 15, entry "Ibn Sina."

philosophers accept the pre-eternity of the world – and thus its needlessness of an external cause– and seek its cause, which is absurd.²⁴

In answer, Averroes argues that Ghazzali has not distinguished between the ‘temporal pre-eternity’ and the ‘essential pre-eternity’. The philosophers tried to negate the temporality of the world and not its dependence. It seems that for Ghazzali ‘creation’ could only be meaningful in a temporal context (apparently he was affected by the linguistic structure of the verb which in a way implies the meaning of being and time), ignoring that the meaning of creation or genesis is much wider than the temporal phenomena, and includes even the world of intellects and the primordial matter itself. We should be aware that transcending time does not mean transcending the cause. What seems to be unintelligible is the essential pre-eternity, that is, the needlessness of the world of contingent beings from a cause, which, of course, is incompatible with the search for its cause.

For Averroes, the approach of the Muslim philosophers is the most intelligible approach. For, on one hand, they observe that the divine emanation is continuous and is not restricted to time, and, because of that, they contend that God’s bounty or generosity is infinite, and, on the other hand, they hold that the whole world of being is dependent on the essence of Creator.²⁵ It is strange that despite Farabi and Avicenna’s emphasis that the temporal pre-eternity of the world does not make it needless of a cause, Ghazzali has ignored this point.²⁶

In response to Ghazzali and his followers, the Islamic philosophical tradition has suggested and developed the criterion or yardstick of needing a cause. Ghazzali’s mistake was that he thought that the yardstick of needing a cause is the temporal origination of things, and if one thing is not a temporal creature it will not need a cause, and it will be contradictory to attribute a cause to it; whereas the reason for needing a cause is the essential origination or the contingent of the effect (for the Muslim peripatetic philosophers) and its existential need (for Mulla Sadra and his followers). This essential origination or contingency or existential need always accompanies the

24. Ghazzali, Muhammad, *Tahafot al-Falasifa*, ed. Maurice Boyj Dar al- Mashrigh, p. 110.

25. Averroes, *Tahafot al-Tahafot*, ed. Maurice Boyj, Dar al-Mashrigh pp. 263 – 264.

26. For studying and criticizing Ghazzali’s objections against the philosophers’ approach to proving the Necessary Being, see: Ashtiyani, Seyed Jalal al-Din, “Critique of Ghazzali’s Thought about Proving the Origin of Existence” *Keyhan Andisheh*, No. 23, p. 45.

contingent, whether the contingent is temporal (originated in time) or atemporal (temporal pre-eternity).

The main attack on Avicenna's argument was the objection that without the temporal origination of things and only via contingency one cannot argue for the existence of God. But as Mulla Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji says, this objection is baseless.

The essential origination, which is a consequential property to the meaning of possibility, is independent and sufficient regarding a yardstick of the need for Creator; for the precedence of one of the two sides of the contingent qua contingent needs a preponderant; and because theologians do not accept contingency and essential origination to be enough for proving the world's need for a Creator, and for them the temporal origination alone or along with contingency is the cause of need, they sought to prove the temporal origination by rational arguments which they could not complete and thus they are faced with a very difficult task..... From the claim they have made, (that is, the yardstick of needing a cause is the temporal origination) it appears that they cannot prove the existence of the Necessary Creator, for when the need for an Agent is held to be caused by the temporal origination, the chain of the causes of the events may end with a contingent being which is temporally pre-eternal, and because contingency is not the only yardstick for needing a cause, neither circle nor regress would occur."²⁷

B. The Incompatibility of the Principle of the Impossibility of an Infinite Regress and Other Principles of the Peripatetic Philosophy

Ghazzali holds that the principle of the impossibility of regress, which is one of the premises of Avicenna's argument, differs and is incompatible with the accepted principles of the Peripatetic philosophy. For one of the philosophical beliefs of Peripatetics—represented mainly by Avicenna—is the infinitude of the chain of events; that is, there is no event that is not preceded by another event. In other words, no time can be found in which no events had occurred.

To answer this objection, we can say that the comparison between the chain of the temporal events and the chain of causes and effects is out of place. For what is impossible is the conglomeration of the infinite links of causes and effects at one time, rather than the infinitude of the events, the non-existence of each of them is the condition or the grounds for the origination of the other and they do not come together actually at the same

27. Lahiji, Abdol Razzagh, *Gohar-e-Morad*, p.151.

time. Philosophers accept that every event is preceded by another event, but they do not accept that every contingent effect must be preceded by another contingent effect. For, in the former there is no actual conglomeration of the parts, whereas in the latter because of the accompaniment of the cause and the effect, all the links of the chain of causes and effects are met together and actually exist simultaneously with the existence of the last effect.

Ghazzali criticises another principle of Avicenna's philosophical convictions as contradictory to the principle of the impossibility of regress in which all the units and components have an actual conglomeration. It is the belief in the infinitude of human souls, despite the priority and anteriority that exist in their origination, that now, because of their eternality, all of them actually exist. On the basis of this objection, the principle of regress is defective on the grounds of its incompatibility with the traditional philosophical convictions, and, thus, Avicenna's argument remains incomplete.²⁸

It seems that the incompatibility of these two principles (the principle of the infinitude of the souls and the principle of the impossibility of regress) does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the principle of the impossibility of regress is invalid, and perhaps the principle of the infinitude of the souls is invalid. The incompatibility of these two principles means that one of them is incorrect, and to determine which one it is requires the study of their arguments. In our discussion of the arguments of the impossibility of regress we have shown the validity and correctness of some of them; therefore, if we supposedly accept the incompatibility of the two mentioned principles (and this incompatibility itself is doubted and debated) we should deny the infinitude of the souls or explain it in such a way as to be compatible with the principle of the impossibility of regress.

C. The Objection of Imam Fakhr-E-Razi

To Avicenna's claim that his demonstration of the existence of God has no place for the contingent beings, but reaches the Necessary Being via the analysis of existence itself, Fakhr-e-Razi objects that Avicenna by abandoning the supposition that the concerned existent must be necessary ultimately directs the discussion to the contingent being, and on the basis of the impossibility of regress he concludes that the existence of the Necessary Being is necessary for the existence of the contingent beings, including the

28. Ghazzali, *Tahafot al-Falasifa*, p. 111; Fakhr-e-Razi, *al-Matalib al-'Aliya fi al-'Ilm al-Ilahi*, ed. Ahmad Hijazi vol. 1, p. 158.

contingent whose existence is supposed already.²⁹

The answer to this objection is clear, for Avicenna claims that his argument is not dependent on the acceptance of the contingent being or discussing it as the premise of the demonstration; and if in the process of demonstration it speaks of the contingent being, it is spoken of as one of the two sides of the veritable disjunctive, so that if the supposed existent is contingent it should end in a necessary Being. On the other hand, we know that the truth of a conditional statement is not dependent on the truth of its antecedent.

D. The Objection of Averroes

Averroes, the Andalusian Muslim philosopher (the West of the Muslim world), who is more highly regarded than Avicenna and other Muslim philosophers by European scholars, has objected to the discourse of Avicenna:

According to him the division of the existence into the necessary and the contingent, which constitutes the premise of Avicenna's argument, is invalid. For an existent is something that exists and what is existent cannot be equal to existence and non-existence (be a contingent being).³⁰

For Averroes, existence is always equal with necessity, and the existent cannot be a contingent being. Although the necessity of existence is sometimes essentially (i.e., by itself) and sometimes is 'by another', at the end every existent is necessary.

Of course, the equality of existence and necessity is not a point that could have been neglected by Avicenna. His division of existent into the necessary and the contingent is not a division made on the mode of existence, for on this basis every existent is necessary and, in fact, unless the thing is necessary it does not become existent (the content of the philosophical rule "unless the thing is necessary it cannot become existent"). What Avicenna was thinking of was that in a rational analysis every existent is one of two kinds. It either cannot be imagined to have any essential or non-existential mode, and all that has is existence, which, in that case, it is called Necessary Being.³¹ Or it is an existent from whose finitude and limits the intellect in its

29. Fakhr-e-Razi, *al-Matalib al-'Aliyya*, vol. 1, p. 56.

30. Majid Fakhri, *Ibn Rushd Feylasoof - o- Ghartaba* Dar al- Mashrigh, p. 23.

31. The essentially Necessary Being has no whatish and contingent aspect at all; He is pure existence, and does not have any limitation from which quiddity can be abstracted. See Gholam Hossein Ibrahim Dinani, *General Philosophical Principles*

analysis extracts an essential mode, which is called quiddity. It is this quiddity that in its relation to existence and non-existence has equal state; and its existence or non-existence needs a cause. That existent from which the quiddity can be extracted and its essence can be conceived and understood is called the contingent being.³²

This interpretation of Avicenna's speech (considering the essence and the quiddity in dividing existence into necessity and contingency rather than existence itself) can be seen in the works of Mulla Sadra. This is why Mulla Sadra considers the division of existent into the necessary and the contingent as a sort of giving fundamentality to the quiddity. For when an external existent, because of having quiddity is characterized by contingency it means that the quiddity acts as an intermediary in occurrence of contingency on existence; in philosophical terms it is a binding aspect, that is, the characterization of contingency is essentially and in reality belongs to quiddity and attributing it to the existent is metaphorical and accidental and is due to the unity of existence and quiddity in the external. If quiddity were a binding aspect and it were the thing which were characterized by contingency, then it would exist in the external, for it is in the external that the quiddity causes existence to be characterized by contingency.³³ To avoid giving any kind of fundamentality to quiddity, Mulla Sadra changes the division of the existence into the necessary and the contingent to that of the self-sufficient and the insufficient, or the independent and the dependent.³⁴

E. Mulla Sadra's First Objection

Mulla Sadra does not accept Avicenna's demonstration as an argument of the Sincere because the concept of existence is part of it. For the concept of existence is different from the reality of existence, which is the only way employed by the argument of the Sincere to prove the existence of God. According to Mulla Sadra, the argument of Avicenna, contrary to what he

in Islamic Philosophy (In Persian), Mo'asseseh Mutali'at va Tahghighat Farhangi, (Tehran), 1986, vol. 2, p. 596.

32. See Javadi Amoli, Abdollah, *Tabein Barahin Ithbat Khoda*, Isra Publications, p. 145, 146.

33. Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar al-Araba'a*, Dar Ihya al-Torath, p. 84; also see Ashtiyani, *Ta' ligha bar Sharh Manzooome*, p. 489.

34. Mulla Sadra, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiya*, ed. Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani; Mashhad University Press, p. 35.

claims, is not based on the analysis of existence itself.³⁵

In answer to this objection, Sabzawari says: "In Avicenna's argument, the concept of existence has been used to refer to the reality of existence, and not simply as one of the many concepts or as a mental issue."³⁶

Because no reference is made to the concept of existence in Avicenna's writing itself, and everywhere he speaks of the reality of existence and externality, the objection by Mulla Sadra appears to be ambiguous and unclear. Perhaps he is attempting to say that by dividing the existence into the necessary and the contingent Avicenna speaks of the concept of existence in its reference to the existence itself, for pure existence without considering another mode cannot be divided into the necessary and the contingent. That which can be divided into the necessary and the contingent is not existence itself which itself is the criterion of necessity and self-sufficiency, but rather it is the concept of existence in its reference to an existent that can be a quiddity or otherwise. If Mulla Sadra's criticism is directed to this, then Sabzawari's answer will not take us anywhere.

If this objection is accepted, it will not do any harm to the argument and its validity, and it will only concern the claim on its title. Mulla Sadra himself has accepted Avicenna's argument, and has acknowledged it to be the nearest way to the real argument of the Sincere, and in some of his works bases his argument on it.³⁷

F. Mulla Sadra's Second Objection

The philosopher from Shiraz argues that Avicenna's argument is a demonstration from effect to cause (*Inni*) argument, which cannot lead to certitude, rather than a demonstration from cause to effect (*limmi*) that ends with certitude. We know that a argument is a kind of logical syllogism composed of certain premises and is made in the two forms of *Inni* (a demonstration from effect to cause) and *limmi* (a demonstration from effect to cause). . The middle term in the latter, besides being the confirmatory cause (the cause of being effect) of the conclusion, it is also the cause of existence (the cause of the realization and the affirmation) of the major term for the minor term. In the demonstration from effect to cause (*Inni*), however, though the middle term is the confirmatory cause, it is the effect or

35. Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar al-Arba'a*, vol. 6, p. 26.

36. Ibid.

37. Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar Al-Arba'a*, vol. 6, p. 26. *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, ed. Seyyed Jalal Ashtiyani, Anjoman Hikmat Publications, p. 15.

the corollary of the effect of the existence of the major term for the minor term. Most logicians hold that such an argument cannot lead to certitude (despite the certitude of its premises).

The detailed study of the above-mentioned division of the demonstration argument, and deciding the validity or invalidity of the claim that the *Inni* argument (the demonstration from effect to cause) cannot lead to certitude are matters lying outside the range of this research. However, we have to briefly mention some points.³⁸

First, if the claim on the impotence of the (*Inni*) argument (the demonstration from effect to cause) in leading to certitude is grounded on the philosophical rule “things or effects that have causes can only be understood through those causes”³⁹, we must say that the issue in question (the essence of the Exalted Creator) is not the subject of this judgment, for it is not an effect.

Second, as was said by some philosophers, though contingency, which is a part of the middle term of Avicenna’s argument, is one of the attribute of the quiddity and is the effect of the Necessary, we can say that in the position of existence this very contingency of the contingent beings is the reason for their need of the Necessary Being.⁴⁰ In other words, by a cause, which is the middle term of the *Limmi* argument, we do not intend the true cause (the existential linkage), but it is the cause belonged to “the case itself” (*Nafs al-Amr*). Therefore, contingency can also be the cause of something, and from this perspective, Avicenna’s argument can be a *Limmi* argument (a demonstration from cause to effect).

Third, we can say that in Avicenna’s argument one of the consequential properties of existence (the contingency of some of its instances) is proved on the basis of another instance (the necessary existence of one of its instances). This kind of argument is called the semi-causal argument and it can lead to certitude, and certainty, though its middle term is not a real cause and only accompanies the conclusion. Allamah Tabatabaie has defended this position and argues that many of the philosophical demonstrations are of this nature.⁴¹

38. See Mesbah, *Sharh Borhan Mantigh Shifa*, ed. Mohsen G. Heravian Amir Kabir Publications, vol. 1, p. 172 .

39. Gholam Hossein Ibrahimi Dinani, *General Philosophical Principles in Islamic Philosophy*, vol.1, p. 252.

40. Mesbah, Mohammad *Taghi*, *Ta ‘ligha, ala Nahaya al-Hikma*, p. 409.

41. ‘Allameh Tabatabaie, *Nahya al-Hikma*, p. 270.

A Few Points about Avicenna's Argument

A. Avicenna's argument is a kind of direct demonstration and is based on the principles of causality and the impossibility of the circle and regress.

B. The principle of causality (the effect's need for a cause) and the principle of the impossibility of circle are self-evident.

C. In rejecting regress, Avicenna has used a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* argument, which can be understood as an argument of the existence of the Necessary. In other words, Avicenna's argument of the impossibility of regress in *Kitab al-Isharat wa-'l-tanbihat*, besides rejecting regress, necessitates the existence of God.

D. Avicenna's argument is one of the best philosophical arguments for the existence of God and possesses logical accuracy.

Other Accounts of the Argument from Necessity and Contingency; The Theologians' Argument from Contingency

In the works of philosophers and theologians, the argument from necessity and contingency is defined as an argument whose first premise is the contingent being, unlike Avicenna's argument, which begins with the absolute existence rather than the contingent existent. Aside from this difference, we can say that the theologians' demonstration is completely similar to that of Avicenna's. For, once the reality of the contingent being is accepted, the principle of causality necessitates that the contingent being should have a cause, and this cause cannot be the contingent being itself (the impossibility of circle), nor can it be a chain of contingent beings (the impossibility of regress). Therefore, there should be a necessary being to give existence to the mentioned existent. Nevertheless, it is accepted as a principle that the contingent being exists; it is accepted on the grounds of its self-evidence, and if there is any doubt about its existence it can be accepted only on the basis of arguments.

Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji holds that the existence of the contingent is self-evident. He argues:

There is no doubt that the contingent being exists, and the existence of the contingent needs a preponderant or a cause that should exist at the time of its existence; if that cause is also a contingent being, it will need another cause. If the cause of this cause is the first contingent, there will be an explicit circle, and if it is a third contingent then we have to discuss its cause. If the cause refers (to other contingent beings) at any level, there will

be explicit or implicit circle, and if it does not refer to them at any level, there will be an infinite regress, and the impossibility of circle and regress have already proved by a decisive argument. Therefore, it is inevitable that the chain of causes and effects should stop at a cause whose existence is necessary and self-dependent.⁴²

There are some theologians who contend that the existence of the contingent is theoretical and needs a cause. They argue that the combination of the sensible and self-evident things, for example, denotes their contingency, and thereby they conclude the attribute of contingency for them.⁴³

The Argument of Sheikh Eshraq

Sheikh Eshraq [Suhravardi] gives his own account of the argument from necessity and contingency, which came to be known as the account of the author of *al-Talwihat* ('The Intimations'). His argument is presented in the form of the *reductio ad absurdum* argument; that is, after supposing that all existents are contingent beings, he shows that this supposition will lead to impossibility and, therefore, it is invalid.

The accounts of his argument are as follows.

A. If we suppose that all existents were contingent beings, in that case their total whole would be contingent. The contingency of the total set is not due to our extending the effect of the part to the whole or the effect of the individual to the whole set, which is a current fallacy and can be avoided; for it is possible that the parts of the whole or the components of a set should have a special characteristic which is not shared by the whole or the set. Contingency can be extended to cover even the whole and the set because the set made of contingent components will be contingent, and the combination of two or a few contingent beings will not confer necessity on the whole. Because of its contingency, like any other contingent, this contingent whole needs a cause (the principle of causality), and its cause cannot be a contingent, for according to our supposition all contingent components are the members of the set, and they cannot be the generating cause of a set of which they are members. Necessarily the cause of this

42. Lahigi, Abdol Razzagh, *Gohar Morad*, ed. Samad Movahed, p. 235. *Sarmayeh Iman*, ed. Sadegh Larjani, al-Zahra publications, p. 40.

43. See Katebi, *Hikma al-'Ayn, Sharh Mobarak shah*, ed. Seyyed Jalal Ashtiyani, Ferdowsi University, p. 134; also see Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar al-Arbaa*, vol. 6, p. 41.

contingent whole is a necessary being and is outside of the set of the contingent beings (the desired conclusion to the question).⁴⁴

It is clear that this argument is similar to Avicenna's argument against regress, but here it is established as an independent argument for proving the Necessary Being.

B. In his book, Qadi Iji has presented the argument of the author of *al-Talwihat* ('The Intimations') in another way. Initially, he supposes that there exists a contingent being, and in its analysis, he writes: If its cause is a contingent being, and the cause of that cause is also a contingent, this would continue *ad infinitum*. We question the whole of those contingent beings, and seek its cause. Its cause cannot be one member of the set of the contingent beings, but it should be sought outside that set. Qadi Iji's account regarding the argument of the author of *al-Talwihat* ('The Intimations') differs from Avicenna's argument only in the first premise, which deals with the acceptance of the contingent being. Therefore, it is difficult to accept it as an independent argument.⁴⁵

In the works of Sheikh Eshraq it is sometimes said: "Because every contingent is necessitous (=needy), all of them must be necessitous; for the whole itself is the effect of the contingent individual units."⁴⁶ This statement itself has raised some objections, for the whole is a subjective (mentally posited, i 'tibari) issue and cannot be counted as one of the real existents – whether a cause or an effect. On the other hand, if the whole is subjective issue, how can we speak of its contingency or its need of a cause?⁴⁶

The Argument of Khawjah Nassir Al-Din Tussi

There is another account of the argument from necessity and contingency known as the account of Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi. He presented the argument from the position of rejecting regress, but after him it was discussed as an independent argument of the Necessary. A summary of the account is as follows.

According to the principle of causality, prior to its necessity a contingent being is deprived of existence ("Unless a thing is necessary it cannot become

44. *Majmou'a Asar -e Sheik Ishragh*, ed. Henry Corbin vol.1, p. 386. Also see Mulla Sadra, *al-asfar al-Arba'a*, vol. 6, p. 30.

45. Seyyed Sharif Jorjani, *Sharh al-Mawaghif*, Sharif Radi Publications, vol. 8, p. 7. (Suhravardi's speech is not correct.)

46. *Majmou'a' Asar-e Sheikh Ishragh*, vol. 1, (al-Talwihat), p. 33; also see *Se Resale az Sheikh Ishragh*; Anjoman Hikmat Publications, p. 146.

existent”), and so far that it retains even a little possibility of its non-existence it will remain in the abyss of non-existence. It is only by eliminating that possibility and attaining the level of necessity that it can step into the realm of existence.

Every contingent individual is threatened with non-existence by another individual, in the sense that unless that other individual exists the first one will not. But our supposition is that the second contingent exists, and, therefore, the first contingent will not be threatened; in philosophical terms non-existence has been repelled. However, because all the links are contingent beings, the chain is also contingent and its existence and non-existence are equal. Therefore, the possibility of its non-existence will also affect its members, and unless there exists something that lifts the whole to the level of necessity, and while the possibility of its non-existence still exists, this possibility will affect all the members of the whole, and this much possibility of non-existence will deny all the members the chance of existence. For the condition of existence is necessity, which they do not possess, and they are threatened with non-existence by the loss and the non-existence of the whole. Philosophically, this kind of possibility of the members’ non-existence is called ‘head non-existence’, that is, it is a kind of non-existence that overtakes the individual as a part of the whole, unlike the previous non-existence, which annihilates the individual in its relationship with another individual.⁴⁷

This argument has been stated in other forms as well. The essence of all of them is that a contingent cannot give existence to another contingent being, for generation is dependent on and a by-product of necessity, and the contingent which itself has no necessity cannot generate or confer necessity on others, unless it is blessed with necessity by another. Therefore, it is only after necessity and the necessary that we can speak of the existence and the generation of the contingent beings.⁴⁸

The argument of the author of *al-Talwihat* (‘The Intimations’) and the

47. Mulla Abollah Zunuzi, *Lama’at-e- Ilahiyya*, ed. Seyyed Jalal Ashtiyani p. 41; also see *Aram Name*, p. 133.

48. Lahiji, Abdol Razzagh, *Shawarigh al-Ilham*, vol. 1 p. 499. He is surprised that why Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi did not cite this argument for proving God’s existence, and he has used it only for rejecting regress; Lahiji refers that this argument is one of the innovations of Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi (p. 199). Also see Abdollah Javadi Amoli, *Tabein Barahin Ibat Khoda*, Isra Publications, p. 147. And Mir Seyyed Sharif Jorjani, *Sharh al-Mawaghif*, vol. 8, p. 12.

argument of Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi, which have been rewritten and recognized in various forms, use the key concept of ‘the whole of the contingent beings’. This kind of argument is not dependent on proving, or the prior acceptance of the principle of impossibility of regress, but while proving the Necessary, proves and demonstrates the impossibility of regress itself. Of course, this does not mean that even by supposing the possibility of regress the arguments for the existence of the Necessary would be valid and complete; rather, it only negates the dependence of the argument of the existence of the Necessary on the principle of the impossibility of regress. In rejecting regress, Avicenna has used the *reductio ad absurdum* argument in which the concept of ‘the whole of the contingent beings’ has a key role.⁴⁹ Essentially, in the *reductio ad absurdum* argument that is established for proving the Necessary or the impossibility of regress the concept of the whole or the totality of the contingent beings must invariably be considered.

In these arguments (those of the author of *al-Talwihat* and Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi against regress) the whole or the totality of the contingent beings are considered, whether the chain of contingent beings is finite or infinite, and because the mentioned whole itself is contingent in its existence we can seek its cause as well.

However, using the concept of the whole or the totality in the argument for the existence of the Necessary and against regress has some problems too.

The Problem of the Fallacy of the ‘Whole’ and the ‘Individual’

A. One of these problems is related to the application of the terms “the whole” or “the set” to endless chains. For the term “set” denotes that its members are limited. Dependence on the set or the whole of the contingent beings for proving the existence of God or the impossibility of regress is begs a question, that is, we use as the premise of our demonstration that which we are seeking to prove. In other words, we accept the finitude of the contingent beings, which is what we are seeking to prove, as a part of the set or the whole of the contingent beings making it the premise of the demonstration.

Khawjah Nassir al-Din-e-Tussi solves this problem introduced by Fakhr-e-Razi in his criticism of Avicenna. Tussi holds that such problems are verbal, for by the whole or the set of the contingent beings Avicenna refers

49. See the discussion of the impossibility of regress in this article.

to the chain of the contingent beings, whether finite or infinite.⁵⁰ That which necessitates limitation is the detailed conception of all the links of the chain, which, of course, is not intended by Avicenna. His intention is the general conception of the chain and, no doubt, referring to it by the term “the whole” or the “set will” entails no limitation.⁵¹

B. The more important problem is related to applying the principle of causality to the whole or the set. Searching for the cause of the whole of the contingent requires that the whole should be a real being, and because such a supposition would mean the whole or the set is one of the contingent members, this would be incorrect.⁵² That which needs a cause in the set of balls is the movement of each of them, and when we say that the whole set of the balls are in motion we should not seek a cause for the movement of the whole, for the whole is not a ball so that it could move and in its movement needs a cause.

This problem has been very important in contemporary Western philosophy of religion, and many philosophers have accepted it; it is known as Bertrand Russell’s objection. The essence of this problem is that seeking a cause for the whole stems from confusing the members of the set or the whole with the abstract concept of the whole or the set.⁵³

To answer this objection, the Muslim philosophers engaged themselves with the study of the different applications of the concept of the whole. The whole sometimes refers to a real compound, that is, that which is produced by special effects and characteristics unavailable to its components. For example, the result of the combination of oxygen and hydrogen is water, which itself is a particular existent with special qualities. As a real compound, the whole is also divided into two. In the first a new kind is produced from the combination of its components, as in the above example; in the other, without producing a new form, the compound thing has really features different from those of its components. For example, a house is made of stone, brick, etc., and without assuming a new form it will have special features. Human products are usually of this kind.

Now, when we speak of the whole of the contingent beings, do we intend

50. Avicenna, *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, vol. 3, p. 22. Also see Katebi, *Hikma al-Ayn*, p.180.

51. See Seyyed Sharif Jorjani, *Sharh al-Mawaghif*, vol.1, p. 6.

52. Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar al-Arba ‘a*, vol. 6, p. 30.

53. In this philosophy, of course, there is another problem related to the concept of the “whole” which is known as Hume’s problem.

that from the combination of the contingent members a new entity with a new specific form is produced, or a new entity without having a new specific form with new special qualities are produced? If a new thing is produced from the combination of the contingent beings, because it has been produced from the combination of contingent components, it will be a contingent and an effect, and we should search after its cause. However, it does not seem that the believers in the contingency of the whole of the contingent beings want to say that a new contingent being which is the whole of the contingent beings has been produced. It is this point that has doubled the problem, for though they accept that the whole of the contingent beings is not a real compound or an independent existent so that its cause could be found, nevertheless they try to explain it and find its cause.

The whole sometimes is used in an abstract and a subjective sense, that is, it refers to the individual members, and, in fact, it is just a name for a series of things. For example, when we speak of the set or the whole of the chairs in a classroom, we do not mean that a new thing has been produced from their combination, but we only refer to the units of the chairs. In its subjective meaning, the whole itself is used in two ways. First, it is the total whole that refers to its members and components along with the condition of combination and accompaniment. Second, it is the overwhelming whole which is the same as the first without the condition of combination; that is, there is no condition as to the members should they be combined with each other.

We can say that when we speak of the whole of the contingent beings in the argument of the existence of the Necessary or the impossibility of regress, we take into consideration its subjective meaning. But when the whole of the contingent beings is an unreal and mentally posited existent, what could be the meaning of the search for its cause? Is the cause of an unreal or a subjective existent anything other than a consideration and abstraction?

The Muslim philosophers hold that the whole of the contingent beings is subjective, and the aim is not to find a cause for that subjective whole, but to find a cause for its referent, which is all the links and components of the chain, which, no doubt, are real things and need a cause.

Sometimes we ask about the cause of the existence of A, and the answer given is based on the existence of B, and, similarly, we ask about the cause of B which is the existence of C, and so on, until finally by supposing the acceptance of a Necessary Being we put an end to all questions. Sometimes we ask of the whole of the individuals together, without conceiving, of

course, their details, which because of their infinitude cannot be conceived. In that case, we cannot explain the existence of all the individuals on the basis of another individual, for according to our supposition that very individual is one of these individuals in question. Therefore, in both cases, that which needs a cause is the individual, but the way the question is asked and the approaches followed in discussing it are different. In other words, in the first approach, each individual is questioned from a particular point of view, but in the second approach the individuals are questioned from a general point of view.

The Argument of Mulla Sadra

In transcendent philosophy, the argument from necessity and contingency has been developed and established in a way consistent with its principles. Mulla Sadra, who holds that the division of a thing into the necessity and the contingent cannot be compatible with the fundamentality of existence, in his account of the argument employs other terms. He argues that an existent is either self-sufficient and independent or insufficient and needy. An insufficient existent cannot exist without a self-sufficient existent. The argument itself is also either direct and is based on the impossibility of regress, or it is indirect and is grounded on the claim that if all things were insufficient and needy, then no existent would have existed. For the plenitude of neediness cannot bring sufficiency and richness, and unless there is sufficiency and independence, needy and insufficient existents cannot have a portion of existence.

Mulla Sadra and his followers blew into the body of the fundamentality of existence the spirit of Avicenna's argument,⁵⁴ and in their re-creation they have liberated themselves from the fetters of dividing existence into the necessary and the contingent, which mainly contributed to the theory of the fundamentality of quiddity.

54. See Mulla Sadra, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, ed. Seyyed Jalal Ashtiyani, Nashr Daneshgahi, p. 35; also Ali Meghdadi Isfahani, *Neshan az Bineshanha*, Adab-e Mashhad Publications, p.155.

The Theory of the Oneness of Existence and its Demonstrability from the Points of View of Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra

Ghassem Kakaie

Abstract

'The oneness of existence' is the most fundamental spiritual view of Ibn Arabi. Mulla Sadra, at the apex of his transcendent theosophy, also moves through 'the gradation of existence' to 'the oneness of existence. Concerning the definition of the oneness of existence there are differing views in the East and the West. In the West some have compared the philosophical view of Pantheism to this theory with some even including them as one. There are however, fundamental differences, between these two views, which will be discussed in this article. On one hand, Ibn Arabi holds that the intellect cannot grasp the theory of the oneness of existence through demonstration, for any rational justification of this theory will meet with irresolvable contradiction. Therefore, from Ibn Arabi's point of view this theory is trans-rational and belongs to a domain beyond reason. On the other hand, Mulla Sadra argues that this theory belongs to **the realm of intellectual discourse**, demonstrating this by substantiating this using two proofs: one is that of analysis (the question of causality) and the other is the rational labouring (the rule of the simple truth). To prove the validity of Pantheism the Western philosophers also considered these two proofs, and have discussed some versions of them, like 'The Dependency Argument' and 'The Infinity Argument'. This article, will first, assess the theories of Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra on the demonstrability of the oneness of existence, and secondly criticise these two proofs of Mulla Sadra comparing them to their Western counterparts.

Introduction

For Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra, the theory of the 'oneness of existence', beyond being a philosophical approach to the world of existence, is a particular understanding of the religious texts in respect to God and His Names and a conceptual interpretation of the Gnostics' mystical unveiling. The people of gnosis have placed this theory next to the most original religious belief, namely monotheism, and have called it the particular monotheism or even the monotheism of the particulars among the elite.¹

This theory found its way from the books of the mystics into the works of philosophers, and if we want to explain properly the whole subject in philosophy, its accurate place would be the section on 'Theology in the Particular sense' rather than 'Theology in the General sense'. As is apparent from the name, this theory contends that in the realm of being there is only one existent or even one 'existence' and returns the multiplicity seen in the world to one 'unity' which embraces the whole multitude. In other words, in this multiplicity it finds a unity whose relationship with the multitudes is the relationship between the absolute and the limited.

This theory greatly differs from all other pseudo-monistic and reductive theories, such as materialism. Materialism holds that behind the whole multitudes there is a unity; it confines existence to 'matter', and contends that all the universe, and even the mind, the intellect, and the soul are the manifestations of matter in its different forms. The difference, however, is that in the theory of the oneness of existence the 'one' or the 'unique' who is the origin of all the multitudes is divine, sacred and is the object of the religious experience, and deserves to be worshipped and praised; it is He, according to Ibn Arabi, Who is called by each nation by a different name. In Arabic he is called Allah, in Persian Khoda, in Armenian Isfaj, in Turkish Tankari, in English God, and in Utopian Waaq.² In short, the world seen by the believer in the oneness of existence is a living universe and that 'one' is the 'soul of the universe'.

The theory known in the West as Pantheism also has these two fundamental constituents, that is, first, it holds that there is a unity behind the

1. Hakim Sabzevari, The Marginal Notes on *al-Asfar al-Arba'a al-'Aghlyya fi al-Hikma al-Muta'aliyya*, Mustafawi Publications, vol. 1, p. 71.

2. *Al-Futuh al-Makkiyya*, Dar Ihya al-Torath al-Arabi, vol. 2, p. 360. Of course, this view is also different from the common monotheism that merely searches for the 'unity' and 'the one' in the origin of the world, for here the unity is in and with the world.

multitudes, and, second, this 'One' is divine.³ This similarity has caused some to believe that 'the oneness of existence' is the same as Pantheism. Different definitions have been given of Pantheism, to the extent that the pre-Socratic philosophers, the ancient Indian religions, Espinoza, Hegel, Bradley, Whitehead, have been counted among the Pantheists. So, Pantheism has been discussed both as a religious tendency and a philosophical approach. Nevertheless, concerning the true definition of Pantheism there are many ambiguities.⁴ Its literal meaning is derived from two Greek words, *pan* meaning all and *theo* meaning God, referring to the belief that holds all existence is divine.⁵ The Pantheists argue that there is only one Being and all forms of reality are its modes or appearances or are equal to It.⁶ Some other definitions have been given of the term:

1. Believing that God is everything, and that all things are God, the world is either equal to God or one in a way or another is the manifestation of His essence.
2. Believing that the whole existence constitutes a unity and this inclusive unity in a sense is divine.⁷ According to this theory, God is not the Creator of things but is equal to them.⁸ Moreover, all things in the world are one and that one is all in all.⁹

Clearly, Pantheism has some similarities to the view of 'the oneness of existence'. Many instances can be cited where the two have been mistaken for each other. To illustrate the main differences between these two theories, initially we will have a look at the oneness of existence in accordance with Ibn Arabi's viewpoint.

Ibn Arabi and the Oneness Of Existence

As Professor Chettick has pointed out, the oneness of Existence as a term was only used in Ibn Arabi's works,¹⁰ once by implication in which the

3. Levine, Michael P. *Pantheism*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, p. 25.

4. *Ibid*, p. 1.

5. Owen, H.P. *Concepts of Deity*, Macmilan, London, 1971, p. 65.

6. *Ibid*, p. 65.

7. Levine, p. 1.

8. *Ibid*, p. 16.

9. *Ibid*, p. 17.

10. See the article "The Oneness of Existence" by William Chittick, *Pajouheshgaran*, No. 11; Also Ibrahim Madkour's view mentioned in *Muhi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi* by Muhsin Jahangiri, fourth edition, Tehran University Press, 1375, p. 263.

words ‘the oneness in existence’ are mentioned.¹¹ But after Ibn Arabi, the opponents of the theory of the oneness of existence, on one hand, have called the Great Sheikh a believer in ‘the oneness of existence’ to accuse him of unbelief (perhaps Ibn Taymiyyah was the first person charged with the aforementioned intention in applying this term to Ibn Arabi).¹² On the other hand, to bring Ibn Arabi’s view closer to the philosophers’ teachings and terms, the disciples of his school have used words such as ‘existence’ and ‘unity’, which are more familiar to philosophers, and have introduced the term the ‘oneness of existence’ to mark the mystical views of Ibn Arabi; after Ibn Sabin the ‘oneness of existence’ became a particular technical term.¹³

However, aside from the term, the meaning of the oneness of existence—restricting existence to God and negating the existence of everything other than Him—is the ultimate goal of all of Ibn Arabi’s works. We will briefly look at examples of some of them.

Expressions such as “Existence is God”¹⁴ or “Existence is the Real”¹⁵, which hold that existence is limited to God, have been repeated many times in *al-Futuhat*. On one occasion in *al-Futuhat* after mentioning the common remark “There is no God other than Allah” he explains its meaning according to this particular monotheism as follows: “But the commitment of the great mystics to ‘There is no God other than Allah’ differs from that which could result from rational speculation; they observe that existence is only God.”¹⁶ Moreover, “other than God nothing can escape the power of the Real; He is their Creator or even He is their existence. All of them derive their existence from Him, whereas the existence of none of them is against or is outside His existence, an existence, which He could have given to other than Him. Such a thing is impossible. He is existence itself and things do appear because of Him.”¹⁷

11. *Al-Futuhat*, vol. 2, p. 502.

12. M. Jahangiri *Muhi al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi*, p. 263.

13. Chittick, “The Oneness of Existence,” *Pajouheshgaran*, No. 11, p. 24.

14. *Al-Futuhat*, vol. 2, p. 556; also in vol. 2, p. 517, there is a sentence which may be the closest meaning to the oneness of existence: “Nothing has been manifested in existence, except the Truth: so the existence is the Truth Himself, and He is the One.”

15. *Al-Futuhat*, vol. 2, p. 540.

16. *Ibid*, vol. 4, p. 89.

17. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 406.

On many occasions,¹⁸ Ibn Arabi argues that the existence of the universe is equal to the existence of the Real.

Concerning our knowledge of God, the most important issue and the highest point of uniqueness is [to know] that the existence of the world is equal to the existence of the Real and is not different from Him. If there were no limits, there would have been no difference or distinction.¹⁹

He also states, "He whose eyes have been opened by God will see Him in everything or equal to everything."²⁰ Moreover, "The mystics see Him as equal to everything."²¹ The difference between the commonplace monotheism produced by the intellect and the particular monotheism which is given by unveiling, shows that the owner of the intellect perceives the unity in the origin and the beginning of things, and holds that "in everything there is a sign denoting the oneness of God." But the owner of manifestation sees the Real as equal to the creatures, and along with Ibn Arabi recites, "In everything there is a sign which shows that God is equal to it." Therefore, "other than God there is nothing in existence, and this is why Bayazid and some of the ancient people of God have claimed 'I am God' and 'I am the Glorified.'"²²

Mulla Sadra and the Oneness of Existence

Although issues such as 'the fundamentality of existence' and 'the gradation of existence' are counted among Mulla Sadra's innovations and are the features that mainly distinguish his philosophy from that of the ancients, the reality is that these were not his last steps, and his goal throughout *al-Asfar* from the very beginning of his discussions of existence was to lift the current formal philosophy through several stages so that it could serve mysticism and explication of the Holy Koran. Thus, at the very beginning of *al-Asfar* while discussing the fundamentality of existence he writes:

We should know that proving the different levels of the existential multitudes and accepting the multiplicity of existence in our discussion and teaching is not incompatible with what, by God's permission, we are intending to explicate, that is, proving that existence and the existent are

18. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 475.

19. Ibid, vol. 4, p. 146.

20. Ibid, vol. 3, p. 247.

21. Ibid, vol. 4, p. 28; also vol. 3, p. 386; and *Fusus al Hikam*, ed. Abul 'Ala 'Afifi, Beirut, 1365 A. H., p. 111.

22. *Al-Futuhah*, vol. 2, p. 272.

essentially and really one, as is believed by the friends of God and the mystics, namely the great people of unveiling and certitude.²³

At the end of his discussion of cause and effect, he fulfils this promise and declares that God has been his guide in this matter:

From over His throne, God has also guided me by His beaming proof to this straight path where existence and existent are confined to one personal truth that has no partner in its existence, no second to its reality, and besides Him, there is nothing in the House of existence.²⁴

In his *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah* ('The Divine Evidence') he writes: Reality has become manifest, the sun of the truth has risen, and it has become clear that all that comes under the name of existence is nothing other than one aspect of the many aspects of that everlasting Unique and one beam of the illumination of the Light of lights.²⁵

In *Mafatih al-Ghayb* ('The Keys of the Unseen') he also emphasizes, "In the world of existence nothing exists other than His identity, and the possible beings are the beams of His light and tiny drops in the sea of His existence. Therefore, other than Him, there is nothing in existence."²⁶

The Difference between Pantheism and the Oneness of Existence

So far the similarities between Pantheism and the oneness of existence have been emphasized. However, there are fundamental differences between the accounts given of Pantheism and the oneness of existence by Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra. Pantheism has been defined as "a religious belief or a philosophical theory which holds that God and the world are one."²⁷

If the identity of God and the world means that God is nothing other than the world, and the term 'God' is simply another name for the world, then the statement 'God is the world', first of all, is tautological and does not signify any scientific meaning, and, second, the statement is another account of the negation of God and is sheer atheism. Therefore, the meaning must be that God is not distinct from the world, He does not possess the attribute of transcendence, and He is completely immanent in the world. As has been

23. *Al-Hikma al-Muta'aliyya*, vol. 1, p. 71.

24. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 292.

25. *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyya*, second ed. Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi, 1360, pp. 50-51.

26. *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, Maktba al-Mahmudi, Tehran: 1391(published with *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*) p. 556.

27. Sprigye, T.L.S. "Pantheism" in *Monist*, 80(April, 1997), p. 191.

said, "One of the most fundamental differences between Pantheism and Theism is that Pantheism does not believe in the transcendence of God."²⁸ Despite their differences, the Pantheists are unanimous in rejecting the claim of Theism that God is different from the world.²⁹

This Pantheist theory is similar to the speech that Sadr al-Mutaallihin attributes to the uninformed among the Sufis. Although he criticises them severely, he argues that the domain of the mystical thought is free from it, for the mystics do believe in the unseen or absent Identity and the station of Uniqueness which transcends the manifestations of the station of the observation (*shahada*).

Some of the ignorant among the Sufis assume that the essence of the Unique which is called the station of Uniqueness and the unseen Identity and the most Unseen in the language of the mystics has no actual realization apart from the appearances and manifestations, and hold that the world of forms and its spiritual and sensible faculties are the only reality; God, in short, is nothing other than the totality of these forms and faculties. This view is a manifest disbelief and sheer atheism, and everyone possessed with even a little knowledge will not accept it.³⁰

In other words, though the Pantheists and this group of uninformed Sufis accept the 'unity in multiplicity', they have not gone beyond the station of comparability and the seen world; they have not grasped the station of 'multiplicity in unity' nor have they perceived the station of transcendence or the most Unseen.³¹

This is why the oneness of existence is held to be different from Pantheism and is thought to be more similar to the theory called Pantheism. Pantheism derives from three words *pan* meaning all, *en* meaning in, and *theo* meaning God, and refers to the belief that "the existence of God embraces the whole world and is eminent in it, so that every part of the world exists in Him." Unlike Pantheism, "it holds that the existence of God transcends the world and does not equate the world with the whole existence of God, though the world has no existence other than the existence of God."³² This is why some writers have declared "Pantheism is different from Pantheism in that it contends that there is something in God's

28. Levine, p. 2.

29. Owen, p. 65.

30. *Al-Hikma al-Muta'aliyya*, vol. 2, p. 345.

31. Ibid, Sabzevari's marginal notes.

32. Owen, p. 74.

essence which transcends and is independent from the world.”³³ “Pantheism argues that the world is the self-manifestation of God, and at the same time there is an aspect of the divine life which is completely separate, free, and independent from the world.”³⁴ “Pantheism is more compatible with Theism or traditional theology and it is placed somewhere between Pantheism and Theism, and, according to some scholars, it is a combination of these two.”³⁵

In any case, unlike Pantheism the school of Ibn Arabi and following it the view of Mulla Sadra have never endured pure comparability, and along with comparability argue for the transcendence of God over the world, as Ibn Arabi has openly stated: “In the station of self-manifestation He is equal to things, but in the essence of things He is not one with them; He is far removed from such a thing and He is the most Exalted. He is He and things are things.”³⁶ In another place he speaks of the two stations and the two judgments of the Real, the station of transcendence and incongruity between the Real and the creatures, and the station of comparability and congruity between the two. He says “The Real has two judgments, one is the judgment related to the station of His identity and essence, and this judgment is nothing other denying any congruity between Him and His creatures; the other judgment is related to the station of lordship which is the cause of congruity between Him and His creatures.”³⁷ In *Fusus* he writes: “From one view the Real is the creatures, so take heed, and from another view the Real is not the creatures, so be careful. Combine and separate, for that Being is both the One and the many, and leaves nothing other than Himself.”³⁸

The Demonstrability of the Oneness of Existence from the Point of View of Ibn Arabi

It is in combining and separating the stations of unity and multiplicity, the Real and the creatures, existence and non-existence, the apparent and the manifesting, the hidden and the apparent, the named and the name, and transcendence and comparability that Ibn Arabi’s ‘bewilderment’ becomes apparent and his logical paradoxes occur. Certainly this statement ‘the

33. Ibid, p. 143.

34. Levine, p. 11.

35. Ford, Lewis, “Pantheism vs. Theism” in *Monist*, 80(April 1997), p. 295.

36. *Al-Futuhat*, vol. 4, p. 36.

37. Ibid, vol. 4, p. 79.

38. *Fusus al-Hikam*, p. 79.

creatures are the Real' is neither tautological nor is it predication. The common predication is also a non-derivative predication (He is He,) in which the subject and the predicate, in one way are united, and in another way they are different, and the aspect of unity should be different from the aspects of difference so that no contradiction occurs. But should we, like Ibn Arabi, believe in 'oneness' rather than 'unity', and should we hold that 'the creatures are the Real' and 'the creatures are not the Real', while at the same time there is nothing other than the Real. Then we would not have a non-derivative predication (He is He); rather we would face a 'He is not He' paradox. To use the words of Ibn Arabi, "at that time the servant will know that he is the Real and he is not the Real."³⁹ In another place he argues that the cornerstone of mysticism is founded on 'He is not He'.

The divine issue has always been based on 'He is not He,' and if you do not understand Him in this way, you will never grasp Him. 'You never did not shoot when you shot, it was God Who shot.' This Koranic verse is exactly the same thing which we have said, 'He is not He', and it is here that the intellects of those who have not seen the things as they are will be overcome with bewilderment.⁴⁰

Therefore, "In all cases the truth is that whatever you see or perceive by any faculty you should say it is He and it is not He."⁴¹ And this 'He is not He' is the cause of the intellect's bewilderment: "If you consider the relationship between the world and the Real you will find that 'He is not He' is the place of bewilderment,"⁴² for "there is nothing here other than Him and there is no identity other than Him. In respect of existence He is equal to the existents... Therefore, concerning Him you should say that He is not He, You are not You."⁴³

This is the issue to which Ibn Arabi has drawn our attention having no hope that it could be grasped by the intellect: "I have reminded you of a great issue, of course, if you can remember and can understand it. In the station of self-revelation, He is the things, but in the essence of things He is not them."⁴⁴ This great matter is not a paradox but *is* contradictory, for if its contradiction were simply superficial, after removing it, it would be no

39. *Al-Futuhah*, vol. 2, p. 268.

40. *Ibid*, vol. 2, 243.

41. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 379.

42. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 144.

43. *Fusus al-Hikam*, p. 76.

44. *Al-Futuhah*, vol. 2, p. 484.

longer great, and there would be no place for bewilderment. The contradiction stems from the fact that “the Exalted God comprises the two contraries, but He is the two contraries. He is the first and the last, and the apparent and the hidden.”⁴⁵ The coincidence of contraries ultimately leads to the coincidence of the contradictories, and because the intellect functions on the basis of ‘the impossibility of contradictories’, this matter, in a way, belongs to a domain beyond reason, and can only be understood by a mystic who is realized by the Real, and like the Real he comprises the opposites, and is present in both stations of negation and affirmation, or transcendence and comparability. “Abu Saud Kharraz says, ‘God can only be known by His comprising the opposites.’”⁴⁶ “In this world only the people of God comprise the two contraries, for He by Whom they are realized comprises the contraries, and the mystics are recognized by Him.”⁴⁷ The mystic acquires this matter via the heart and through ‘unveiling’,⁴⁸ rather than via the intellect, for he is **beyond the realm of intellect somehow**.

He who does not witness the manifestations in his heart will deny them, for the intellect and other faculties are restrictive, but the heart is not restricted and changes so quickly. Therefore, the heart is the faculty beyond the realm of intellect. Every person has an intellect, but the faculty that is beyond reason is not given to everybody.⁴⁹

The reason for the Intellect’s bewilderment in this valley is that it must accept the unity of cause and effect. “In the divine sciences there is no question more obscure than this... In existence there is nothing other than God; He is both the ruler and the ruled.”⁵⁰ “Look! How strange is the issue which is related to existence; that is, He that accepts existence is He Who gives existence.”⁵¹

It is this coincidence of opposites and contradictories that has made this question inexpressible, and essentially incapable of proof:

Explaining this issue is extremely difficult, for words cannot express it, and because of the speed of its change and the contradiction of its effects it cannot be imagined. This issue is

45. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 476.

46. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 184.

47. Ibid, vol. 3, p. 369.

48. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 162.

49. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 289.

50. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 216.

51. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 702.

very much like the speech of God that ‘You did not (He negates) when you shot (He affirms).’⁵²

Thus, there remains only two ways to explain this issue: one is the way of unveiling supported by the religious law and faith, as he says,

Look! How strange is this issue, which embraces a definite contradiction. Admitting the two sides of the contradiction in this issue is necessary, and knowing it via unveiling—and believing it at the same time—is a great success and strength conferred upon he who has been given this issue.⁵³

The second way is particular to those who cannot follow the way of unveiling. They should, first, accept that there is a domain beyond reason, and, second, have an unconditional faith in the news given by the divine law in respect to the domain beyond reason: “Through his acknowledging in the Prophet, such a person will be assured that the domain beyond reason differs from what is acquired via intellectual discourse in giving what has been considered unanimously impossible by all intellectual proofs.”⁵⁴ In other words, perceiving that the intellect cannot describe the Real as He is, he understands that he must listen to the description of the Real in His own words:

From the perspective of mysticism, the intellect in order to know God follows the way of supposition and speculation, and, thus, its proofs are open to doubt and question, whereas the knowledge of God delivered by the divine law is authentically transmitted and definite and raises no doubt in the believer ... In other words, this is God Who is introducing Himself to His

52. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 216. Strange to say that despite inexpressibility of this issue, Ibn ‘Arabi has written thousands of pages about it! Perhaps this is also another case in which the mystic has done the combination between two contraries. Principally, the existence of the mystic is a paradox: “He exists, and he does not exist” let alone his words. The whole life and works of Ibn ‘Arabi are based upon this expression, and we can see this from the way he encountered Averroes when he was a teenager. Ibn ‘Arabi raised the mentioned expression against that eminent philosopher who had based his philosophy upon “He is He”: “Averroes told me: “yes,” he was happy to find that I understood him; then I found what made him happy. I said, “no” and he became pale and depressed and doubted what he believed in.” *al-Futuhat*, vol. 1, p. 154. This is the reaction of mysticism toward Averroes’ philosophy. But Mulla Sadra’s treatment of this paradox will be discussed later.

53. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 635.

54. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 288.

servants, and He knows His servants more than they know themselves. To know God via the divine law is to know that He combines transcendence with comparability, and such a matter, namely the coincidence of opposites in a subject is impermissible from the perspective of the speculative and rational proofs. Therefore, the creatures of God cannot judge God, and the intellect, speculation, and rational intellection are among God's creatures.⁵⁵

To sum up, the mystics approve 'the oneness of existence' on the authority of the heart, and the Holy Koran on the authority of the divine law, but demonstration does not agree with this theory on rational grounds, and it is only through faith and submission that it can be harmonized with the heart and the divine law.

Thus, we understand that there is a station that is beyond intellection that can give certain things to the servant... including what is intellectually considered to be impossible and from the perspective of intellection, the intellect holds to be nonexistent and impossible. However, at the same time intellect can accept it from the Real as a true reality without removing the name of impossibility or lifting the judgment of its rational impossibility.⁵⁶

In another place he says: "When a station which is beyond reason is clarified by Prophecy, and the group of mystics behaved and acted on its basis, they will be granted to unveil what the intellect thinks impossible to unveil through intellection."⁵⁷

Now it appropriate to ask what can be said about all Ibn Arabi's emphasis on the supra rational and the contradictory nature of the oneness of existence? There are a few approaches to consider:

1. We could believe that in speaking of his mystical witnessing Ibn Arabi has made a verbal mistake and has fallen in contradiction, for 'the oneness of existence' is not a contradictory issue.

55. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 597.

56. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 114. Here again Ibn'Arabi emphasizes that the oneness of existence cannot be proved by arguments. He classifies mystical issues into two groups. One are those which are expressible but cannot be proved by arguments (such as the present case), and the other are those which are not even expressible: He says: "this can be counted as expressible knowledge; Now what about the knowledge which is outside the realm of expression knowledge? So, not every kind of expressible knowledge can be counted as the intuitive knowledge."

57. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 128.

2. We could take the discourse of Ibn Arabi as poetic fantasies or even verbal nonsense, without attaching any real meaning to it; therefore, it cannot be placed within the limits of logic.
3. We could understand the oneness of existence as a paradoxical theory whose contradiction is only superficial; by finding its different aspects, we can remove the unity of direction and then get rid of contradiction, a thing Ibn Arabi would not do because of his absorption in the station of unveiling and witnessing, or could not do because of his insufficient knowledge in theosophical and philosophical matters.⁵⁸
4. We could take the oneness of existence as a meaningful theory, and accept that for Ibn Arabi it is the rational explanation of the oneness of existence that is impossible, rather than that any rational proof could be established against the impossibility of the oneness of existence.
5. We could say with Stais that mysticism is supra rational and is beyond the domain of reason, and all accounts of the oneness of existence are obvious logical contradiction, and the contradictions put by Ibn Arabi are logically irresolvable. Ibn Arabi and people like him are sincere in their speech on the secrets of witnessing and the essence of certitude.

In saying that their state or experience is beyond the domain of reason, obviously they mean that it is beyond logic and demonstration; and every endeavour made for analysing and explaining their mystical ecstatic phrases on logical and linguistic grounds would end with lowering mysticism to the level of common and conventional reason, denying its unique characteristic, and degrading it to the level of our everyday experiences.⁵⁹

In any case, some of Ibn Arabi's followers followed the third option and tried to rationalise the theory of the oneness of existence; however, most of the proofs they presented suffer from confusing of the concept with the extension in one way or another; that is, most of them instead of proving the unity of the extension of existence, have tried to prove the unity of its concept.⁶⁰ None of them succeeded completely in rationalising the oneness of existence, considered by Ibn Arabi to be Koranic and mystical, until the

58. In this case Ibn 'Arabi must be like a person who is unable to speak and people must be those who are unable to hear and even to see.

59. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, trans. Baha al-Din Khoramshahi, Soroush Publications, 1375, chapter 'Mysticism and Logic'.

60. Javadi Amoli, 'Abdollah, *Rahigh Makhtoum*, Markaz Nashr Isra, vol. 1, chapter 1, p. 493.

advent of Mulla Sadra.

Mulla Sadra and the Demonstrability of the Oneness of Existence

Mulla Sadra tries, first, to prove that demonstration (the knowledge of certitude) can never be against mysticism or gnosis (the essence of certitude),⁶¹ for certitude is light, and light never opposes or is against another light. Second, by the supra rational he understands those matters, which because of their extreme sublimity and grandeur are not accessible to the intellect, that because of their contradictory nature are denied by the intellect.

It is true that the sound intellect, which dwells in the realm of nature, not able to travel to the world of secrets, is impotent to grasp some of the levels of the perfect knowledge because of its nobility and grandeur; however, the sound intellect and the straight mind does not deny any of the real issues or decree their corruption.⁶²

Here he cites an example from Ghazzali who distinguishes between what the intellect holds to be impossible and that which is inaccessible to it:

Know that in the realm of sainthood and mysticism there is nothing that is held to be impossible by the intellect. It is true that in the realm of sainthood there could be a kind of knowledge, which the intellect cannot grasp, that is, the intellect by itself cannot understand it. He that cannot differentiate between what is held by the intellect to be impossible, and that which the intellect cannot access, little deserves to be a party to our debate and discussion.⁶³

According to this view, the oneness of existence is a secret that the intellect because of its essential deficiency cannot grasp, rather than a secret incompatible with the intellect because of its contradictory nature. For example, the intellect cannot grasp the infinitude of God because it is limited and cannot encompass the infinite. But God's infinitude is not contradictory. On the other hand, the intellect cannot grasp the 'square circle' and considers it to be impossible, for this concept is contradictory.

Third, Mulla Sadra holds that the intellect by itself cannot perceive this issue, but it can do so by the help of divine light, as the intellects of the Prophets and the friends of God are able to do:

The particular monotheism, which belongs to the elite among

61. *Al-Hikma al-Muta'aliyya*, vol. 2, p. 315.

62. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 322.

63. *Ibid*.

the people of God, is an issue that transcends the speculative intellects whose eyes have not been illuminated yet by the light of the divine guidance. Therefore, expressing and interpreting it in a way to comply with what is heard by the people of speculation and formal intellection would be very difficult for the people of God.⁶⁴

Fourth, I will endeavour to show that the oneness of existence is demonstrable, provided that in the first instance the intellect is illuminated by divine light, and in the second instance the formal intellection and the current philosophy are so much developed that they can explicate the oneness of existence. Mulla Sadra has succeeded in both of these areas, particularly in the second part. He was very successful in establishing the principles and rules of the transcendent theosophy. At the beginning of his book *al-Asfar* and by the time he starts his discussion of the issues related to existence he follows no other goal than explaining and proving the oneness of existence,⁶⁵ and in this way, unlike Stais in his views, he has not degraded mysticism, but on the contrary he has honoured and exalted the status of theosophy and philosophy. In his commentary on *Hidayah Athiriyyah* he writes:

Concerning the oneness of existence it is usually said that its understanding transcends the realm of intellectual discourse, but I know one of the poor who holds that the understanding of this question falls within the realm of the intellect, and has demonstrated this issue in his books and essays.⁶⁶

The person intended by Mulla Sadra is none other than himself, who promises to demonstrate this issue at the beginning of the first volume of his *al-Asfar*,⁶⁷ and fulfils this promise by the end of his discussion of the issues related to cause and effect.⁶⁸

Fifth, Sadr Mulla Sadra establishes two proofs here, one is proving the oneness of existence via the analysis of ‘the question of causality’ and the other is meditating upon the rule ‘the simple (non-composite) reality is all the things’. In short, for him, the oneness of existence does not belong to a domain beyond reason; rather understanding is related to a special degree of

64. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 337.

65. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 71.

66. *Sharh al-Hidayya al-Athiriyya*, Qom: Bidar Publications, p. 288.

67. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 71.

68. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 292.

the intellect that is inaccessible to crooked intellects or formal intellection. In any case, it is within the realm of intellectual discourse; its contradiction is superficial or formal and can be eliminated by emphasizing its diverse aspects.⁶⁹

Mulla Sadra's First Argument

The first argument is made through reducing 'causality' to 'self-manifestation'; the summary of this is as follows:

1. The Exalted Real is the only real cause in the world, and the entire universe and everything other than God is His effect.
2. Being an effect is the same as is equal to the essence of the effect, for if being an effect, and need were not equal to the essence of the effect, then need would be accidental to it, and in its essence it would be neither dependent nor an effect, and this is against our supposition.
3. The object whose being an effect is the same as its essence will have no identity of its own, and, in other words, will be nonexistent and dependent upon the cause; in consequence, it will be the very appearance, state, and self-manifestation of the cause.
4. Therefore, other than God all things are the appearances and the states of the Exalted Real, and they have no identity of their own.
5. In one respect the appearance of the thing is equal to the thing itself.
6. In consequence, the world has no identity other than the Exalted Real; therefore, He is the world and the creatures are the Real.⁷⁰

In this substantiation contradiction appears only in the fifth premise, in that the manifestation of A is A itself. In order to eliminate this contradiction, Mulla Sadra, besides the expansion that he introduced in philosophy, introduced radical changes into logic as the means of explaining philosophy. In the proposition 'A is the manifestation of A itself,' contrary to Ibn Arabi's views, we are not faced with the paradox 'He is not He'; rather, we meet with a kind of predication of 'He is He' (non-derivative predication) which is neither a primary predication nor a common predication; it is the predication of the apparent upon the cause of appearance.

For in the primary predication the realm of unity is the axis of quiddity and concept, and in the common predication the realm of unity is the axis of

69. The author believes that the fourth view that is Stace's view is more compatible with Ibn Arabi's views.

70. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 2, pp. 299-300.

existence, and in the predication that we mentioned the realm of unity is appearance and manifestation, which is neither a concept nor a quiddity nor existence.⁷¹

Of course, this meaning and the analysis of the oneness of existence on the grounds of causality were not unknown by Ibn Arabi, and he referred to them on many occasions: “It is certain for the verifiers that in the house of existence there is nothing other than God, and though we do exist, our existence is dependent on Him, and he whose existence is dependent on another is in effect nonexistent.”⁷² But essentially Ibn Arabi, unlike Mulla Sadra, first, could not demonstrate the major premise “He whose existence is dependent on another is in effect nonexistent,” and, second, in harmonizing between “the creatures are the Real” and “the creatures are not the Real” sees that the intellect is perplexed and in contradiction. The answer of Mulla Sadra is that here there occurs no contradiction, for there is no unity of predication here. For “the creatures are the Real” is the predication of the apparent upon the cause of appearance, and “the creatures are not the Real” is a common technical predication, and is a negative proposition with its subject being nonexistent.⁷³

Another account of this proof, known as ‘The Dependency Argument’, has been given by Western thinkers to demonstrate Pantheism and the unity of God and the universe. The summary is as follows.

1. God is the cause of the world and the world is His effect.
2. The effect both in its generation and subsistence needs a cause and cannot exist without a cause.
3. When X in all the moments of its existence is dependent on C for its subsistence, it is nothing other than an aspect, a mode,

71. *Rahigh Makhtoum*, vol. 2, chapter 5, pp. 65-68. Of course, this is not the predication of truth on appearance because in this predication, the pivotal point is the subject and again, there is a duality between the cause and the effect (the predicate and the subject) so that the cause possesses the perfections of the effect, so, it can be said that it is the effect and vice-versa. When we have a hundred, we also have ninety, so we can predicate ninety upon one hundred. However, this kind of predication, which is also one of Mulla Sadra’s innovations can be a means for expressing the graduation of existence, but not the oneness of existence.

72. *Al Futuhat*, vol., p. 279.

73. The author believes that this contradiction is not even solved by this justification for it will end in accepting an intermediary between the existence and non-existence. This issue should be dealt with separately. The author hopes to have a chance to deal with this issue separately in future.

or a lower level of C.

4. In consequence, the world is the appearance and the self-manifestation of God and is not separate from Him.⁷⁴

Of course writer has not demonstrated the third premise and simply tries to explain the issue by theorizing about the relationship of the soul with its faculties and acts.

In comparison, by bringing counter-examples some have tried to show that the third premise is defective. "For example, when we drink water from a water cooler, while we press the tab there is water, that is, the former is the cause of the latter, but is the springing of water an aspect, a manifestation, or an appearance of the pressing of the tab?"⁷⁵ Of course, it is obvious that here the generating cause (the divine agent) has been confused with the physical cause (the natural agent).

Mulla Sadra's Second Argument

The second argument of Mulla Sadra to prove the personal unity of existence comes at the end of his discussions of cause and effect under the title 'A Discourse on Another Argument that the Necessary Being is Unique in His Essence, He is the Whole Reality, and Nothing Exists Outside His Reality'.⁷⁶

In this argument, he employs the rule of 'the simple reality'; its simple form is as follows:

1. The Exalted Real is the Necessary being.
2. Every necessary being is simple in its reality and is infinite in its existence.
3. An infinite being does not leave any space for other than itself.
4. Therefore, insofar as existence is concerned the Exalted Real does not leave any space for other than Himself. That is, the Exalted Real exists and everything other than Him is nonexistent.

He explains this corroboration in *al-Asfar* as follows: "Know that the Necessary Being is the simple reality in the highest degree of simplicity, and such a simple reality is all things; therefore, the Necessary Being is all things and nothing exists outside His existence."⁷⁷ In his *commentary* on *Usul al-Kafi* he gives another account of the proof:

The Monotheism of the Divine Throne: Know that the essence of the

74. Levine, p.149-151.

75. Ibid, p. 50.

76. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 368.

77. Ibid.

Exalted Real is the Reality of an infinite and endless existence, and the reality of non-existence cannot combine with it. Therefore, the existence of all things is invariably dependent on Him, and He is the existence of all things.⁷⁸

This evidence in its various forms has also been employed to prove Pantheism and negate any distinction between God and the universe. Espinoza and his followers have even considered it. Some Western thinkers have said in this regard:

If God were a distinct existent besides other existents, He would be limited, and, as Espinoza had said, if we accept the traditional distinction made between God and the creatures and hold that God is the Creator, and the universe is created by Him, the infinitude of God will be open to question.⁷⁹

In any case, the infinitude of God established an argument for the validity of Pantheism, known as 'The Infinity Argument', which is very similar to Mulla Sadra's argument.

Some objections and criticism have been made against this argument, and some examples have been put forth contradicting the major premise of this evidence, that is, "No infinite being leaves a place for another being of its kind." For example, in traditional Theism, God's power and knowledge are described as infinite; that is, He has all the power and knowledge that a person can have, and He possesses every kind of power and knowledge that others have altogether. However, from this we should not necessarily conclude that He is the unique omnipotent or knowing and others have no power or knowledge.⁸⁰ Thus, if we say God has all the existential perfections of all other existents, it should not be concluded that other existents have no existential perfection and that God has them exclusively.

The answer is that here we speak of the infinitude of 'existence', and, according to the fundamentality and simplicity of existence if existence were infinitely simple and the existential perfection were not separate from existence, it would be meaningless to assume that this infinite being does not possess all the perfections of things, and, rather, He has them by way of 'He is He'. According to some transcendent theosophists, the rule of the simple reality can be one of two forms.

First, the simple reality possesses all the perfections of other existents but

78. *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, Maktaba al-Mahmudi.

79. *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, Maktaba al-Mahmudi, Tehran: 1391 A.H, p. 336.

80. Oakes, Robert. "The Devine Infinity", *Monist*, 80 (April 1997), pp. 251-66.

does not share with them any of their deficiencies. Such an account is compatible with the gradation of existence: “What the beauty all have, You have altogether.” Second, the simple reality or the Exalted Real has all the perfections, in the sense that all perfections belong to Him... Bringing up the rule of the simple reality at the end of the discussions of cause and effect is compatible with the second account, namely the personal unity of existence... Emphasising that this chapter includes another demonstration of the singular essence and absolute Reality of the Necessary is ample evidence that the intended meaning that the no object’s reality can exist outside the Necessary, is like a negative proposition that its subject is nonexistent.”⁸¹ In fact, the rule of the simple reality according to the second account will take the form “the simple reality is the things themselves but it is none of them.”⁸²

It is also important to remember here that according to the account given of ‘The Infinity Argument’ regarding the Western God is not a separate existent besides other existents, and even, according to this argument, God is not an individualized being at all. It is argued, “One of the fundamental concepts of Pantheism which separates it from traditional Theism is that from the perspective of Pantheism God is not individualized, and even primarily He is not personal.”⁸³ In consequence, the other important difference between the school of Ibn Arabi and Pantheism becomes clear. As was seen, the One and the Absolute believed by Pantheism to embrace all things is neither individualized nor personal,⁸⁴ whereas the One demonstrated by Mulla Sadra is individualized, for we speak of the confinement of existence and existent to one personal Reality. Ibn Arabi’s God also, besides being individualized, is extremely personal so that Ibn Arabi throughout his works is bargaining, speaking, and expostulating with Him, and in his poems, he is passionate about Him. He is a God Who in the apex of His transcendence assumes all the attributes of the creatures and speaks of himself as ‘I’, and even attributes to Himself such qualities as anger, satisfaction, resentment, happiness, cheerfulness, and even laughing, hunger, thirst, and illness.⁸⁵

81. *Rahigh Makhtum*, vol. 2, chapter 2, p. 336.

82. *Ibid*, p. 106.

83. Ford, p. 89.

84. Levien, p.2.

85. *Al-Futuhah*, vol. 3, p. 583.

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