

THE UNITY OF BEING (*WAHDAT AL-WUJUD*), MULLA SADRA'S DOCTRINE OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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Abstract:

The major concern in Islamic Philosophy, especially in the metaphysics is the reality of Being, that specifically studies about being itself. One of its purposes is to prove the existence of the Absolute Being, i.e., God. Regarding the proof for the existence of Absolute Being, arguments derived from pre-Islamic era were the argument about the first mover, which is not much valued. Much more powerful arguments have been advanced by the Muslim philosophers about these important issues. This doctrine which is widely known since the time of ibn 'Arabi, basically is a view that states there is only one existence in this universe, i.e., God. Other beings, the world, and all other phenomenal existences do not really exist. That is, all of them do not separate from God. However, most people misunderstand this unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*) as pantheism, panentheism. The view (unity of being) does not equate everything (viewed as) other God with God, nor stating them are identical with God.

Related to the unity of Being, other Muslim philosopher, Mulla Sadra conceives it in relation to the multiplicity of existence as the rays of the sun in relation to the sun, which the rays of the sun are not the sun and at the same time are nothing but the sun. According to Sadra that existences are equal and the same for all objects, both concrete and abstract. However, the

existence of God is pure, while the other has been added with the quiddity. This can be understood because, according to Sadra, the more perfect existence, the less essence would be shown. Here then comes the second principle, the gradation of being, which being not only one but is a hierarchy from the highest to the lowest level. The principle of the doctrine of unity is nothing but to prove that God is the Absolute Being, while the gradation of being is not other but as the principle of identity and difference among the beings.

Keywords: The Unity of Being, The Multiplicity of Being, Existence,

Foreword:

Mulla Sadra has a vast system of thought which cannot be apart each other in the discussion especially related to Being. Here the writer describes his doctrine of the primacy of existence as his pre-step to the doctrine of the unity of Being as the cornerstone of his all-correlative system of thought. While this unity of Being be an urgent issue as he regards, the single reality is Being. It is a sole reality and grades as the arc of descent, then as its consequence is the arc of ascent through the transsubstantial motion, where all being are moving vertically until they reach the plenum of their archetypes. Discussing Mulla Sadra's system of thought, i.e., *wujud (asalat, wabdat, tashkeik)*, we could take any issues separately each other but must to be a comprehensive discussion related each other.¹ Somehow, all his metaphysics view reverts back to them.

1. Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Sadra on Existence, Intellectual, and Intuition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010), p.86

A. The Primacy of Existence (*Asalat al-Wujud*)

After the emergence of the distinction between *wujud* and *mahiyah* which appeared in Islamic philosophy in long history.² Sadra put himself as the figure who argued the primacy of existence (*asalat al-wujud*) after long argued the primacy of quiddity (*asalat al-mahiyah*),³ and contrary to earlier thinkers who argued that *mahiyah* is more fundamental. Mulla Sadra in the earlier age retained the primacy of quiddity (*asalat al-mahiyah*) like his previous philosopher and his teacher, Mir Damad did. After finding self-enlightenment he precisely finds that existence is more fundamental than quiddity.

To understand this doctrine, it is necessary first of all to turn to the classical distinction in Islamic philosophy between *wujud* (existence),⁴ and *mahiyah* (quiddity) which in its original Latin form is derived directly from the Arabic *mahiyah* (compound of the Arabic words “*mad*” (what is) and “*hiya*” (it)).⁵ Muslim philosophers understand mahiyah from a prophetic tradition:

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2. Megawati Morris gives summary of this long history of distinction between *wujud* and *mahiyah*, Since Aristotle as the Greek source of this distinction continued in Islamic philosophy including al-Farabi, Ibnu Sina and Suhrawardi. See, Megawati Morris, *Mulla Sadra's Doctrine of the Primacy of Existence* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2003), pp.14-38

3. As Sadra said;

"وإني قد كنت شديد الذبّ عنهم في اعتبارية الوجود وتأصل الماهيات، حتى أن هداني ربي وانكشف لي انكشافاً بيّناً أن الأمر بعكس ذلك، وهو أن الوجودات هي الحقائق المتأصلة الواقعة في العين وأن الماهيات المعبر عنها في عرف طائفة من أهل الكشف واليقين بالأعيان الثابتة ما شمت رائحة الوجود أبداً."

Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota'aliya fi al-Asfar al-'Aqliyah al-Arba'a*, Vol. I, Journey 1, Ed. Ayatullah Hasan Hasan Zadahu Amaly, (Tehran: Wizarat al-Tsaqafahwa al-Irshad al-Islamy, 1383H), p. 82.

4. The term *wujud* as it is used in Islamic Philosophy denotes both particular existence and Absolute Being. (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *A Commentary on The Hujjat al-Siddiq of Nur al-Din al-Raniry*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1986), pp.227-230). The term is also a universal concept which refers to all levels of reality encompassing that of the creatures and the absolute or necessary being (*wajib al-wujud*) itself. Adapted from the renditions given by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Being" refers to the Absolute Being, "existence" to particular things or to the principle of existence *vis-a-vis* quiddity, and "being" to the graded aspect of reality which stretches from Absolute Being to individual existents. (Megawati Morris, *Mulla Sadra's Doctrine of the Primacy...*, p.2-3)
5. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *A Commentary on The Hujjat al-Siddiq...*, p.230

“O God, show me things as they really are” (اللَّهُمَّ أَرِنِي الْأَشْيَاءَ كَمَا هِيَ), *ma hiya* refers to the realities (*al-baqaiq*) of things, things as they really are in their shelves---their real essence. Mulla Sadra states that, the main purpose of *al-Hikmah* itself is to get this meaning, or understanding everything as it really is.⁶

In Islamic philosophy, term *mahiyah* is used in two different understanding; *first*, in the particular sense (*bi al-ma'na al-khash*) as an individual existent (*manjud*) which refers to the logical ‘quiddity’ that is derived from the answer to the question: “what is it?”, and *second*, in the general sense (*bi al-ma'na al-'amm*) to the ontological quiddity as that by which thing is what it is (*ma bibi al-shay' huwahu*), which pertains to the ‘real essence’ (*ayn*) or the ‘reality’ (*baqiqah*) of thing.⁷

Mahiyah in the general sense is not contrary to *wujud*. In this second sense *mahiyah* is identified as existence (*wujud*). It includes the very substance of thing or primary stuff of which things are made of, which it is existence itself. Existence here is also understood as presenting itself in a two fold aspect; *first*, as the very act itself of existence by which the quiddity is actualized, *Second*, as the quiddity in the state of actualization (*manjud*).⁸ Hence, *wujud* (existence) itself is *mahiyah*⁹ in this understanding as the reality of thing. But in the particular sense extremely contrary to *wujud*, because it relates to the concept in mind and merely as the result of mental abstraction. *Mahiyah* in

6. Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota'aliya*..., p.30.

7. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam; An Exposition of The Fundamental Element of The World View of Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), p.249, Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, (Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust, 2007), p.154

8. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*..., p.249

9. The development of the concept *mahiyah* in later Islamic philosophy the meanings of the term have been distinguished, *mahiyah* as in its particular sense rendered into English as quiddity, and in its general sense rendered to English as essence. (Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*...,p.75. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*..., p.236)

this sense is considered by Sadra as subjective consideration (*i'tibari*), and expressed *wujud* (existence) as the fundamental.

According to Sadra, to understand the nature of the reality of things, human minds perceive two understandings; its quiddity (*mahiyah*) and existence (*wujud*). “Water”, as example, is a specific identity used to respond the question “what is it?” likewise “dust” used also to respond such question “what is it?”, but both of the two has the same ‘existence’, even with different quiddities. And the answer is merely a kind abstraction by man’s mind as quiddity. Sadra regards that quiddity is merely human mind construction. From every object human mind perceives an image as quiddity. But actually, what give effect and reality of universe is existence, not quiddity. Hence Existence is the actualized as reality and quiddity as image in mind. Therefore, it is possible to have a clear and precise definition of the term “Quiddity” is that which provides the answer to the question “what is it?” when the mind contemplates the thing which demands a definition. To arrive at a definition of the thing in question, the mind will undergo a concept-forming process in which it is able to abstract the thing’s “whatness” from its existence.¹⁰

The mind cannot think of the reality of Being but can only think of logical categories which are associated with quiddities such are, universality (*kulliyah*), particularity (*juz’iyyah*), generality (*‘ammiyyah*) or specificity (*khassiyah*).¹¹ Hence, according to Sadra we can never conceive or think about the reality of Being but we can know it intuitively or experientially. Mulla Sadra distinguishes clearly between the notion of being (*mafhum al-wujud*) and the reality of being (*haqiqat al-wujud*). The first is the most obvious of all concepts and the easiest to comprehend while the second is the most difficult for it requires extensive mental preparation as

10. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam...*, pp.218-219

11. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, trans. James William Morris, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.96

well as the purification of one's being so as to allow the intellect within to function fully without the veils of passion and to be able to discern *wujud* as Reality.¹²

Sadra also here to show that *wujud* cannot be defined. He says that it is impossible to define since it does not have a genus (*jins*) and specific difference (*fasl*) which makes up this definition.¹³ Being is self-evidence cannot to be proved even by neither definition (in term genus and differentia) nor demonstrative proof in logic since Being is included in all categorization as in the logical sense indulges merely in technical categorization.¹⁴

The early Muslim philosophers assert that it is impossible to define the term being or existence. Ibnu Sina, like other Muslim philosophers, only alludes to its meaning by asserting that “it (being) is that from which all other things are derived”.¹⁵ The reason is *wujud* is the most general (*‘amm*) of all concepts in its comprehensiveness (*shumul*) and as such, cannot have genus and specific difference. *Wujud* cannot also be defined through description (*rasm*) since a description makes something known by employing concepts in the logical definition which are better known. *Wujud* is recognized by reason itself¹⁶ without the aid of definition or description. Since it has no definition it has neither genus nor differentia because nothing is more general than it.

Sadra also rejects the view that states that existence does not correspond anything to reality in the external world, as Suhrawardi said, and on the contrary he asserts that nothing is

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12. S.H. Nasr, Mulla Sadra: His Teachings, in *History of Islamic philosophy, Part. I*, Ed. S.H. Nasr, and Oliver Leaman, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.646. Simply we could say, being conceptual is equivalent to being in the mind and being real is equivalent to being outside the mind. ‘Abd al-Rasul ‘Ubudiyat, The Fundamentally of Existence and the Subjectivity of Quiddity, in *Topoy*, edition 26th, (2007), p.201.
 13. Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota’aliya*..., pp.40-42
 14. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra and Heidegger; a Comparative Ontology*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), pp.48-49
 15. Parvis Morewedge, *The Metaphysica of Avicenna*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p.15
 16. Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota’aliya*..., p.98

real (*haqiqi*) but existence. The problem lies in the human mind; it is not able to capture or grasp Absolute Being or the nature of Being as the sole Reality.¹⁷ The human mind cannot understand “being-as-such” or “isness” when it is not related to a particular thing or a concrete existent. Mind can only understand *mahiyah* and general notions. Because *mahiyat* (quiddities) does not exist per se merely appear in the mind, such as mental phenomenon, while existence as the general notion of existence is the uniquely particular, as the objective reality existence cannot be grasped as conceptual mind.¹⁸ Hence there is fundamental difference between general notion of being or existence and those of quiddity.

Sadra also has own argument answering the question; “when the existence is more fundamental and real it must be real in the external world not merely as a concept (of being)”. To Sadra it is not proper to say that existence ‘exists’. Existence is the primordial reality thanks to which things exist but according to the common use of language itself cannot be said to exist; just as whiteness is because things are white, but whiteness itself cannot be described as white in the common use of language.¹⁹ In this sense a special usage of term can be employed, that is that existence is existent *par excellence*, just as that whiteness is white *par excellence*.²⁰ Being is being and there is no other being to which Being corresponds. Being in itself has no mental existence and that which has no mental existence cannot be represented or conceived.²¹ Quiddities are concepts, they are only indicators and their domain is restricted to the mind.²²

17. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne*..., p.103

18. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p.28, Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra: Being Summary of His Book Al-Hikmah Al-Muta’aliyah fi Al-Asfar Al-Aqliyah Al-Arba’ah*, in *Tsaqafah*, vol. 5 no.1 1429, p.80

19. Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota’aliya*..., p.67

20. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*..., p.28

21. Megawati Morris, *Mulla Sadra’s Doctrine of the Primacy*..., p.49

22. ‘Abd al-Rasul ‘Ubudiyat, *The Fundamentally of Existence*..., p.201

B. The Unity of Being (*Wahdat al-Wujud*)

Wahdat al-wujud has been an extremely important for Muslim philosophers. Its relation to the oneness of God (*Tanbihid*) be a crucial doctrine as the foundation of Islamic faith and different from the other belief (religion).²³ For Sadra, *Wahdat al-wujud* is a cornerstone of his metaphysics, which without it his whole worldview would collapse. Sadra conceives it in relation to the multiplicity.²⁴

A revolution perspective from Sadra is emphasizing *wujud* be understood as the verb or act of Being or existing rather than the noun or state of existence.²⁵ Everything is seen as acts of Being and not as objects that exist. Hence, what we perceive as individual objects that have their own independent existence and reality are only delimitations of the act of Being manifesting Itself in particular forms.²⁶ This Necessary Being is nothing else but the Absolute Being. Sadra said;

The Necessary Being is “One and without partner” because He is Complete in reality, Perfect in essence, Infinite in Power and intensity, and because He is the Pure Reality of Being, unlimited and without bound.²⁷

The Absolute Being (*al-Wujud al-Mutlaq*) is Pure Being and is completely undetermined and unlimited. The Absolute is one and simple. Absolute Being is a Reality by Itself without a reality outside of Itself determining and individualizing It. Also, Sadra

23. Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, tran. D.M. Matheson, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1999), pp.18-25

24. The concept of multiplicity that is not as a simply numerical, nor even more generally 'quantitative', but rather multiplicity of a 'transcendent' or truly universe order, applicable to all the domains that constitute the different worlds or degrees of Existence considered separately or in their totally. (Rene Guenon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2005), p.3

25. Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Tran. Liadain Sherrard, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), p.342

26. Megawati Morris, *Mulla Sadra's Doctrine of the Primacy...*, p.8

27. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne...*, p.99

instead; “He is the true unity; His being is the source of all particular beings”.²⁸

The first determination of the Absolute Being which issues from It is the extended or Self-Unfolding Being (*al-Wujud al-Munbasith*), also referred to as the First intellect, the Truth of truths/Reality of realities (*haqiqatal-haqaiq*). The Extended Being is the creative principle which causes all things to come into existence.²⁹ It is One in its essence, but it possesses infinite ontological determinations. The various grades and degrees of Being, i.e., the relative beings which issues from It arise from the different modes (*anbaʿ*) of Its determinations. All of the ontological differentiations which are manifested in the cosmos issues from the single Extended Being.³⁰ This is the other aspect of Being, i.e., of differentiated realities (*mukhtalijat al-haqaiq*). In this aspect, being participates in grades and differentiation according to Its Wedding or being united with the quiddities. Being individualizes all the quiddities that also existentiated by it. Hence, each thing that exists in this world does so becoming wed to one degree (*darjah*) and stage (*martabah*) or another of Being. For example, “being” wedded to “quiddity of tree” result in “existing tree”, “being” wedded to “quiddity of stone” result in “existing stone”.

This unity does not contradict to the multiplicity as the multiplicity does not contradict to the unity. And then Sadra describes;

The particular quiddities of things in this world are manifestations of the archetypes which are the universal quiddities or God’s knowledge of his self-determination. He is the Source of Being, and everything else is subordinate to Him, dependent on Him for the substantiation of its essence.³¹

28. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne...*, p.97

29. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne...*, p.97

30. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra...*, pp.101-103,

31. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne...*, p.100

In reality there is only one Being with grades of existence issuing from it, stretching from Pure Being to the level of prime matter. Although it appears that things exist, in reality it is Being which assumes the accidentality of a multiplicity of things while remaining immutable and eternal in its unity. This pure existence, which is absolute, manifests itself in different forms, through a process of self-unfoldment, and the resultant beings, which are contingent, are *modes of Being (anba al-wujud)*.³² The modes of Being are in their basic nature only Being. However, they differentiated from Absolute Being in that they exhibit certain essential characteristics to the mind by virtue of their being manifestations or modes of Being, i.e., the quiddities.³³

Sadra gives the analogy of the light of the sun to explain the relation of quiddity to being. The sun as the source of light is in particular sense, identical with the rays it emits. These rays by themselves however, also give rise to or produce different characteristics as, for example, in a prism.³⁴ Sadra himself regards light as a perfect and intelligible example of the unity and gradation of Being and praises the Illuminationists on this point.³⁵ For Sadra, the beings of this world are manifestations of the Light of being (*Nur al-wujud*) cast upon their archetypal realities or permanent/fixed archetypes (*a'yanthabitah*) which through the arc of descent bring various creatures into the realm of physical existence.³⁶ Hence, their realities are only relational or partial since they are established only through their relation with and the being illumined by the light of the one absolute Reality, i.e., God, the Light of lights (*Nur al-anwar*). Quiddities are partial realities (since the single reality is Being) which considered in isolation without Being are nothing; they do not exist, but if they

32. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*..., p.30

33. Megawati Morris, *Mulla Sadra's Doctrine of the Primacy*..., p.64

34. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*..., p.30

35. S.H. Nasr, Sadr Al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), in *A History of Muslim Philosophy Vol. II*, Ed. M.M Sharif, (New Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1995), p.942

36. Megawati Morris, *Mulla Sadra's Doctrine of the Primacy*..., p.66

are considered in relation to Being they do exist and possess reality.³⁷

He is the true unity; His being is the source of all particular beings.³⁸ Being is the same reality in all realms of existence; it is a single reality but with gradations and degree of intensity. Just as we say the light of the sun, the light of a lamp, or the light of a candle, and mean the same subject, i.e., light, but with different predicates, i.e., under different conditions of manifestation, so in the case Being, the being of God, of a man, of a tree, of earth are all one Being or one reality but in various degree of intensity and manifestations.³⁹

Existence is the primordial reality, causes all things to come into existence. Being does not need the other being to be actualized because being itself is self-actualized. Need to understand, that the various beings in the world of manifestation are all limitations of the one reality of Being. These limitations are abstracted by the mind and become the forms of quiddities (*mahiyyat*) of things, and when transposed into the principial domain, they become the Platonic ideas or archetypes. Hence, the quiddities (*mahiyyat*) are accidents of Being abstracted by the mind without having a reality independent of Being. Even the archetypes (*al-a'yan al-tsabitah*) possess a form of Being which in this case is God's knowledge of them. As Sadra said;

Thus, it has become evident that the source of existence of everything that exists is this Pure Reality of Being, unmixed with anything other than Being. This reality is not restricted by any definition, limitation, imperfection, contingent potentiality, or quiddity; nor is mixed with any generality, whether of genus, species, or differentia, nor with any accident, whether specific or general.⁴⁰

37. Toshihiko Izutsu, *the Concept and Reality of Existence*....p.104

38. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne*...., p.97

39. S.H. Nasr, *Sadr Al-Din Shirazi*...., p.942

40. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne*...., p.96

The other determination of being is simple nature is everything (*basith al-haqiqah kull al-ashay*)⁴¹ which is a direct consequence of the unity and principality of *wujud*. By this principle Sadra means that reality (*al-haqiqah*) in its state of pure simplicity and before becoming “combined” with quiddity (*al-mahiyah*), that is, Pure Being, contains all things since the reality of things is their existence and Pure Being is the source of all beings and therefore in a sense contains the reality of all things.⁴² Because every higher level of being contains all the reality that is manifested below it. Hence this principle does not mean unity in diversity, as it has been generally misunderstood, but means diversity in unity. In other it means, it is proper to say that all creatures in God than to say that God in all creatures, which is pantheism understanding. This principle does not yield the possibility of predicating everything of God but, on the contrary, yields the denial of that possibility; the absoluteness of God means that nothing relative or conditioned can be attributed to Him.⁴³

It does not mean also that all creatures are merely illusion and unreal. On the contrary, It must be understood that all creatures suspend thoroughly to God and differentiated from Him as their diversity. In other words, no reality but Absolute Reality, and all creatures inside it are not God but their realities are nothing but His reality.⁴⁴ This principle put more emphasis on the transcendent value and imminent of God than on pantheistic, which regards all creatures as God or God in all creatures. While to explain that every higher level of being contains all the reality that is manifested below it and could perform their activities, Sadra is an adamant person, and said:

41. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne*..., pp.95-97

42. S.H. Nasr, *Mulla Sadra: His Teachings*..., p.655

43. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*..., p.39

44. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra*..., pp.134-135

In general, the more powerful and the more intense the being becomes, the more perfect it is in essence, the more completely comprehensive of all notions and quiddities, and the more (capable) in its activities and effects.⁴⁵

Then we could see the soul of animal, for example, it is more powerful than the vegetal soul or the elemental forms, so it is able to perform the activities of plants, the elements. So does the soul of man, performs all the activities of the animal soul.⁴⁶ And then God as the Pure and the Absolute Being can perform all activities of His creature (all beings below Its Being).

C. The Gradation of Being (*Tashkik al-Wujud*)⁴⁷

This character of being constitutes an image that a sole Being with different gradation by the grade of quality on that being. This concept shows two characteristics of being simultaneously; unity (*Univocal*) and multiplicity (*Equivocal*) or in Sadra's term; "multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity" (*al-Katsrah fi 'aynival-dahwa al-wahdah fi 'ayni al-Katsrah*).⁴⁸ Sadra adopted the doctrine of differentiation and gradation from Suhrawardi, which things can be distinct from each other through the very element that unites them such as the light of the sun, the moon, and the candle which are united by being, i.e., light (univocally) and yet are distinct from one another also by light which is manifested in the two cases according to different

45. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne...*, p.156

46. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne...*, p.156

47. In addition called as the gradation, '*tashkik*' can also translated as the equivocally since it means that wujud is universal applicable to all things but with various forms according to the intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority. By this characteristic also, i.e., can be more and less, it called as the systematic ambiguity, that this character "can be more and less" cause (and show) the perpetual movement of every existence from the more general, indeterminate to the more concrete, determinate. Whereas, term 'gradation' is as the consequence by thus character, which every *wujud* differentiated each other through the intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority, which show a kind of gradation.

48. S.H. Nasr, *Sadr Al-Din Shirazi...*, p.944

degrees of intensity (equivocally).⁴⁹ But Sadra applied this doctrine of gradation to Being based on his doctrine of the primacy of existence (*asalat al-wujud*) and the unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*).

As clarified before, Sadra regards existence is the only original reality hence applied this principle in existence not to quiddity. We have seen that while all existence is unique, quiddity is characterized by universality in the mind. Hence, quiddity is univocal, existence is equivocal or ambiguous. When something is characterized such as ambiguous, it, *by virtue of being a principle of identity, acts as the principle of difference*—not that it is a principle of identity in one sense or respect and a principle of difference in another sense or respect.⁵⁰

The first characteristic of Being is as the identity principle of all existence. *Wujud* (being) is identically the same in all forms, not only as a general notion, but also as a reality in every existence.⁵¹ Every individual entity is same. It is also in this sense that we are able to say that everything is the same in terms of existing (i.e., existence). No distinction can be made between entities, whether it is God, man, horse, stone tree, or an animal. We simply express that the thing “is”.⁵²

But Being is a common attribute which is also predicated equivocally, not univocally of all things.⁵³ All beings have a common characteristic which they all exhibit; Being. But this notion is predicated of every being equivocally. This means that Being is “in” beings with different intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority.⁵⁴ Being is the same reality in all realms of existence but of various grades and degrees of intensity: the

49. S.H. Nasr, *Mulla Sadra: His Teachings...*, p.647, Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic...*, p.101

50. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra...*, pp.35-36

51. Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota'aliya...*, p.60

52. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra...*, p.51

53. Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota'aliya...*, pp.58, 60-61

54. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra...*, p.50

being of God, of a man, of a horse and of a stone are all one Being and one reality but in various degrees' intensity of manifestation. Sadra then differ from Ibnu Sina. Mulla Sadra as Suhrawardi intend, is *tashkik bi al-shiddahwa al-da'f* (in terms of intensity (strength) and weakness), while the kind of tashkik that Ibnu Sina has in mind, is (*tashkik bi al-taqaddumwa al-ta'akhur*) in terms of priority and posteriority.⁵⁵

In this second principle of Being, no entity is the same in terms of existing (i.e., existence). Being has different meaning in that it not only expresses an ontological status but also what "short" of Being the entity possesses.⁵⁶ Being is predicated of things not homonymously, but analogically (*bil-tashkik*). This means that some things possess more of Being, and that some other things possess less of it. In other side, Sadra did not only apply this *tashkik* in being or existence, but applied it systematically.⁵⁷ This is because existence is not static but in perpetual movement. This movement is from the more general, the more indeterminate levels of Being to the more concrete, determinate and integrated or "simple" (absolute) forms of existence. Movement from the less perfect to the more perfect is, further, uni-directional and irreversible, for existence never moves backwards.

The highest point in this scale is God, who is Absolute Being and hence no essence and is not amenable to conceptual though at all. Absolute Being itself is above all limitations and, therefore, above all forms (*mahiyat*), above all substance and accidents. It is the "Form of the forms" because it is simple so contains the all forms below it, and the Agent of all acts.⁵⁸ The substances of the higher world as causes and those of the lower

55. Yanis Eshots, The Principle of the Systematic Ambiguity of Existence in the Philosophy of Ibnu Sina and Mulla Sadra, in *Afkar*, bil. 6: (Rabi' al-Awwal 1426/ May 2005), p.164

56. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra...*, p.51

57. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra...*, p.35

58. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne...*, p.156

one as their effects, because the substantiality of the cause is by necessity fuller and more complete than the substantiality of the effects, intensity then has no other meaning except; some substances are more intense and stronger in their substantiality than other ones.⁵⁹

Sadra's doctrine be different to whom he adopts the concept of gradation, *Shaykh al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi. According to him all realities consist of degree of light and darkness. Hence Suhrawardi "divides" the reality according to the types of light and darkness.⁶⁰ The highest of this level is Light of lights (*Nur al-anwar*), and more over each light is the existential cause of light below it.⁶¹ While Sadra with his gradation of Being, regards that the source and what cause everything comes to existence only Absolute Being, the Light of being, and the higher level of being contains the realities manifested below it, not cause them to be existence. Being, inherently manifests itself in *manjudat* (existents) ordered according to Its varying degrees of intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority.⁶² Since these manifestations are a consequence of the very nature of Being itself and are not due to any extrinsic factor, each and every existent is unique.⁶³

However, in so far as they are internal modifications or modalities of one single reality called Being, they are ultimately the same. These forms share the same source: Being, but they differ in how much of Being they possess. Hence, the differences observable among the various things are in the final analysis a

59. Yanis Eshots, *The Principle of the Systematic Ambiguity...*, p.170

60. S.H. Nasr, *Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul*, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy Vol. I*, Ed. M.M Sharif, (Sadar: ABC, 1961), p.387. These types of light which arise from the Nur al-anwar can be classified according to their character; *thabaqatath-thul* (longitudinal order), *thabaqat al-'ardh* (latitudinal order) and *an-anwar al-mudabbirah* (regent lights), see, Dr. Amroeni Drajat, M.A, *Suhrawardi; Kritik Falsafah Peripatetik*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005), p.233-243

61. Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, (Richmond: Curzon, 1997), p.31

62. Mulla Sadra, *The Wisdom of the Throne...*, p.103

63. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra...*, pp.38-39

matter of degrees. This character of Being “be more-or-less” that makes the evolutionary movement possible.

D. Trans-Substantial Motion (*al-Harakah al-Jauhariyyah*)

The theory of *tashkik* suggests a movement is in Being; a movement which is from the more general and indeterminate levels of Being to the more concrete and determinate modes of Being. Sadra rejects the possibility of suddenly change⁶⁴ from one substance to another.⁶⁵ The assumption of suddenly change, it means that the sudden changeability show that even that alteration is possible, but the true alteration merely happens on certain time, hence in many times is invariable, it means that existents are static (motionless). While Sadra asserts that the whole of the physical and even physic or imaginal universe which extend up to the immutable or luminous archetypes are in constant motion or becoming.⁶⁶ Whenever, with that perspective (suddenly change) the universe more impressed as immutable object than to be changeable.

This substational movement is something novel in the history of Islamic thought and distinct from his predecessors. Earlier Islamic philosophers, especially Ibnu Sina, had followed Aristotelian natural philosophy in accepting motion (*al-harakah*) only in the categories of quantity (*kam*), quality (*kayf*), situation (*wad*), and place (*ayn*), all of which are accidents and denied explicitly the possibility of motion in the category of substance.⁶⁷ As the essence of a thing depends upon its substance, if that substance were to change; its essence would also change

64. Suddenly change called as *kaun wafa sad* (happening and destruction). *Kaun* is suddenly presence of something, *Fasad* is also suddenly disintegration. While gradual change equally with changing of time, called as ‘motion’ (*harakah*). Murtadha Muthahari, *The Philosophy of Shadr Al-Muta'allihin*, in *Filsafat Hikmah*, Tran. Tim Penerjemah Mizan, (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), p.95

65. S.H. Nasr, *Sadr Al-Din Shirazi...*, p.948

66. S.H. Nasr, *Mulla Sadra: His Teachings...*, p.649

67. S.H. Nasr, *Mulla Sadra: His Teachings...*, p.649

and lose its identity.⁶⁸ Most of them believe that there is no any motion in substance. They regard category substance organizes the other categories. Substance occupy as the essence of thing (*dz'at*), while the other categories as the attribute or predicate of thing (*shifab*).⁶⁹

According to Sadra, since accident have no existence independent of substance, that any change in the accidents of an object requires the fact a change in its substance.⁷⁰ Sadra claims that there is existential movement because there is in Being intensification and weakening (*isbtidad, tada'uf*). Further, he argues that every intensification and weakening is a movement in quality, just as every increase and decrease is a movement in quantity. Movement within a category means that the existent is contradicting itself at every moment of the movement. This means that we have a different individual at every moment. But this should not mislead us into the belief that that particular category—for example, a certain shade of black—endures under change by only intensifying in itself. For intensification in blackness or an addition of more blackness to it, rather it is the removal of the former and coming into Being of another blackness which is more intense than the first one.⁷¹ Hence this is a motion in quality and quantity at the same time.⁷² This Sadra's doctrine has been called *al-labs ba'd al-labs* (dressing after dressing). This implies that the form and the matter of an existent become themselves the matter for a new form and that this process goes on continuously as if one were to put on one coat on top of another.⁷³

The existential movement starts by an emanation with matter from the Absolute Being where It is also finalized. From

68. S.H. Nasr, *Sadr Al-Din Shirazi...*, p.948

69. Murtadha Muthahari, *The Philosophy of Shadr Al-Muta'allihin*, op.cit, p.96

70. S.H. Nasr, *Mulla Sadra: His Teachings...*, p.649

71. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra...*, p.136

72. Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota'aliya...*, pp. 61-63

73. S.H. Nasr, *Mulla Sadra: His Teachings...*, p.649

the Absolute Being; as Sadra regards that the beings of this world are manifestations of the light of *wujud* cast upon their archetypal realities which through the arc of descent (*al-qaws al-nuzuli*) bring various creatures into realm of physical existent. Toward the Absolute Being; in this sense, the trans-substantial motion marks the arc of ascent (*al-qaws al-su'udi*) which allows the existents to return to their archetypal realities in the supernal realm through the ever-intensity of light of *wujud*.⁷⁴

Therefore, all beings in this world are moving vertically as a result of Tran-substantial motion until they reach the plenum of their archetypal reality. So everything moves from the lowest level of Being to the highest one, Being unfolds itself and acquires more concrete individualized existence.⁷⁵ Nasr gives details for its example, as follows;

The sperm becomes a foetus and grows to the form of a baby who is then born and continues to grow from one form to another until he or she reaches full maturity and the body becomes weaker as the soul grows stronger until one dies and reaches the "imaginal world" and finally the Divine Presence.⁷⁶

Since accidents are dependent on and a secondary to Being, movement in accidents cannot adequately be explained without any reference to the fundamental movement in substance. Movement therefore, is in Being, but this movement always in terms of priority and posteriority, intensification and weakening of Being. It is also established that in our definition every being is 'renewal of Being' or a 'being in constant flux' (*sayy al-huwariyyah*), although it has a stable essence.⁷⁷ It is in this sense that every existent distinguished from one another in a way of Being-prior and Being-posterior or Being-weak and Being-intense. This motion creates a hierarchical order of Being without (fixed) level

74. S.H. Nasr, *Mulla Sadra: His Teachings...*, p.649

75. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra...*, p.136

76. S.H. Nasr, *Mulla Sadra: His Teachings...*, p.649

77. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Being and Existence in Sadra...*, p.136

or stages. We cannot say then “man”, for example, is at this level of Being, but rather that he is within a certain mode of Being.⁷⁸

When the doctrine of gradation of Being (*tashkik al-wujud*) is considered in relation to the evolutionary existential process it becomes clear that it is Being which endures in everything and it is also Being which undergoes the fundamental change. It is, in fact, on the basis of this conclusion that Being can act as a principle of identity and difference. These two characteristics, i.e., enduring and changing, are merely two aspects of Being which are manifested in existents. This conclusion may also help us determine Sadra’s position concerning the problem of monism and pluralism, unity and diversity. The unity in Reality consists of the unity of Being and existents in their very multiplicity.

Closing

By the primacy of existence, Sadra argued that the actual presence of things around us is their existence and quiddity is merely human mind construction. From every object, human mind perceives an image as quiddity. But actually, what gives effect and reality of the universe is existence, not essence. Hence Existence is the actualized as reality and quiddity as image in mind. While regarding to the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*), God is the Sole Reality, Sadra conceives it in relation to the multiplicity of existence as the rays of the sun in relation to the sun. God as the Pure Existence, which is absolute, manifests itself in different forms, through a process of self-unfoldment, and the resultant beings, which are contingent, are *modes of Being* (*anha al-wujud*). The unity in Reality consists of the unity of Being and existents in their very multiplicity. God is the true unity; His being is the source of all particular beings.

Gradation of Being means that being is commonly attributed to all beings, everything is the same in terms of existing, but no

78. Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-Mota’aliya*..., pp.63-64

entity is the same in terms of existing. It means that some things possess more of Being, and that some other things possess less of it. Hence, we understand there is a hierarchical order of Being. These forms share the same source: Being, but they differ in how much of Being they possess, according to different degrees of intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority. This character of Being “be more-or-less” that makes the evolutionary movement possible, by which beings are moving vertically as a result of Tran-substantial motion until they reach the plenum of their archetypal reality.

Sadra’s doctrine the unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity does not impress as the pantheistic view combine with the concept “simple nature is everything” (*basith al-haqiqahkull al-ashay*). According to that concept every higher level of being contains all the reality that is manifested below it, and God is The Simple Being. In other it means, it is proper to say that all creatures in God than to say that God in all creatures.

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