

Mullah Mohammad Mehdi Naraqı and analysis of pantheism theories

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Abstract

Unity of Existence is one of the key issues of human knowledge that has been discussed by great thinkers in various forms since long time ago. Some have dealt with this issue in pure rational or intuitive terms while some others have tried to combine the two elements of reason and intuition in their discussions. This issue has been discussed by ancient Greeks, neo-Platonists and Persian sages under a variety of titles that range from Intuitive Unity and Gradational Unity to Personal Unity and this shows the importance of this issue. Muhammad Mahdi Naraqı better known as Muhaqiq-e Naraqı is a Muslim mystic, philosopher and theologian who has discussed this issue at various points of his works and critically assessed the ideas of the mystics and philosophers. We can outline his key ideas and critical remarks as follows: -Mystics believe that Divine Presence reveals itself in contingent beings by way of immanence and occurrence. This is indeed to say that God is not independent and is in need of the contingent beings for its realization. -The idea of absolute indetermination of Divine Essence as propounded by mystics is baseless from a logical point of view and is a sign of confusing concept with extension. -No diversity is perceivable in Divine Existence and accordingly believing in divine incarnations in this world is tantamount to express blasphemy. -The objectification of Divine Presence through contingent beings is not acceptable as the latter is equal to endorsing the descent of Divinity to the sphere of corporeal entities. -The reality of contingent beings as conceived by the proponents of the doctrine of taste of sapience has nothing to do with the Essence of Divine Existence. -Divine Presence is of concrete reality regardless of its mental representation and the abstract mode of contingent beings has no rational basis. Although the author believes that Naraqı is right in a number of his remarks some of them are still critically flawed and need to be revised. In fact, Naraqı's analyses are based on gradational unity and conceptual perspective not personal unity nor extensional perspective. To put it otherwise, he has thought that mystics deny every type of diversity while this is far from being correct as the mystics ground their arguments mainly on Quran and prophetic traditions. Then one cannot negligently attribute such baseless doctrines as immanence, occurrence, apostasy and blasphemy to mystics. After critical assessment of the ideas of mystics, Naraqı turns to Mulla Sadra's views of Unity of Existence and reviews him as we have summarized hereunder:

-The maxim of Simple Reality in the discussions of unity of existence is concerned with the modes of existence and gradational unity not personal unity. -Mulla Sadra's depiction of the world as the shadow of Divine Presence is blasphemous because this implies attribution of the flaws of the worldly objects to divinity. -The essential difference between the generator and the generated is an

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expression of the inconsistency between the mode and the owner of the mode. -Gradation happens in the concept of existence not in its reality. In other word, weakness and intensity and priority and posteriority occurs in the concept. It seems that the majority of Naraqī's objections to Mulla Sadra have their origin in Naraqī's subjective notion of unity of existence while Mulla Sadra's point of view of the gradation of existence is objective and his perspective of personal unity of existence is subjective. To put the matter differently, Naraqī speaks of both notions in subjective terms and his idea that there are a number of similarities and differences between the true unity and the untrue one endorses the author's latter remark. Generally speaking, Naraqī's objections to the mystics and philosophers show that he is definitely agree with the idea of unity of existence but he does not have a unified approach in this regard and this is why there are various strands of thought within his corpus on the subject that range from Peripateticism and Intuitionism to Transcendent Theosophy. Though on surface this might appear to be methodological flaw Naraqī's attentiveness to various schools of thought is valuable as such.

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