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**A Study of Mulla Sadra's Views
on the Theory of Individual Unity of Existence¹**

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Abstract

In the history of Islamic philosophy and mysticism the theory of unity of existence was interpreted differently by Muslim philosophers, mystics and other scholars. In Mulla Sadra's Transcendental Philosophy the theory which has been put forward to answer the question regarding the unity or plurality of reality was stated in two forms: Firstly, in the form of gradational unity of existence, a theory which was attributed to Pahlavi sages, and secondly, in the form of a theory called individual unity of existence which was discussed in the works of great mystics like Ibn Arabi. However, this question has always been raised - which of the two mentioned theories was Mulla Sadra's final view? In this article, studying different and sometimes contradictory viewpoints of the specialists of Transcendental Philosophy, we offer the individual unity of existence as the final view of Mulla Sadra, and this claim is proved by mentioning some parts of his works. Finally, presenting the possibility of rational provability of the theory of existence we bring forward two arguments to prove the theory.

Key words: 1.Unity of existence 2. Mulla Sadra
3.Transcendental Philosophy 4. Mysticism 5. Ibn Arabi

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1. Introduction

The theory of the Unity of Existence is the most important element in the theoretical apparatus of Islamic mysticism, and perhaps is its most meticulous and most difficult principle. It may be said that if someone does not understand this principle as the great mystics expressed it, he cannot derive great profit from their thinking, nor can he understand much about theoretical mysticism, even though he may be aware of other principles and mystical teachings. Having special importance, and being the main idea of the fundamental and valid work of mysticism, this principle has been misunderstood by most people. It is in fact the mystics' conception of monotheism, the origin of which has been acquired through inspiration and intuition. Because of this misunderstanding and for other reasons the principle has been stated in various forms, confirmed by some while denied by some others. Nevertheless, all its versions are called 'the unity of existence'. This makes the differentiation of the authentic theory of mystics from some superficial and unauthentic theories more difficult. Consequently, many scholars including theologians, philosophers, jurists, traditionalists, and commentators of the Quran have offered incorrect accounts of the principle, raised many debates against mystics and labelled their beliefs as incarnation, pantheism, pure idealism, denial of intellectual and sensory self-evident truths, and some other kinds of unfair attribution, let alone the damage done by some of the prejudiced jurists' legal decisions against the principle. Mystics and mystical philosophers who defend the principle have paid attention to a number of the false viewpoints before rejecting them in their works.

The variety of utterances and the different names given the principle have meant that sometimes one title has been applied to two completely different theories. For example, some people have sometimes used the title 'the unity of existence and existent' for the theory of 'the individual unity of existence' and sometimes for 'pantheism' - especially a version of the theory according to which they consider existent sensory pluralities as entified particles of one existence. Similarly, the title "divine temperament" has been used by

some people for the individual unity of existence, and by some others for the theory attributed to Dawani according to which the existence is one and existents are plural.

In short, in this article we are not going to discuss and criticize all those opinions and viewpoints; rather we restrict the discussion to two of Mulla Sadra's central theories; namely, the 'gradational unity of existence' and 'the individual unity of existence'.

2. The Origin of the Point and the Explanation of Views

Historically, the theory of the unity of existence has been put forward to answer the question regarding the unity or plurality of reality. For a long time, man has asked whether the reality of existence is one, and plurality is unreal and made by human mind; or contrary to that, plurality is real, and unity is illusory and abstracted by human mind from multiple things. In philosophical terms, is the reality of existence one or plural? To answer this question, one of the following theories should be mentioned:

1. Pure unity; 2. Pure plurality; 3. Unity in plurality itself. Because there have been many different explanations and versions, each of the above answers may have various subdivisions mentioned in the philosophical works. Some philosophers have offered more than forty theories concerning them. Philosophers consider this topic as one of the discussions of 'general principles' or ontology and explain it under the title 'Unity and Plurality' - One and Many'. Setting those subdivisions aside, in this article we explain only two divisions of the unity of existence that Mulla Sadra have confirmed and tried to prove in his works.

But mystics have looked at the issue from a different angle. As the result of reaching the position of annihilation in God, they have intuited that the real existence is God and other than Him all are mirrored images of Him. So, in theoretical discussion, when they explain existential monotheism and the unity of the Divine Essence they also explain their visions, observations, and mystical experiences. If they occasionally offer arguments to prove their claims it is only to make the points understandable for the men of insight. In fact, they

have not found truths through demonstrations, and these in turn do not support and guarantee the truth of the proofs provided by them.

2. 1. The Gradational Unity of Existence

According to this theory provided by Mulla Sadra in his works, existence, i.e. the only entified and fundamental thing, is one reality with various degrees. Existence has multiple individuals; however, as these individuals are different from each other in existence, they share the same existence with one another. In other words, what distinguishes the various degrees of existence is exactly what is common to them, and what makes them different is exactly what makes them one. They are differentiated by existence's intensity and weakness, completeness and incompleteness, priority and posteriority. Basically, intensity and weakness are only true concerning the degrees and levels of one truth. Philosophers have called this characteristic 'gradation'; and as one of the special properties of existence, it has no real equal. However, to make it easier for the minds to understand we can give some examples. 1. The levels of numbers have infinite multiplicity. At the same time, what differentiates them is exactly what is common to them. 2. In both strong and weak kinds of light, what distinguishes them from each other is exactly what they share; that is, the light itself. 3. In fast and slow motions, the motion itself is the point of difference and communion at the same time. Similarly, the reality of existence has the same unity; i.e. the difference of the beings belongs to the intensity, weakness and the levels of the reality of existence itself. Thus, according to this theory, the entified and external reality of existence is one in its multiplicity, and at the same time is multiple in its unity (13, V: 1, p.36; V: 2, p.99; V: 3, p.139. And 16, p.44). Mulla Sadra and his followers attributed this theory to the Iranian Pahlavi sages and they have confirmed it in their works. Nowadays, the theory is known as the chosen viewpoint of Mulla Sadra, and the followers of Transcendental Philosophy in general.

2.2. The Individual Unity of Existence

The theory of individual existence is another version of the unity of existence dealt with by Mulla Sadra in some of his works, especially his encyclopaedic book *Asfar*. He has accepted it as his chosen and

favorite theory and tried to explain and prove it in many places. The theory is the product of intuition of great mystics, such as Ibn Arabi and the followers of his school like Sadroddin Qunavi, Kashani, Qeysari, Seyyed Heydar Amoli, Ibn Turke Isfahani and a number of others, who have described, explained and defended it in their mystical works. According to this version, existence is only one thing, that is, the existence of the Exalted God. Nothing is the real instance of existence other than the sacred Divine Essence. All things but God are considered as His shadows, determinations, aspects, and manifestations. Thus real existence and existent are unitary whose unity is real, true and not susceptible to multiplicity; and contingent beings are metaphorically called existents or existences. These mystics' claim has been put into the following couplet:

Thou art the only real existent / The rest are relations and the mind-made.

Of course, it must be said that by 'relation' they mean 'illuminative' and not 'categorical' relation. The former, contrary to the latter, has only one side; i.e. the related is the relation itself, such as the relation of a creating cause and the effect. The effect is nothing but manifestation and emanation of the cause. So the real existence is the existence of the cause; and the existence of the effect is only a ray radiated by it. In brief, the unity of existence in this version means that the essential real existence is specific to the sacred Divine Essence, and all contingent beings, beginning from pure existence to the primordial matter, are only manifestations and rays of that Unitary Real Existent. So, according to this theory, the absolute multiplicity is not denied; rather, it is annihilated in the Real Existence, and attributed to His manifestations and appearances. It is clear that by transferring the multiplicity from existence to manifestation, the graduation is also transferred from existence to the manifestation, and then, as they say, the appearances of existence have gradational levels. Accordingly, the nearer the manifestations are to the Real Existence, i.e. the sacred Divine Essence, the more intensive and powerful they are; and the farther they are from the Real Existent, the weaker they are. Of course, the intensity and weakness of these appearances do not cause any

alteration in the unity, purity and simple-ness of the Real Essence (13, V: 1, p. 69; V: 2, pp. 347 & 353).

In Ibn Arabi's statements there are expressions in which he clearly refers to shadowy multiplicity. For instance, he considers the reality of existence as all the created and the uncreated. The uncreated real is the existence of the Exalted God, and the created real is His manifestations that have been generated by His emanation. Because of this point, the pure existence is sometimes called as 'the Real from Whom all things are created' (7, V: 3, p.419).

3. Judgment on the Final Viewpoint of Mulla Sadra

As one can find in Mulla Sadra's works the support for both the gradational unity of existence and the individual unity of existence, this question has always been raised - which of the two mentioned viewpoints was his final view? Did he believe in the gradational unity or the individual unity of existence? In general, are these theories considered as two expressions of one truth or two different and heterogeneous truths? In response to these questions, and according to their views of the gradational unity or the individual unity of existence, the experts and specialists who have studied Mulla Sadra's philosophy have offered a number of different commentaries. Most of these philosophers consider the two theories mutually exclusive. It is noteworthy that Mulla Sadra himself refers to heterogeneity of them (13, V: 2, p.77). However, some believe that the difference between the two views is only in expression, and they consider them compatible to each other. Fazel Tuni in his *Marginal Notes on Fusus* and Seyyed Jalal Ashtiyani in his *The Biography and Philosophical beliefs of Mulla Sadra* favour this opinion, though the latter in this book and his other works has confirmed the difference between the two theories and believed that Mulla Sadra's main viewpoint is the unity of individual existence (2, pp.26-27). Among those who consider the theories incompatible, some believe that the final viewpoint of Mulla Sadra is the gradational unity of existence and some other have attributed to him the individual unity. Here we examine further some instances of these philosophers' views.

3. 1. Mulla Sadra Believes in Gradational Unity of Existence

Those who have unanimously agreed upon the gradational unity of existence as the Mulla Sadra's final viewpoint, have interpreted his statements regarding the individual unity of existence in the two following ways:

3. 1. 1. Mulla Sadra has interpreted the false theory of individual unity of existence as the gradational theory of existence:

Some experts on the philosophy of Mulla Sadra believe that the theory of individual unity of existence disagrees strongly with the intellect, and involves the denial of sensory and rational self-evident truths. They are aware of the philosophical position of Mulla Sadra; they even consider him to be the greatest and the most important philosopher of the Islamic world. They also confirm that Mulla Sadra has discussed and conceded the theory in question. Nevertheless, they believe that the theory, though accepted by such a philosopher, is unreasonable. They justify their belief by saying that Mulla Sadra has a good opinion of the proponents of the false theory of individual unity and, accordingly, he has interpreted it as the gradational unity of existence. They believe that the only way to justify the theory is to reduce it to the gradational unity. Mortaza Motahhari and Misbah Yazdi are in this group. The former exceptionally considers the theory of Mulla Sadra as the very same theory of mysticism and praises it (12, V: 6, pp. 973-977). However, in some of his works Motahhari has said that the theory of mysticism is basically fallacious because it denies multiplicities and self-evident truth. He, then, has proved Mulla Sadra's theory of gradational unity of existence. Meanwhile, Misbah Yazdi believes that the viewpoint of mysticism appears to be contrary to what is obvious and given by consciousness, and says that it is possible to give their position some kind of interpretation, according to which it can be taken as a form of gradational unity. He acknowledges that Mulla Sadra's final viewpoint is gradational unity (11, V: 2, p. 384).

3. 1. 2. Mulla Sadra has not understood the high theory of individual unity of existence correctly; rather, he has expressed it by digressional way: The second group believe in the individual unity

of existence. They believe that Mulla Sadra's viewpoint is basically the gradational unity which is, in their opinion, false, and that Mulla Sadra had been led to the individual unity of existence not by intuition of the truth, but by accepting the arguments of the theory. They say he had been compelled to accept it despite it being contrary to his philosophical foundations, and was not his chosen one. So (they say) we cannot regard the individual unity of existence as one of the principles of Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, which is basically admitted by him. Among the members of this group we can refer to the great mystic, Seyyed Ahmad Karbalaee. In his fourth letter to Mohammad Hoseyn Gheravi, he has written:

The late Mulla Sadra, May God comfort his position, in the beginning of his book, though he has not understood the elite's monotheism, has faced trouble in the discussion of causality, and admitted the opinion of philosophers that the causality is nothing in reality but the descending rank of the cause, and then has said that now the truth has come to light. Though this issue is incompatible with the discussions of his book, it seems that the argument has forced him to confess the truth rather than the intuitive insight (5, pp. 116-117)

Another member of the second group is Seyyed Mohammad Hoseyn Hoseyni Tehrani. Following Karbalaee he writes:

The words of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, regarding the individuation of existence, the real and true unity, the separation of God's essence from His attributes, and the existential accompaniment of Divine Presence with all contingent beings are so clear that they have no consistency with the gradation in existence and the identity of his attributes with the essence. What Mulla Sadra after one thousand years has used of Imam Ali's words regarding the purity of existence and the pure oneness of God are all true and right; however, it

seems he has ignored some of the requirements of purity which are unity and individuation in existence. He has also founded his issues on the pure gradation of existence. This is his mistake; for the question of gradation finally leads to the numerical unity of God. Believing in gradation which is not separable from the numerical unity, is never consistent with believing in real purity of existence. Whoever understands the pith and real meaning of the purity of existence cannot believe in gradation that finally leads to numerical unity. Had Mulla Sadra understood the real purity and its requirements, he would have declared the individuation in existence, and have not refused it; however, following other philosophers he has not exceeded the gradation in existence and refused to accept the individuation in existence. Thus, though he has been a pioneer in understanding the purity in existence, he has fallen behind the caravan of monotheists by [his] misunderstanding its individuation (Ibid, pp.212-213).

3. 2. Mulla Sadra Believes in the Individual Unity of Existence

Those who have unanimously agreed upon the individual unity of existence as the Mulla Sadra's final viewpoint are divided into two groups: Those who consider the individual unity of existence and its gradational unity to be compatible; and those who believe that the two theories are incompatible.

3. 2. 1. The final and chosen viewpoint of Mulla Sadra was the individual unity of existence, and he debated the gradational unity of existence for instructional purpose only: Some experts in the philosophy of Mulla Sadra claim that Mulla Sadra really believed in the individual unity of existence. He consciously accepted it and believed in its logical requirements and results. According to them, he went even further and was proud of his theory. Considering it as a high

theory he believed that the other theory, i.e. the gradational unity of existence in comparison with the individual unity, is an inferior one.

One of the members of this group is the great and famous mystic, philosopher, and commentator of the Quran, Allameh Mohammad Hoseyn Tabatabaee. He explained and taught the theory of gradational unity in his instructional works; but he preferred the theory of individual unity to the gradational unity in a number of other works such as his *Marginal Notes on Asfar*, *Appendices for Karbalaee and Isfahani's writings*, *Resalat al-Wilayat*, and *Resalat al-Tawhid*. In almost in all these works he declared that the theory of individual unity is more accurate and precise than the other one. In his opinion Mulla Sadra has completely been aware of this point and his main chosen and favorable theory was the individual unity of existence, but for instructional purposes he has founded some of his philosophical theories on the theory of gradational unity. The exact expressions of Allameh Tabatabaee are as follows:

In order to facilitate his instruction, the late Mulla Sadra in the discussions of monotheism founded his discussions on the principle of gradation in existence. However, choosing such ground work is not complete; for he regards beings as the very relations and dependences. But according to the principle of gradation of existence, the beings have a kind of existence though weak and dependent, against the Necessary Existence; and at the most is their being concealed in the Divine Essence, but not their annihilation and effacement in Him, whereas according to our argument, all beings are annihilated and effaced in His essence. In the discussion of causality in his book, *Asfar*, Mulla Sadra himself said: "there is a kind of monotheism beyond this one" (20, p.5)

Hasanzade Amoli and Javadi Amoli, who were students of special seminars of Allameh Tabatabaee on theoretical mysticism, confirmed

their teacher's viewpoint by different expressions. In his *lectures of Asfar* Javadi Amoli has declared:

Mulla Sadra in his works offers two viewpoints: mean and final. His mean viewpoint is founded on the gradation of existence, which depends on the fourfold bases of real unity, real multiplicity, real reduction of unity to multiplicity, and real reduction of multiplicity to unity. However, the final viewpoint of Mulla Sadra is the individual unity of existence, and on this basis, existence and existent are one; and multiplicities are shadows and rays of one existent; they have no portion of existence themselves. In the precepts of existence, the position Mulla Sadra offered under the title 'The Pick of the Throne' is his final viewpoint (9, V: 1, p. 494).

3. 2. 2. The chosen viewpoint of Mulla Sadra was the individual unity of existence, and the difference between this kind of unity and the gradation of existence is a difference only in expression:

According to this opinion the main difference between the gradational unity of existence and its individual unity is only in expression, but without any doubt Mulla Sadra has chosen the latter, and in this regard those who consider it as his final viewpoint are right. Fazel Tuni prefers this opinion to others. For, he believes, naming contingent things 'existences' or 'manifestations' is a conventional issue.

3. 3. Evidence of Mulla Sadra's Belief in the Individual Unity of Existence

In spite of all the previous discussions, if any one by any justification considers the two theories different and heterogeneous, and asks about the final viewpoint of Mulla Sadra, the answer will be that he undoubtedly believes in and is attached to the theory of the individual unity of existence. Although he discusses both theories in his works, we can understand from his clear expressions that he prefers and defends the individual unity; he even shows a prejudice in favour of it. In the beginning of his great book, *Asfar*, he writes:

Very soon you will know that the levels of contingent beings who are possible realities are nothing but rays of Real Light and Necessary Existence, Great be His Glory. They are not independent, self-subsistent, and self-existent entities; rather, they are all aspects of one essence and manifestations of one truth. All these will be proved by some convincing proofs, the details and complete study of which will be mentioned soon (13, V: 1, p.29).

Mulla Sadra has expressed the same meaning in other words.

All contingent beings and relational entities are unreal (*ittibari*). They are aspects of Necessary Existence, rays and shadows of Everlasting Light. In their identity they have no independence. They cannot be considered discrete essences and independent entities.

For belonging to other, being relational and dependent are their very realities. We do not mean that they are independent realities and then relations, belonging to other, and dependence occur to them. Rather, in their essence they are pure dependences and relations. Their realities are nothing but relations to One Truth. So, the Truth is one and there is nothing but His aspects and modes. They are rays and shadows of His Light, and manifestations of His Essence, as is said in the following verse:

All existents are illusions or imaginations or they are images in a mirror, or some shadows. By divine grace and His confirmation we have offered a clear superior proof for this high valuable issue and excellent subtle discussion which will be cited in its suitable place” (Ibid, p.47).

In another place Mulla Sadra specifies that if he speaks of the gradational multiplicity of existence in different chapters, it is for

facilitating teaching. What, in fact, he wants to prove is the unity of existence and existent in essence and reality, just as explained by the friends of God and great mystics.

He has promised to offer convincing proofs of this issue that the existents, though multiplied and differed from each other, are but the determinations of the First Truth, and the manifestations of His Light and the aspects of His Essence (Ibid, 71). Mulla Sadra is proud that the argument of the personal unity has been given to him by the Lord's wisdom according the pre-eternal providence. He claims that God by His grace and generosity has assigned it to him as his portion of knowledge by which he has tried to perfect philosophy and complete wisdom. Since the theory is subtle, obscure, difficult to find, and deeply analytical, it is neglected by the most of philosophers, and by this negligence many of them have slipped into error, let alone their followers, imitators, and pupils (13, V: 2, p.292). Mulla Sadra continues:

By His grace and mercy God has given me success to understand the everlasting destruction and pre-eternal vanity of contingent quiddities and possible entities. He has also led me to a straight path by His clear superior proof that the existent and existence are confined to one individuated truth that does not have any associate in being real existent, nor does He have any second in objectivity. There is nothing in the world of existence other than Him. Anything that shows itself in the world of existence to be other than the Necessary God, is, in fact, of the appearances of His Essence and the manifestations of His attributes that are identical with His Essence in reality, just as explained by some of mystics who said, 'what is called the world, i.e. all things other than God, in respect to Him the exalted, is like a shadow for a person. Thus, the world is the shadow of God (Ibid, V: 2, p. 292).

Mulla Sadra finally concluded that the truth is that the world is nothing but an illusion, and does not have any real existence. This is precisely the theory of divine mystics and the people of research (Ibid, p.294).

In the final section of his discussion of causality Mulla Sadra has assigned a chapter under the title “Emphasizing that the contingents are non-existences according to their essences” to the discussion in question. He insists that,

Existence is one reality which is the very Truth, and the contingent quiddities do not have any real existence. Rather, their being existents are by the light of existence; and their intelligibility is acquired from a way among the ways of the manifestation of existence and a kind among the kinds of its appearance. What is seen in all manifestations, quiddities, aspects and determinations is but the reality of existence; that is, it is the existence of God the Truth according to the differences of His manifestations, the plurality of His aspects, and the multiplicity of His modes. The state of the specific contingent quiddity, like meaning of man and animal, is similar to the concept of contingency, thingness and the like that are not fundamental (*asil*) in existence (Ibid, V: 2, p.339).

In the same chapter, but in another paragraph Mull Sadra emphasizes that the essences of contingent beings have been and will be perishing in pre-eternity and forever. The real existent is the essence of God, the Truth, permanently and everlastingly. Thus unity belongs to existence, while multiplicity and distinction belong to perception; for many meanings and different concepts may be understood from one sort of existence.

As a result, according to Mulla Sadra’s view, the reality of existence is Necessary Existence, and He is one by individual unity, and what seems to be multiple beings are, in fact, the shadows of the one existence. They have no real portion of existence; that is, we can

say that contingent beings exist accidentally, but not essentially and really (Ibid, V: 2, p.300).

Mulla Sadra then adds: "Be firm in a position in which the feet of scholars and wise men have slipped. Spend your life acquiring it; perhaps, if you are deserving, you will catch a whiff of it" (Ibid, V: 2, p.321).

In another place, he also said that the real existence is identical with essential necessity, according to which the instance of true existent is only Necessary God. As an example, he likens the existence of God the Truth to an indicator, and the existence of all other than God to its shadow according to which the realization of the latter is based on the former; moreover, the shadow has no real existence (Ibid, V: 2, p. 292).

In brief, in his opinion, all beings including intellects, souls and bodies are only the rays of Real Light and the manifestations of the existence of the Self-subsisting. As the light of the Truth is radiated, the fancies of the veiled people that the quiddities exist by themselves will disappear, and it emerges that all are appearances rather than existences.

As it will be seen Mulla Sadra analyzes the causality very carefully and reduces it so that the multiplied effects are only the aspects and manifestations of one reality, that is, the cause, rejecting any independent existence for them. By denying the plurality of existence and existent, he considers the multiplied beings as the attributes and aspects of the Necessary God. Of course, he has emphasized the distinction between God and the world of existence: a kind of distinction which is not like that of two heterogeneous and opposed beings; rather, as Imam Ali explains it, it is only a descriptive difference and not a difference of complete separation.

4. Proving the Individual Unity of Existence

Once the theory of the individual unity of existence is considered as an interpretation of the witness or intuition of the mystic and wayfarer to God, it no longer needs intellectual proof. For the mystic may say - if you want to understand the truth of what I say, just come and see.

However, if the theory is considered ontologically or philosophically, it will be necessary for philosophers to offer intellectual arguments for the truth of their claims. And this requires that the theory should be intellectually verifiable.

4.1. The Possibility of Intellectual Proof

If somebody in his epistemological foundations believes that some issues are not intellectually provable, that is, the intellect is not able to give a meaningful statement for or against them, he can no longer quest for arguments to prove or disprove them. Now, we have to see whether the theory of the individual unity of existence is intellectually verifiable according to its supporters. In our opinion, a statement is intellectually verifiable if it can be proved only by dependence on intellectual, evident or theoretical premises so that the wise accept it only according to the precepts of the intellect.

If there is the least intellectual possibility for the falsity of that claim, it will be unproven. It is clear that this will be realized when denying the result of the argument for proving that claim leads to denying the self-evident truths. Now, the question is whether the adherents of the theory consider it intellectually verifiable. In reply, we can divide them to two groups: Those who deny the intellectual provability of the theory, and those who believe in the provability of it.

Comment [MA1]:

4. 1. 1. Denying the Intellectual Provability of the Theory of Individual Unity: Some mystics including Ibn Arabi believe that the accurate understanding of the individual unity of existence is only possible by way of inward revelation and intuition (7, V: 2, p.635). They say that understanding the theory is beyond the human intellect, and there is no way to reach arguments for proving it (Ibid, V:1, p.162; V: 2, pp. 114, 288 & 593). Here, in Rumi's interpretation, the foot of intellect is made of wood. The wooden foot is weak, and can never ascend to the ladder of the heavens. This is why they believe that the wayfarer to God witnesses some truths which can never be seen by the eye of intellect, and in Hafez's interpretation, the intellect is never allowed to enter the watch-place of the secret.

Mulla Sadra occasionally refers to this point and repeats the mystics' views. For example, he says: "What is claimed by people of

revelation regarding the unity of absolute existence, the spread of the reality of Truth in all things, His appearance and manifestation upon all things and recipients, is another meaning which is not possible to be perceived by discourses and argumentation, without any referring to their way in knowledge and practice, and without absolute turning the manners of owners of argument and dialectics aside" (14, p. 306) However, in other places he confirms that the theory can be proved by rational reasoning, and he tries to bring it near to the understanding of philosophers by offering some arguments. Accordingly, as we will soon explain, his viewpoint is that the theory can intellectually be proved.

4.1.2. The Adherents of the Intellectual Provability of the Theory: Unlike those who deny the intellectual provability of the theory, some philosophers, including Mulla Sadra, as was mentioned above claim that the theory can intellectually be proved. He says:

The philosophers' doctrine is that the highest level of existence is the Necessary Existence. Some monotheists consider the existence as the very reality of God and believe that He embraces all existents, and nothing is devoid of Him; rather He is the reality of all things. It is said that this point is beyond the intellect, but I know one of the poor who has understood the question through the intellect and offered some arguments to prove it intellectually (17, p.288).

Of course, by 'the poor who has offered arguments' Mulla Sadra means himself. In *Asfar, Shawhid al-Robubiyyah* and some other books, he tries to prove the individual unity of existence through analyzing the reality of causality, saying that all effects are but aspects and manifestations of the cause. After Mulla Sadra, philosophers and mystics who believed in the individual unity of existence confirmed and extolled the arguments offered by him.

4. 2. Mulla Sadra's Arguments for Proving the Theory of Individual Unity of Existence

4. 2. 1. The First Argument: In *Asfar* and in the final discussion of causality, Mulla Sadra concluded that unlike the primary stage of understanding, the effect has no independent existence of its cause. He emphasizes: “Previously, in our theoretical discussions, we have said that there are causes and effects which are apart of each other. There is no identity between them. However, now, from a mystical viewpoint we speak in another way” (13, V: 2, pp. 300-301). Then, he continues his discussion saying that if we know the real relation between the cause and effect, we will find out that the effects are the existential manifestations and appearances of one cause. By looking at the contingent being whose essence is not the very existence, we can understand that it is necessary for it to come into existence by the cause. The causality of such a cause cannot be an additional attribute to its essence. For if causality is an additional attribute to its essence it will need a cause that gives the attribute to it. Then the question will be about the causality of that cause and finally we meet the trouble of either a causal circle or an infinite regress. Accordingly, to avoid a circle or a regress, the chain of the contingents must lead to a cause whose essence is the same as its causality. We can then say that a cause is an existent who is essentially agent and gracious.

If we consider the reality of an effect, we will understand that its essence is nothing other than ‘being an effect’; that is, it does not have an essence which has acquired something from its cause; rather it takes its very existence from its cause. The proof for this claim is that if ‘being an effect’ is not the same as the effect, then it will be either an inseparable accident or a separable accident for it. If it is a separable one for it we must be able to conceive it without the attribution of ‘being an effect’. But, this leads us to contradiction, because we have believe that while in its realization needs a cause, it does not need any cause too. But if ‘being an effect’ is an accident separable from the effect, then, this accident will definitely be posterior to the effect, and it cannot be in the level of effect’s essence. This leads the essence of the effect to be non-effect, which is contradictory and unacceptable.

Therefore, it can be said the effect does not have an identity separate from its existence-giving cause, and the intellect cannot refer

to the identity of the effect without disregarding the identity of the cause so that in intellection of both the cause and effect have two independent and separate existences, one of which is the giver of emanation, and the other the receiver of it. Rather, the effect qua effect is nothing but a relation to the cause. In fact the creator of a thing, i.e. its existence-giving cause, is a being which gives emanation to others by essence, that is, its reality is absolute activity. So, the real creator of a thing is pure and absolute agent rather than being an existent characterized by activity.

On the other hand, the effect itself is essentially the emanation of the cause, though we can analyze it in our mind and say that it is a thing and an effect. In brief, this emanation, that is, the effect qua an effect has no reality but a relation to, or mere dependence on its cause. In other words, it is not an independent identity or essence characterized by being an effect; Rather, it is nothing rather than a ray, a sign, and pure need, exactly contrary to the cause, the bestower of emanation, which is absolutely Independent Origin for all, the Everlasting Refuge, and the all embracing; and these are the same as His essence.

Accordingly, in the relation between the cause and the effect, there are not two things, one called the cause the other the effect; rather, what we call the effect is the very emanation bestowed by the cause. So, the duality of the effect and the emanation reached to it by the cause withers away and it becomes plain that the effect is nothing but the emanation of the cause.

In this conception of causality, the effect has no independence at all in comparison with the cause; its reality or existence is depended on its cause; for the emanation of the cause is not a reality or an identity apart from the effect, but it is everlastingly dependent on the cause. To express the dependence of the effect Mulla Sadra says that the effect is an aspect or a ray of the cause. In this conception, the effect is no longer opposed to the cause, but considered as a mode of it. Thus, the emanation of the effect by the cause is not that something opposed to the effect is created; rather, its emanation is in fact, a mode, a ray or an aspect of the cause.

Accordingly, the emanation of a cause, the causality of which is the same as its essence, is only its manifestation or aspect, an attribution which is not different of the cause's essence. So, all the world of existence is divine attribution and manifestation. The relation of God as the cause and the world as the effect is not a heterogeneous one so that former is independent and the latter is dependent. Rather, the effect in itself is the very relation to or attribution of the cause. Consequently, it cannot be said that the relation between the world and its cause is a productive one, because the former is only a dependent attribute to the latter. Furthermore, if the relation between the two is productive, the world will have a portion of existence. On the contrary, if this relation is attributive, the world will have no real, dependent and essential existence. In the final step of his discussion, Mulla Sadra concluded that there exists but one fundamental truth, and all the so-called beings are His manifestations and modes (13, V: 2, pp. 299-300; 15: p.52; 17, p.49). Consequently, according to Mulla Sadra existence has an individual unity with the multiplicity of aspects, manifestations, and attributes.

4. 2. 2. The Second Argument

In the second argument, Mulla Sadra used the simplicity or non-compositeness of God to prove His embracing or inclusiveness of all things; then he concludes that not one particular thing is out of Him. Mulla Sadra's second argument is as follows.

- (1) Every necessarily existent is a non-composite being in its reality;
 - (2) Every non-composite being in its reality embraces all things.
- Thus, (3) the Necessarily Existent embraces all things (13, V: p.368).

This argument is valid in its form. So if its premises are true and valid, that is, they are either self-evident or provable, then the conclusion is true and valid too. Now, we study the premises.

Statement (1) is not self-evident. So it must be proved. Mulla Sadra refers the proving of this statement to the section of 'Divinity in the special sense' in the sixth volume of *Asfar*. There, he offered some arguments for this claim, which we accept as axioms.

To prove the statement (2), i.e. the major premise, he mentions a proof which can be classified on the following lines.

(4) If the non-composite being in his reality does not embrace the perfections of all things absolutely, then, it will be composite rather than simple or non-composite.

(5) The non-composite being in his reality is not composite, but simple.

(6) The non-composite in his reality embraces the perfections of all things absolutely.

This proof is valid in its form. Its second premise (5) is necessarily true, that is, it is a logical truth. In the statement (4) by denying the consequent, the contradiction of the antecedent, i.e. the non-composite being in his reality embraces all things, is concluded, and accordingly, the statement (2) the major premise of the deduction, and following it the statement (3) are proved. Concerning the proving of statement (4) Mulla Sadra says:

(7) If a truth is out of the essence of the non-composite being in his reality, then He will be the instance of the negation of that truth.

(8) Being an instance of a thing means the applying of the mode of loss to the thing. And according to (7) and (8)

(9) The non-composite being in his reality is combined of two modes: the mode of having and the mode of loss.

Accordingly, regarding the truth of statement (4) and the necessity of the truth of (5), the statement (6) is proved, and this is, in fact, proving the truth of statement (3).

In his discussion for proving statement (2) Mulla Sadra stated the same argument with more details, and said that when a kind of perfection is taken away from a being, he is combined of two different modes which come together. For example, in the statement, "A man is not a horse" the negation of being a horse from man indicates a mode other than the mode of his being a man. The latter is a particular mode which is different from other modes including being a horse. For if the two modes of being man and non-being a horse are one, then this unity is due to either concept or extension, both of which are false.

If the mode of being a man and the mode of non-being a horse have a unity in concept, they will be synonymous concepts. It is evident that this is not acceptable; for these are different concepts. Being a man does not have the same meaning of non-being a horse. Thus, these modes do not have unity in concept.

The two concepts of 'man' and 'non-horse', though they do not have a unity in concept, do apply for the extension of man, in different aspects. As these concepts are not equal with each other and do not have one aspect of truth, so they do not have one extension either. In the external world, the extension of man differs from the extension of non-horse. Thus, application of these two concepts for one objective reality shows its being composite.

Consequently, if a truth is a necessary and pure, and void of any disposition or incompleteness, then it will be immaterial and non-composite being that possesses all completions. Of course, those concepts that represent incompleteness do not apply for a truth of pure essence, and this is, in fact, a sign of the intensification of completions for this essence. Such an attribution for a being entails its existential actualization and its embrace of all completions. No completion can be excluded from this Being, and no incompleteness can be applied to Him. Any evil and imperfection are negated of Him; and the origin of any good and the perfection of all complete existents are depended on Him. In brief, the Exalted Necessary Being is a pure and non-composite existent that has all perfections; and no perfection is found outside of His pure and holy essence.

It seems that the truth of statement (3) does not prove the claim of individual unity of existence; for the content of this statement is consistent with both theory of the gradational unity and the individual unity of existence.

With choosing the individual unity in his principle, one may say the statement (3) means that any perfection of other than the Necessary Existent belongs to Him too. But the perfections of others are impure and dependent, while His perfections are pure and independent.

On the other hand, according to the theory of gradational unity of existence, it can be said other than the Necessary Existent nothing

really exists so no perfection can be attributed to anything but Him. Thus, all other than God are His manifestations and appearances, and He has the same perfections of all His rays and manifestations.

Now, the question is, which of these interpretations was accepted by Mulla Sadra? The truth is that he pronounced both not only in his different works, but also sometimes in one book. The mystery is that he deals with the philosophical discussions in the beginning according to the principles of other philosophers, but in the end he traverses his own way which is close to the horizon of divine wayfarers and mystics. Thus, if his chosen theory is the individual unity of existence, as he sometimes declared, then the second version and interpretation of this argument which is consistent with the individual unity, should be attributed to him. Furthermore, mediating the argument regarding the Necessary Being Who embraces all things, we can realize that it is in consistent with the gradational unity of existence. For if the Necessary Existent does not have all perfections of other things, but possesses perfections only similar to others, then He will be limited; and this entails His essence to be finite and compound of two aspects of possessing and lacking some kinds of perfection, which contradicts with the attributes of the Exalted Necessary Existent.

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