The Concept and Reality of Existence

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FOREWORD

The present work consists of four independent papers that have been written by the author during the last four years. The first three (I, II, III) are papers written and read on different occasions at different places in the form of public lectures: (I) at the Fifth East-West Philosophers' Conference, at Hawaii University, Honolulu, in 1969; (II) at McGill Institute of Islamic Studies, Tehran, Iran, in 1970; and (III) at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in 1969. The first essay has been published in the Bulletin (Vol. I) of the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies, Tehran, edited by Dr. Mehdi Muḥaqqiq, Dr. Herman Landolt and myself.

The fourth and longest essay was originally written in 1968 and subsequently appeared as the English Introduction to the Arabic text of Hâdî Sabzawârî's "Metaphysics" (*Sharḥ-i Manẓûmah*) which I edited and published in 1969 in collaboration with Professor M. Muḥaqqiq as the first volume of a new series of publications, *Dânesh-i Irânî,* as part of the activity of the above-mentioned McGill Institute of Islamic Studies in Tehran.

I take this occasion to thank all those who have directly or indirectly furnished me motives for writing these papers, particularly Dr. Raymond Klibansky of Montreal, Dr. Abraham Kaplan of Michigan, Dr. Joshua Blau of Jerusalem, and Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr of Tehran. It is also my pleasure to record my indebtedness to Dr. Charles Adams, Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, who read the fourth essay while it was still in the state of typescript and offered a number of suggestions for improving the style and presentation.

The four papers here collected in a volume have a sort of internal unity in that they all center around the topic of the reality and concept of existence (*wujûd*) as it has been elaborated in the post-Mongol periods of Islamic philosophy, especially in Persia. There are naturally a number of overlappings among the four papers. In gathering them together here I have not tried to eliminate them, for such work of trimming would have destroyed the organic unity of each paper. Besides, overlappings may not always be entirely useless when they are due to repeated endeavors on the part of the author to attack the same points of central importance each time from a slightly different angle.

All through the four papers, it has consistently been my wish to uncover and recapture the living spirit of *'irfân,* a particular type of metaphysics that has developed and flourished in Persia as a combination of mysticism and rational thinking. It has, moreover, been my intention to establish this kind of philosophy as representing one of the archetypal patterns of philosophizing which is to be found almost everywhere in the intellectual cultures of the East, and thus to start preparing a ground for truly fruitful and methodical explorations in the field of comparative philosophy.

In ending I express my deep gratitude to Keio University, Tokyo, Japan, for having agreed to publish these papers in the present form as one of the publications of the Institute of Cultural & Linguistic Studies.

Toshihiko Izutsu
20 Feb., 1971, Montreal, Canada

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I

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF METAPHYSICAL THINKING IN ISLAM

THE BASIC STRUCTURE
OF METAPHYSICAL THINKING IN ISLAM

What I am going to say might seem to have no direct connection with the main theme of this Conference.[1] In reality, however, the problems I am going to deal with are not irrelevant to the problem of alienation even within the confines of Islamic philosophy, particularly with regard to the existential and metaphysical aspects of alienation. But instead of trying to connect my problems directly to the topic of alienation, I shall rather explain the basic structure itself of Islamic metaphysics.

I want to bring to your attention one of the most important types of the philosophical activity of the Oriental mind as exemplified by the thought of some of the outstanding philosophers of Iran. I believe this kind of approach has some significance in the particular context of East-West encounter in view of the fact that the East-West philosophers' Conference, as I understand it, aims at creating and promoting a better mutual understanding between East and West at the level of philosophical thinking. It is my conviction that the realization of a true international friendship or brotherhood among the nations of the East and West, based on a deep philosophical understanding of the ideas and thoughts of each other, is one of the things that are most urgently needed in the present-day situation of the world.

Unlike Western philosophy, however, which, broadly speaking, presents a fairly conspicuous uniformity of historical development from its pre-Socratic origin down to its contemporary forms, there is in the East no such historical uniformity. We can only speak of Eastern philosophies in the plural.

Such being the case, it is, I think, very important that the various philosophies of the East be studied in a systematic way with a view to arriving at a comprehensive structural framework, a kind of metaphilosophy of the Eastern philosophies, by means of which the major Oriental philosophies may be brought up to a certain level of structural uniformity.

In other words, before we begin to think of the possibility of a fruitful philo-

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1) The present paper is the manuscript of a public lecture delivered at the Fifth East-West Philosophers' Conference in Hawaii (June–July 1969). The reference is to the main theme of the Conference: *The Alienation of Modern Man.*

sophical understanding between East and West, we shall have to actualize a better philosophical understanding within the confines of the Oriental philosophical traditions themselves.

It is with such an idea in mind that I approach the problem of the basic structure of metaphysical thinking in Islam.

Islam has produced in the course of its long history a number of outstanding thinkers and a variety of philosophical schools. Here I shall pick up only one of them, which is known as the school of the "unity of existence" and which is undoubtedly one of the most important. This concept, unity of existence, goes back to a great Arab mystic-philosopher of Spain of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Ibn 'Arabî (1165–1240). It exercised a tremendous influence upon the majority of Muslim thinkers, particulary in Iran, in the periods extending from the thirteenth century down to the 16th–17th centuries, when the tradition of Islamic metaphysical thinking found its culminating and all-synthesizing point in the thought of Ṣadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî, commonly known as Mollâ Ṣadrâ (1571–1640).

Thus the scope of my talk today is a very limited one, both historically and geographically. But the problems I am going to discuss are those that belong to the most fundamental dimension of metaphysical thinking in general. Moreover, I would like to point out that the "unity of existence" school of thought is not, for Islam, a thing of the past. On the contrary, the tradition is still vigorously alive in present-day Iran. In any case, I only hope that my presentation of the problems will shed some light on the position occupied by Iran in the philosophical world of the East.

As one of the most salient features of the Iranian thought in the periods which I have just mentioned we may begin by pointing out an unremitting search for something eternal and absolute beyond the world of relative and transient things. Formulated in this way, it may sound a truism; in fact it is a feature commonly shared by almost all religions.

The important point, however, is that this problem was raised in Islam in terms of the *reality* of existence. "Existence" (*wujûd*) is here the central key-term.

In order to elucidate the real significance of this idea in its historical context I must explain briefly what is usually known in the West as the thesis of the "accidentality of existence" attributed to Avicenna, or Ibn Sînâ (980–1037). This notorious thesis was attributed to Avicenna first by Ibn Rushd (1126–1198), or Averroës, a famous Arab philosopher of Spain of the twelfth century, and then in the West by Thomas Aquinas who followed Averroës in the understanding of Avicenna's position. In the light of what we now know of Avicenna's thought, their understanding was a misinterpretation. But the Avicennian position as misinterpreted by Averroës and Thomas played a very important role not only in the East but also in the history of Western philosophy.

In fact, from the earliest phase of the historical development of Islamic philosophy, the concept of "existence" (*wujûd*), as a heritage from Greek philosophy, was the greatest metaphysical problem the Muslim thinkers had to face. The problem was first raised explicitly by Fârâbî (872–950), and it was presented in an extraordinary form by Avicenna when he declared that "existence" is an accident (*'araḍ*) of "quiddity" (*mâhîyah*).

The most important question which we must ask here is: What did Avicenna really intend to convey by the above-statement? I must first clarify this point.

We constantly use in our daily conversation propositions whose subject is a noun and whose predicate is an adjective: for example: "The flower is white", "This table is brown" etc.. On the same model we can easily transform an existential proposition like: "The table is" or "The table exists" into "The table is existent". Thus transformed, "existence" is just an adjective denoting a quality of the table. And the proposition "The table is existent" stands quite on a par with the proposition "The table is brown", for in both cases the subject is a noun denoting a substance called "table", while the predicate is an adjective indicating grammatically a property or accident of the substance.

It is on this level and on this level only, that Avicenna speaks of existence being an "accident" of essence. Otherwise expressed, it is at the level of logical or grammatical analysis of reality that it makes sense to maintain the accidentality of existence. However, neither Averroës nor Thomas Aquinas understood the Avicennian thesis in that way. They thought that "existence" in the thought of Avicenna must be a property inhering in a substance, not only at the level of logical or grammatical analysis of reality but in terms of the very structure of the objective, external reality. That is to say, "existence" according to Avicenna must be a predicamental or categorical accident, understood in the sense of *ens in alio*, something existing in something else, i.e. a real property qualifying real substances, just in the same way as other ordinary properties, like whiteness existing in a flower, coldness existing in ice, or brownness existing in a table.

It is clear that the Avicennian position, once understood in such a way, will immediately lead to an absurd conclusion; namely, that the table would have to exist before it becomes existent just as the table must exist before it can be brown, black, etc.. This is, in fact, the gist of the criticism of the Avicennian thesis by Averroës and Thomas.

Avicenna was well aware of the danger that his thesis might be misinterpreted in this way. He emphasized that we should not confuse "existence" as an accident with ordinary accidents, like "brown", "white", etc.. He emphasized that existence is a very peculiar and unique kind of accident, for the objective reality which is referred to by a proposition like "The table is existent" presents a completely different picture from what is naturally suggested by the propositional form of the expression.

However, Avicenna himself did not clarify the structure of the extra-mental, objective reality which is found beyond what is meant by the logical proposition. The problem was left to posterity.

In the periods subsequent to Avicenna, this problem assumed supreme importance, and a number of divergent opinions were put forward.

The philosophers belonging to the school of thought which I am going to talk about, chose to take a position which might look at first sight very daring or very strange. They asserted that, in the sphere of external reality, the proposition: "The table is existent" as understood in the sense of substance-accident relationship turns out to be meaningless. For in the realm of external reality there is, to begin with, no self-subsistent substance called table, nor is there a real "accident" called "existence" to come to inhere in the substance. The whole phenomenon of a table being qualified by "existence" turns into something like a shadow-picture, something which is not wholly illusory but which approaches the nature of an illusion. In this perspective, both the table and "existence" as its "accident" begin to look like things seen in a dream.

These philosophers do not mean to say simply that the world of reality as we perceive it in our waking experience is in itself unreal or a dream. Nor do they want to assert that the proposition: "The table is existent" does not refer to any kind of external reality. There certainly *is* a corresponding piece of reality. The only point they want to make is that the structure of external reality which corresponds to this proposition is totally different from what is normally suggested by the form of the proposition. For in this domain "existence" is the sole reality. "Table" is but an inner modification of this reality, one of its self-determinations. Thus in the realm of external reality, the subject and the predicate must exchange their places. The "table" which is the logical or grammatical subject of the proposition: "The table is existent", is in this domain not a subject; rather, it is a predicate. The real subject is "existence", while "table" is but an "accident" determining the subject into a particular thing. In fact all the so-called "essences", like being-a-table, being-a-flower, etc. are in external reality nothing but "accidents" that modify and delimit the one single reality called "existence" into innumerable things.

Such a vision of reality, however, is not accessible to human consciousness as long as it remains at the level of ordinary everyday experience. In order to have access to it, according to the philosophers of this school, the mind must experience a total transformation of itself. The consciousness must transcend the dimension of ordinary cognition where the world of being is experienced as consisting of solid, self-subsistent things, each having as its ontological core what is called essence. There must arise in the mind a totally different kind of awareness in which the world is revealed in an entirely different light. It is at this point that Iranian philosophy turns conspicuously toward mysticism. So much so that a philosopher like Mollâ Ṣadrâ comes to declare that any philosophy which is not based upon the mystical vision of reality is but a vain intellectual pastime. In more concrete terms, the basic idea here is that an integral metaphysical world-view is possible only on the basis of a unique form of subject-object relationship.

It is to be remarked in this connection that, in this variety of Islamic philosophy as well as in other major philosophies of the East, metaphysics or ontology is inseparably connected with the subjective state of man, so that the selfsame Reality is said to be perceived differently in accordance with the different degrees of consciousness.

The problem of the unique form of subject-object relationship is discussed in Islam as the problem of *ittiḥâd al-'âlim wa-al-ma'lûm,* i.e. the " unification of the knower and the known ". Whatever may happen to be the object of knowledge, the highest degree of knowledge is always achieved when the knower, the human subject, becomes completely unified and identified with the object so much so that there remains no differentiation between the two. For differentiation or distinction means distance, and distance in cognitive relationship means ignorance. As long as there remains between the subject and object the slightest degree of distinction, that is to say, as long as there are subject and object as two entities distinguishable from one another, perfect cognition is not realized. To this we must add another observation concerning the object of cognition, namely that the highest object of cognition, for the philosophers of this school, is " existence ".[2] And according to Mollâ Ṣadrâ who is one of the most prominent figures of this school the real knowledge of " existence " is obtainable not by rational reasoning but only through a very peculiar kind of intuition. This latter mode of cognition, in the view of Mollâ Ṣadrâ, consists precisely in knowing " existence " through the " unification of the knower and the known ", i.e. knowing " existence " not from the outside as an " object " of knowledge, but from the inside, by man's *becoming* or rather *being* " existence " itself, that is, by man's self-realization.

It is evident that such " unification of the knower and the known " cannot be realized at the level of everyday human experience where the subject stands eternally opposed to the object. The subject in such a state grasps " existence " only as an object. It objectifies " existence " as it objectifies all other things, while " existence " in its reality as *actus essendi* definitely and persistently refuses to be an "object". An objectified "existence" is but a distortion of the reality of "existence".

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[2] Cf. Mollâ Ṣadrâ: *al-Shawâhid al-Rubûbîyah*, ed. Jalâl al-Dîn Âshtiyânî, Mashhad, 1967, p. 14.

Ḥaydar Âmulî,[3] one of the foremost Iranian metaphysicians of the 14th century says: When man attempts to approach "existence" through his weak intellect (*'aql ḍa'îf*) and feeble thinking (*afkâr rakîkah*), his natural blindness and perplexity go on but increasing.

The common people who have no access to the transcendental experience of Reality are compared to a blind man who cannot walk safely without the help of a stick in his hand. The stick giving guidance to the blind man here symbolizes the rational faculty of the mind. The strange thing about this is that the stick upon which the blind man relies happens to be the very cause of his blindness. Only when Moses threw down his stick were the veils of the phenomenal forms removed from his sight. Only then did he witness, beyond the veils, beyond the phenomenal forms, the splendid beauty of absolute Reality.

Maḥmûd Shabastarî, an outstanding Iranian mystic philosopher of the 13th–14th centuries, says in his celebrated *Gulshan-e Râz* (v. 114):

Throw away reason; be always with Reality,
For the eye of the bat has no power to gaze at the sun.

Reason trying to see the absolute Reality, says Lâhîjî in the Commentary,[4] is just like the eye trying to gaze at the sun. Even from afar, the overwhelming effulgence of the sun blinds the eye of reason. And as the eye of reason goes up to higher stages of Reality, gradually approaching the metaphysical region of the Absolute, the darkness becomes ever deeper until everything in the end turns black. As man comes close to the vicinity of the sacred region of Reality, Lâhîjî remarks, the brilliant light issuing forth from it appears black to his eyes. Brightness at its ultimate extremity becomes completely identical with utter darkness. That is to say——to use a less metaphorical terminology——"existence" in its absolute purity is to the eyes of an ordinary man as invisible as sheer nothing. Thus it comes about that the majority of men are not even aware of the "light" in its true reality. Like the men sitting in the cave in the celebrated Platonic myth, they remain satisfied with looking at the shadows cast by the sun. They see the faint reflections of the light on the screen of the so-called external world and are convinced that these reflections are the sole reality.

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[3] Cf. his *Risâlah Nadq al-Nuqûd*, ed. Henry Corbin and Osman Yahya, Téhéran-Paris, 1969, p. 625.

[4] Muḥammad Lâhîjî: *Sharḥ-e Gulshan-e Râz*, Tehran, 1337 A.H., pp. 94–97.

Ḥaydar Âmulî,⁵⁾ divides "existence" in this connection into (1) pure, absolute "existence" as pure light and (2) shadowy and dark "existence": light (*nûr*) and shadow (*ẓill*). Seen through the eye of a real metaphysician, shadow also is "existence". But it is not the pure reality of "existence".

The ontological status of the shadowy figures, i.e. the objectified forms of "existence" which, at the level of normal everyday experience, appear to the human consciousness as solid, self-subsistent things is, according to Mollâ Ṣadrâ,⁶⁾ like that of a "mirage falsely presenting the image of water, while in reality it has nothing to do with water". However, the phenomenal things, although they are of a shadowy nature in themselves, are not wholly devoid of reality either. On the contrary, they are real if they are considered in relation to their metaphysical source. In fact even in the empirical world, nothing is wholly unreal. Even a mirage is not altogether unreal in the sense that its perception is induced by the actual existence of a wide stretch of desert land. But in a metaphysical perspective, the desert land which is the empirical basis of a mirage must itself be regarded as something of the nature of a mirage, if it is compared with the ultimate ground of reality.

This Islamic approach to the problem of the reality and unreality of the phenomenal world will rightly remind us of the position taken by Vedanta philosophy as represented by the celebrated dictum of Shankara which runs: "The world is a continuous series of cognitions of Brahman" (*Brahma-pratyayasantair jagat*).⁷⁾ For Shankara too, the phenomenal world is Brahman or the absolute Reality itself as it appears to the ordinary human consciousness in accordance with the natural structure of the latter. In this respect, the world is not a pure illusion, because under each of the phenomenal forms there is hidden the Brahman itself, just as a rope mistakenly perceived as a snake in darkness is not altogether unreal because the perception of the snake is here induced by the actual existence of the rope. The phenomenal world becomes unreal or false (*jagan mithyâ*) only when it is taken as an ultimate, self-subsistent reality. It is not at all false and illusory *qua* Brahman as perceived by our non-absolute consciousness.⁸⁾

Likewise in Islamic philosophy, the phenomenal world is real in so far as it is the absolute truth or Reality as perceived by the relative human mind in accordance with its natural structure. But it is false and unreal if taken as something ultimate and self-subsistent. A true metaphysician worthy of the name is one who is capable

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5) Cf. *Jâmi' al-Asrâr wa-Manba' al-Anwâr*, ed. Henry Corbin and Osman Yahya, Téhéran-Paris, 1969, p. 259, p. 261.

6) Cf. *al-Shawâhid al-Rubûbîyah*, op. cit., p. 448.

7) *Vivekacûḍâmani*, 521.

8) Cf. S.N.L. Shrivastava: *Samkara and Bradley*, Delhi, 1968, pp. 45-47.

of witnessing in every single thing in the world the underlying Reality of which the phenomenal form is but a self-manifestation and self-determination. But the problem now is: How can such a vision of Reality be obtainable as a matter of actual experience? To this crucial question the Islamic philosophy of "existence" answers by saying that it is obtainable only through an "inner witnessing" (*shuhûd*), "tasting" (*dhawq*), "presence" (*ḥuḍûr*), or "illumination" (*ishrâq*).

Whatever these technical terms exactly mean, and to whatever degree they may differ from one another, it will be evident in any case that such an experience of Reality is not actualizable as long as there remains the subject of cognition as a "subject", that is to say, as long as there remains in man the ego-consciousness. The empirical ego is the most serious hindrance in the way of the experience of "seeing by self-realization". For the subsistence of the individual ego places of necessity an epistemological distance between man and the reality of "existence", be it his own "existence". The reality of existence is immediately grasped only when the empirical selfhood is annihilated, when the ego-consciousness is completely dissolved into the Consciousness of Reality, or rather, Consciousness which *is* Reality. Hence the supreme importance attached in this type of philosophy to the experience called *fanâ'*, meaning literally annihilation, that is, the total nullification of the ego-consciousness.

The phenomenal world is the world of Multiplicity. Although Multiplicity is ultimately nothing other than the self-revealing aspect of the absolute Reality itself, he who knows Reality only in the form of Multiplicity knows Reality only through its variously articulated forms, and fails to perceive the underlying Unity of Reality.

The immediate experience of Reality through "self-realization", consists precisely in the immediate cognition of absolute Reality before it is articulated into different things. In order to see Reality in its absolute indetermination, the ego also must go beyond its own essential determination.

Thus it is certain that there is a human aspect to the experience of *fanâ'* inasmuch as it involves a conscious effort on the part of man to purify himself from all the activities of the ego. 'Abd al-Raḥmân Jâmî, a famous Iranian poet-philosopher of the fifteenth century, says, "keep yourself away from your own ego, and set your mind free from the vision of others".[9] The word "others" here means everything other than absolute Reality. Such efforts made by man for the attainment of *fanâ'* are technically called *tawḥîd*, meaning literally "making many things one" or "unification", that is, an absolute concentration of the mind in deep meditation. It consists, as Jâmî explains, in man's making his mind cleansed (*takhlîṣ*) of its relations with anything other than absolute Reality, whether as objects of desire and will or as objects of knowledge and cognition. So much so that in the end even the consciousness of his own *fanâ'* must disappear from his consciousness. In this sense the experience of annihilation (*fanâ'*) involves the annihilation of annihilation (*fanâ'-ye fanâ'*), that is, the total disappearance of the consciousness of man's own disappearance.(10) For even the consciousness of *fanâ'* is a consciousness of something other than absolute Reality. It is significant that such an absolute *fanâ'* where there is not even a trace of the *fanâ'*-consciousness, which, be it remarked in passing, evidently finds its exact counterpart in the Mahayana Buddhist conception of *shûnyatâ* or nothingness, is not regarded as merely a subjective state realized in man; it is at one and the same time the realization or actualization of absolute Reality in its absoluteness.

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[9] *Lawâ'iḥ*, ed. M.H. Tasbîḥî, Tehran, 1342 A.H., p. 19.

This point cannot be too much emphasized, for if we fail to grasp it correctly, the very structure of Islamic metaphysics would not be rightly understood. *Fanâ'* is certainly a human experience. It is man who actually experiences it. But it is not solely a human experience. For when he does experience it, he is no longer himself. In this sense man is not the subject of experience. The subject is rather the metaphysical Reality itself. In other words, the human experience of *fanâ'* is itself the self-actualization of Reality. It is, in Islamic terminology, the preponderance of the self-revealing aspect of Reality over its own self-concealing aspect, the preponderance of the *ẓâhir*, the manifest, over the *bâṭin*, the concealed. The experience of *fanâ'* is in this respect nothing but an effusion (*fayḍ*) of the metaphysical light of absolute Reality.

The force of the self-revealing aspect of Reality is constantly making itself felt in the things and events of the phenomenal world. Otherwise there would be no phenomenal world around us. But there, in the phenomenal world, Reality reveals itself only through relative, and spatio-temporal forms. In the absolute consciousness of a mystic-metaphysician, on the contrary, it reveals itself in its original absoluteness beyond all relative determinations. This is what is technically known as *kashf* or *mukâshafah*, i.e. the experience of " unveiling ".(11)

Fanâ' as a human experience is man's experiencing the total annihilation of his own ego and consequently of all things that have been related to the ego in the capacity of its objects of cognition and volition. This experience would correspond to a spiritual event which is known in Zen Buddhism as the mind-and-body-dropping-off(12) (*shin jin datsu raku*), i.e. the whole unity of " mind-body ", which is

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10) *Ibid.*, p. 19.

11) Cf. Nihat Keklik: *Sadreddîn Konevî'nin Felsefesinde Allah, Kâinât ve Insan*, Istanbul, 1967, pp. 6–9.

12) This and the following expression: *datsu raku shin jin* appearing in the next paragraph belong to the technical terminology of the celebrated Japanese Zen master Dôgen (1200–1253).

no other than the so-called ego or self, losing its seemingly solid ground and falling off into the bottom of metaphysico-epistemological nothingness. However, neither in Zen Buddhism nor in Islam does this represent the ultimate height of metaphysical experience.

After having passed through this crucial stage, the philosopher is supposed to ascend to a still higher stage which is known in Zen as the dropped-off-mind-and-body (*datsu raku shin jin*) and in Islam as the experience of *baqâ'* or " survival ", i.e. eternal remaining in absolute Reality with absolute Reality. At the stage of *fanâ'* the pseudo-ego or the relative self has completely dissolved into nothingness. At the next stage man is resuscitated out of the nothingness, completely transformed into an absolute Self. What is resuscitated is outwardly the same old man, but he is a man who has once transcended his own determination. He regains his normal, daily consciousness and accordingly the normal, daily, phenomenal world of multiplicity again begins to spread itself out before his eyes. The world of multiplicity appears again with all its infinitely rich colors. Since, however, he has already cast off his own determination, the world of multiplicity he perceives is also beyond all determinations. The new world-view is comparable to the world-view which a drop of water might have if it could suddenly awake to the fact that being an individual self-subsistent drop of water has been but a pseudo-determination which it has imposed upon itself, and that it has in reality always been nothing other than the limitless sea. In a similar manner, the philosopher who has attained to the state of *baqâ'* sees himself and all other things around him as so many determinations of one single Reality. The seething world of becoming turns in his sight into a vast field in which absolute Reality manifests itself in myriad different forms. This vision of reality has produced in Islam a typically Oriental metaphysical system based on a dynamic and delicate interplay between unity and multiplicity. I want to discuss some aspects of this problem in what follows.

At this point I would like to repeat what I have previously said: namely, that in this type of philosophy metaphysics is most closely correlated with epistemology.

The correlation between the metaphysical and the epistemological means in this context the relation of ultimate identity between what is established as the objective structure of reality and what is usually thought to take place subjectively in human consciousness. It means, in brief, that there is no distance, there should be no distance between the " subject " and " object ". It is not exact enough even to say that the state of the subject essentially determines the aspect in which the object is perceived, or that one and the same object tends to appear quite differently in accordance with different points of view taken by the subject. Rather the state of consciousness *is* the state of the external world. That is to say, the objective structure of reality is no other than the other side of the subjective structure of the mind. And that precisely is the metaphysical Reality.

Thus to take up the problem of our immediate concern, *fanâ'* and *baqâ'*, "annihilation" and "survival", are not only subjective states. They are objective states, too. The subjective and the objective are here two dimensions or two aspects of one and the same metaphysical structure of Reality.

I have already explained the subjective *fanâ'* and *baqâ'*. As to the objective *fanâ'*, it is also known as the ontological stage of "unification" (*jam'*, meaning literally "gathering" or "all-things-being-put-together"), while the objective *baqâ'* is called the stage of the unification of unification (*jam' al-jam'*), "separation after unification" (*farq ba'd al-jam'*), or "second separation" (*farq thânî*). I shall first explain what is really meant by these technical terms.[13]

The word "separation" (*farq*) primarily refers to the common-sense view of reality. Before we subjectively attain to the stage of *fanâ'* we naturally tend to separate the Absolute from the phenomenal world. The phenomenal world is the realm of relativity, a world where nothing is absolute, where all things are observed to be impermanent, transient, and constantly changing. This is the kind of observation which plays an exceedingly important role in Buddhism as the principle of universal impermanence. The world of multiplicity, be it remarked, is a realm where our senses and reason fulfil their normal functions.

Over against this plane of relativity and impermanence, the Absolute is posited as something essentially different from the former, as something which absolutely transcends the impermanent world. Reality is thus divided up into two completely different sections. This dichotomy is called "separation" (*farq*). The empirical view of reality is called "separation" also because in this view all things are separated from one another by essential demarcations. A mountain is a mountain. It is not, it cannot be, a river. Mountain and river are essentially different from one another.

The world of being appears in a completely different light when looked at through the eyes of one who has reached the subjective state of *fanâ'*. The essential demarcations separating one thing from another, are no longer here. Multiplicity is no longer observable. This comes from the fact that since there is no ego-consciousness left, that is to say, since there is no epistemological subject to see things, there are naturally no objects to be seen. As all psychological commotions and agitations become reduced to the point of nothingness in the experience of *fanâ'*, the ontological commotion that has hitherto characterized the external world calms down into an absolute Stillness. As the limitation of the ego disappears on the side of the subject, all the phenomenal limitations of things in the objective world disappear from the scene, and there remains only the absolute Unity of Reality in its purity as an absolute Awareness prior to its bifurcation into subject and object. This stage is called in Islam "gathering" (*jam'*) because it "gathers" together all the things that constitute the phenomenal world and brings them back to their original indiscrimination. In theological terminology this is said to be the stage at which the believer witnesses God, and God alone, without seeing any creature. It is also known as the stage of "God was, and there was nothing else". This stage would correspond to what the Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzŭ calls "chaos" (*hun tun*).[14]

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[13] The following description is an elaboration of what Lâhîjî says about these technical terms in his Commentary on *Gulshan-e Râz* (*op. cit.*, pp. 26–27).

The next stage which is the ultimate and highest is that of *baqâ'*. Subjectively, this is the stage at which man regains his phenomenal consciousness after having experienced the existential annihilation of its own self. The mind that has completely stopped working at the previous stage resumes its normal cognitive activity. Corresponding to this subjective rebirth, the phenomenal world also takes its rise again. The world once more unfolds itself before the man's eyes in the form of the surging waves of multiplicity. The things that have been "gathered" up into unity are again separated from one another as so many different entities. This is why the stage is called "separation after unification" or the "second separation".

There is, however, an important difference between the first and the second "separation". In the "first separation", which is the pre-*fanâ'* stage both subjectively and objectively, the innumerable things were definitely separated from one another, each being observed only as an independent, self-subsistent entity. And, as such, they are made to stand opposed to the Absolute, again as two entirely different ontological domains between which there is no internal relationship. At the stage of the "second separation", too, all phenomenal things are unmistakably distinguished from one another through each one of them having its own essential demarcation which is peculiar to itself. And this ontological dimension of Multiplicity *qua* Multiplicity is also unmistakably differentiated from the dimension of Unity.

The "second separation", however, is not sheer Multiplicity, because at this stage all the essential demarcations of the things, although they are clearly observable, are known to be nothing other than so many self-determinations of the absolute Unity itself. And since the "unity" annihilates in its own purity all ontological differences, the whole world of being is here found to be ultimately reducible to one single metaphysical root. From such a viewpoint, what can be said to exist in the real sense of the word is nothing but this unique metaphysical root of all things. In this sense the Multiplicity which is observable here is Unity. The only important point is that "unity" at this stage is unity with inner articulations. And this stage is called "gathering of gathering" (*jam' al-jam'*) for the very reason that the phenomenal things that have all been once reduced to the absolute unity of total annihilation at the stage of *fanâ'*, i.e. the primary "gathering", are again "separated" and then again "gathered" together in this new vision of Unity.

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[14] For an analysis of the Taoist concept of "chaos" see my Eranos Lecture: The *Absolute and the Perfect Man in Taoism* (Eranos Jahrbuch XXXVI), Zürich, 1967, pp. 398–411.

Thus the difference from this particular point of view between the Unity at the stage of *fanâ'* i.e. "gathering" and the Unity at the stage of *baqâ'* or "gathering of gathering" consists in the fact that the Unity at the stage of *fanâ'* is a simple, absolute Unity without even inner articulation, while the Unity seen at the stage of the "gathering of gathering" is an internally articulated Unity. And Reality as observed at this latter stage is philosophically a *coincidentia oppositorum* in the sense that Unity is Multiplicity and Multiplicity is Unity. It is based on the vision of Unity in the very midst of Multiplicity and Multiplicity in the very midst of Unity. For as Lâhîjî remarks, Unity or the Absolute here serves as a mirror reflecting all phenomenal things, while Multiplicity or the phenomenal things fulfil the function of a countless number of mirrors, each reflecting in its own way the same Absolute——a metaphor which is singularly similar to the Buddhist image of the moon reflected in a number of different bodies of water, the moon itself ever remaining in its original unity despite the fact that it is split up into many different moons as reflections.15)

He who has reached this stage is known in the tradition of Islamic philosophy as a "man of two eyes" (*dhu al-'aynayn*). He is a man who, with his right eye, sees Unity, i.e. absolute Reality, and nothing but Unity, while with his left eye he sees Multiplicity, i.e. the world of phenomenal things. What is more important about this type of man is that, in addition to his simultaneous vision of Unity and Multiplicity, he knows that these two are ultimately one and the same thing. Such being the case, he recognizes in every one of the actually existent things two different aspects: the aspect of *fanâ'* and the aspect of *baqâ'*. It goes without saying that the terms *fanâ'* and *baqâ'* are here taken in the ontological sense, although they are not unrelated to the subjective experience known respectively by

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15) The same metaphor is very frequently used for a similar purpose in Oriental philosophy. Thus, to give one more example, Chu Tzŭ, (1130-1200), famous Confucian philosopher of the Sung dynasty, remarks, on the problem of how the Supreme Ultimate (*t'ai chi*) is related to its manifestations in the physical world, that the Supreme Ultimate in relation to Multiplicity is just like the moon which is reflected in many rivers and lakes and is visible everywhere without being really divided up into many. (*Cf. Chu Tzŭ Yü Lei*, Book 94).

the same appellations.

The aspect of *fanâ'* in a thing is the aspect in which it is considered as something determined, individualized, and essentially delimited. In this aspect every existent thing is properly non-existent, a "nothing". For the "existence" it seems to possess is in reality a borrowed existence; in itself it is unreal (*bâṭil*) and subsists on the ground of Nothingness.

The aspect of *baqâ'*, on the contrary, is the aspect in which the same thing is considered as a reality in the sense of a determined form of the Absolute, a phenomenal form in which the Absolute manifests itself. In this aspect, nothing in the world of being is unreal.

Every concretely existent thing is a peculiar combination of these negative and positive aspects, a place of encounter between the temporal and the eternal, between the finite and infinite, between the relative and the absolute. And the combination of these two aspects produces the concept of a "possible" (*mumkin*) thing. Contrary to the ordinary notion of ontological "possibility", a "possible" thing is not a purely relative and finite thing. As a locus of divine self-manifestation (*tajallî*), it has another aspect which directly connects it with absolute Reality. In every single thing, be it the meanest imaginable thing, the mystic-philosopher recognizes a determined self-manifestation of the Absolute.

This metaphysical situation is described by Maḥmûd Shabastarî in his *Gulshan-e Râz* through a combination of contradictory terms as "bright night amidst the dark daylight" (*shab-e roushan miyân-e rûz-e târîk*).16) The "bright night" in this expression refers to the peculiar structure of Reality as it discloses itself at the stage of the subjective and objective *fanâ'* in which one witnesses the annihilation of all outward manifestations of Reality. It is "night" because at this stage nothing is discernible; all things have lost their proper colors and forms and sunk into the darkness of the original indiscrimination. This metaphysical "night", however, is said to be "bright" because absolute Reality in itself——that is, apart from all considerations of the limitations set by the very structure of our relative consciousness——is essentially luminous, illuminating its own self as well as all others.

The second half of the above expression reads "amidst the dark daylight". This means, first of all, that this absolute Unity is revealing itself in the very midst of Multiplicity, in the form of determined, relative things. In this sense and in this form, the absolute Reality is clearly visible in the external world, just as everything is visible in the daylight. However, the daylight in which all these things are revealed to our eyes is but a phenomenal daylight. The things that appear in it are in themselves of the nature of darkness and non-existence. This

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16) *Gulshan-e Râz* (*op. cit.*), v. 127, p. 100. Cf. Lâhîjî's Commentary, p. 101.

is why the "daylight" is said to be "dark".

These two contradictory aspects of Reality, namely, light and darkness, which are said to be observable in everything, bring us directly to the question: In what sense and to what degree are the phenomenal things real? The problem of the "reality" or "unreality" of the phenomenal world is indeed a crucial point in Islamic philosophy which definitely divides the thinkers into different classes constituting among themselves a kind of spiritual hierarchy. Ḥaydar Âmulî in this connection proposes a triple division: (1) the common people (*'awâmm*) or men of reason (*dhawu al-'aql*), (2) the privileged people (*khawâṣṣ*) or men of intuition (*dhawu al-'ayn*), and (3) the privileged of all privileged people (*khawâṣṣ al-khawâṣṣ*) or men of reason and intuition (*dhawu al-'aql wa-al-'ayn*).17)

The lowest stage is represented by those of the first class who do not see except Multiplicity. They are those who are firmly convinced that the things as they perceive them in this world are the sole reality, there being nothing beyond or behind it. From the viewpoint of a real mystic-philosopher, the eyes of these people are veiled by the phenomenal forms of Multiplicity from the view of Unity that underlies them. The phenomenal things, instead of disclosing, by their very mode of existence, Something that manifests itself through them, function as impenetrable veils obstructing the sight of that self-revealing Something. This situation is often compared in Islamic philosophy to the state of those who are looking at images reflected in a mirror without being at all aware of the existence of the mirror. In this metaphor the mirror symbolizes absolute Reality, and the images reflected in it the phenomenal things. Objectively speaking, even the people of this type are perceiving the images on the surface of the mirror. There would be no image perceivable without the mirror. But subjectively they believe the images to be real and self-subsistent things. The metaphor of the mirror happens to be one of those important metaphors that recurr in Islamic philosophy on many different occasions. Another metaphor of this nature is the sea surging in waves, which, in the particular metaphysical context in which we are actually interested, indicates that the people notice only the rolling waves forgetting the fact that the waves are nothing but outward forms assumed by the sea. Describing bow phenomenal Multiplicity veils and conceals the underlying Unity of Reality, Jâmî says:18)

Existence is a sea, with waves constantly raging,
Of the sea the common people perceive nothing but the waves.

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17) cf. *Jâmi' al-Asrâr* (*op. cit.*), p. 113, p. 591.
18) *Lawâ'iḥ* (*op. cit.*), p. 61.

Behold how out of the depth of the sea there appear innumerable waves,
On the surface of the sea, while the sea remains concealed in the waves.

I would take this opportunity to point out that Muslim philosophers tend to use metaphors and similes in metaphysics, particularly in the explanation of the seemingly self-contradictory relation between Unity and Multiplicity, or absolute Reality and the phenomenal things. The frequent use of metaphors in metaphysics is one of the characteristic marks of Islamic philosophy, or indeed we might say of Oriental philosophy in general. It must not be taken as a poetic ornament. A cognitive function is definitely assigned to the use of metaphors.[19]

This may rightly remind us of Wittgenstein's understanding of the concept of "seeing as". According to Wittgenstein, "seeing as" involves a technique in a way which normal "seeing" does not. Thus one might well be able to "see" but not be able to "see as". He call this latter case "aspect-blindness".[20]

In the same way, to discover an appropriate metaphor in the high domain of metaphysics is for Muslim philosophers a peculiar way of thinking, a mode of cognition, for it means discovering some subtle features in the metaphysical structure of Realiy, an aspect which, no matter how self-evident it may be as a fact of transcendental Awareness, is so subtle and evasive at the level of discursive thinking that human intellect would otherwise be unable to take hold of it.

This said, we shall continue our consideration of the various stages in metaphysical cognition. Those of the common people who perceive nothing beyond Multiplicity and for whom even the word "phenomenon" does not make real sense have been said to represent the lowest stage in the hierarchy. A stage higher than this is reached, still within the confines of the common people, by those who recognize something beyond the phenomenal. This Something-beyond is the Absolute——or in popular terminology God——which is conceived as the Transcendent. God is here represented as an absolute Other which is essentially cut off from the phenomenal world. There is, in this conception, no inner connection between God and the world. There is between them only an external relationship like creation and domination. Such people are known in Islam as "men of externality" (*ahl-e ẓâhir*), i.e. those who see only the exterior surface of Reality. Their eyes are said to be afflicted with a disease preventing them from seeing the true structure of Reality. The reference is to a disease or deformity peculiar to the eye called *ḥawal*. He who is infected with it always has a double image of whatever he sees. One single object appears to his eyes as two different things.

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[19] On the distinction between the ornamental and the cognitive function of metaphors, see Marcus B. Hester: *The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor*, The Hague-Paris, 1967, Introduction.

[20] Wittgenstein: *Investigations*, p. 213.

The second class of people according to the above-given division, are those who have attained to an immediate vision of absolute Reality in the experience of *fanâ'*, both in the subjective and the objective sense, that is, the total annihilation of the ego and correspondingly of all the phenomenal things that constitute the external, objective world. But the people of this class just stop at this stage and do not go any further. To state the situation in more concrete terms, these people are aware only of absolute Unity. They see everywhere Unity, nothing else. The whole world in their view has turned into absolute Unity with no articulation and determination.

Certainly, when these people come back immediately from the experience of *fanâ'* to their normal consciousness, Multiplicity does again become visible. But the phenomenal world is simply discarded as an illusion. In their view, the world of Multiplicity has no metaphysical or ontological value because it is essentially unreal. The external objects are not "existent" in the real sense of the word. They are just floating gossamers, sheer illusions backed by no corresponding realities. Such a view is in its fundamental structure identical with the Vedantic view of the phenomenal world in its popular understanding, in which the notorious word *mâyâ* is taken to mean sheer illusion or illusion-producing principle.

Just as this popular understanding does gross injustice to the authentic world-view of Vedanta philosophy, the exclusive emphasis on the Absolute to the irreparable detriment of the phenomenal world in Islamic metaphysics fatally distorts the authentic view of its representatives. It is in this sense that Ḥaydar Âmulî accuses Ismailism of disbelief and heresy.[21]

From the viewpoint of the highest mystic-philosopher, even the people of this type, when they experience the vision of the Absolute, are actually doing nothing but perceiving the Absolute as it is reflected in the phenomenal things. But dazzled by the excess of light issuing forth from the Absolute, they are not aware of the phenomenal things in which it is reflected. Just as, in the case of the people of the first class, the Absolute served as the mirror reflecting upon its polished surface all the phenomenal things, so in the present case the phenomenal things serve as mirrors reflecting the Absolute. In either case, man usually takes notice of the images in the mirror, and the mirror itself remains unnoticed.

It is at the third stage, that is, at the stage of the "privileged of all privileged people" that the relation between the Absolute and the phenomenal world is correctly grasped as the *coincidentia oppositorum* of Unity and Multiplicity. It is, moreover, in this region that the cognitive value of metaphorical thinking to which reference has been made earlier is most profusedly displayed.

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[21] *Jâmi' al-Asrâr* (*op. cit.*), p. 217, p. 221.

Those whose consciousness has been raised to the height of *baqâ'* after the experience of *fanâ'*, experience the relation between the Absolute and the phenomenal as the *coincidentia oppositorum* of Unity and Multiplicity. Theologically speaking, they are those who are able to see God in the creature and the creature in God. They can see both the mirror and the images that are reflected in it, God and the creature at this stage alternately serving as both the mirror and the image. The one selfsame "existence" is seen at once to be God and the creature, or Absolute Reality and the phenomenal world, Unity and Multiplicity.

The sight of the Multiplicity of phenomenal things does not obstruct the sight of the pure Unity of ultimate Reality. Nor does the sight of Unity stand in the way of the appearance of Multiplicity.[22] On the contrary, the two complement each other in disclosing the pure structure of Reality. For they are the two essential aspects of Reality, Unity representing the aspect of "absoluteness" (*iṭlâq*) or "comprehensive contraction" (*ijmâl*), and Multiplicity the aspect of "determination" (*taqyîd*) or "concrete expansion" (*tafṣîl*). Unless we grasp in this way Unity and Multiplicity in a single act of cognition we are not having a whole integral view of Reality as it really is. Ḥaydar Âmulî calls such a simultaneous intuition of the two aspects of Reality the "unification of existence" (*tawḥîd wujûdî*) and regards it as the sole authentic philosophical counterpart of religious monotheism.[23] The "unification of existence" thus understood consists in a fundamental intuition of the one single reality of "existence" in everything without exception. In the Absolute, which corresponds theologically to God, it sees "existence" in its absolute purity and unconditionality, while in the things of the phenomenal world it recognizes the concrete differentiations of the selfsame reality of "existence" in accordance with its own inner articulations. Philosophically this is the position generally known as "oneness of existence" (*waḥdat al-wujûd*), which is an idea of central importance going back to Ibn 'Arabî.

The particular type of metaphysics based on this kind of existential intuition begins with the statement that the Absolute only is real, that the Absolute is the sole reality, and that, consequently, nothing else is real. The differentiated world of Multiplicity is therefore essentially "non-existent" (*'adam*). To this initial statement, however, is immediately added another; namely, that it does not in any way imply that the differentiated world is a void, an illusion, or sheer nothing. The ontological status of the phenomenal things is rather that of relations, that is, the various and variegated relational forms of the Absolute itself. In this sense,

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22) *Ibid.*, p. 113.

23) *Ibid.*, pp. 113–115.

and in this sense only, they are all real.

The rise of the phenomenal world as we actually observe it, is due primarily to two seemingly different causes which are in reality perfectly co-ordinated with each other: one metaphysical, another epistemological. Metaphysically or ontologically, the phenomenal world arises before our eyes because the Absolute has in itself essential, internal articulations that are called *shu'ûn* (sg. *sha'n*) meaning literally "affairs", i.e. internal modes of being. They are also called existential "perfections" (*kamâlât*), a conception similar in an important and significant way to Lao Tzŭ's idea of "virtues" (*tê*) in relation to the way (*tao*).[24] These internal articulations naturally call for their own externalization. As a consequence, "existence" spreads itself out in myriads of self-determinations.

Epistemologically, on the other hand, this act of self-determination on the part of Reality is due to the inherent limitations of the finite human consciousness. The Absolute or pure "existence" in itself is sheer Unity. The Absolute remains in its original Unity in no matter how many different forms it may manifest itself. In this sense the world of Multiplicity is essentially of the very nature of the Absolute; it is the Absolute itself. But the original Unity of the Absolute appears to the finite human consciousness as differentiated into countless finite things because of the finitude of the consciousness. The phenomenal world is the Absolute that has hidden its real formless form under the apparent forms which are caused by the very limitations inherent in the epistemological faculties of man.

The process here described of the appearance of the originally undifferentiated metaphysical Unity in many different forms is called in Islamic philosophy the "self-manifestation" (*tajallî*) of "existence". The conception of the *tajallî* is structurally identical with the Vedantic conception of *adhyâsa* or "superimposition", according to which the originally undivided Unity of pure *nirguṇa Brahman* or the absolutely unconditioned Absolute appears divided because of the different "names and forms" (*nâma-rûpa*) that are imposed upon the Absolute by "ignorance" (*avidyâ*). It is remarkable, from the viewpoint of comparison between Islamic philosophy and Vedanta that *avidyâ* which, subjectively, is the human "ignorance" of the true reality of things, is, objectively, exactly the same thing as *mâyâ* which is the self-conditioning power inherent in Brahman itself. The "names and forms" that are said to be superimposed upon the Absolute by *avidyâ* would correspond to the Islamic concept of "quiddities" (*mâhîyât*, sg. *mâhîyah*) which are nothing other than the externalized forms of the Divine "names and attributes" (*asmâ' wa-ṣifât*). And the Vedantic *mâyâ* as the self-determining power of the Absolute would find its exact Islamic counterpart in the concept of the Divine "existential mercy"

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[24] Cf. my *The Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism*, II, Tokyo, 1967, pp. 122–123.

(*raḥmah wujûdîyah*).

However, even at the stage of self-manifestation, the structure of Reality as seen through the eyes of a real mystic-philosopher looks diametrically opposed to the same Reality as it appears to the relative consciousness of an ordinary man. For in the eyes of an ordinary man representing the common-sense view of things, the phenomena are the visible and manifest while the Absolute is the hidden. But in the unconditioned consciousness of a real mystic-philosopher, it is always and everywhere the Absolute that is manifest while the phenomena remain in the background.

This peculiar structure of Reality in its *tajallî*-aspect is due to what I have repeatedly pointed out in the course of this lecture; namely, that the differentiated world of phenomena is not self-subsistently real. No phenomenal thing has in itself a real ontological core. The idea corresponds to the celebrated Buddhist denial of *svabhâva* or "self-nature" to anything in the world. In this sense, the philosophical standpoint of the school of the "oneness" of existence" (*waḥdat al-wujûd*) is most obviously anti-essentialism. All so-called "essences" or "quiddities" are reduced to the position of the fictitious. The utmost degree of reality recognized to them is that of "borrowed existence". That is to say, the "quiddities" exist because they happen to be so many intrinsic modifications and determinations of the Absolute which alone can be said to exist in the fullest sense of the word.

In reference to the ontological status of the phenomenal world and its relation to the Absolute the Muslim philosophers here proposed a number of illuminating metaphors. In view of the above-mentioned importance of metaphorical thinking in Islam I shall give here a few of them. Thus Maḥmûd Shabastarî[25] says in the *Gulshan-e Râz*:

> The appearance of all things "other" (than the Absolute) is due to your imagination (i.e. the structure of human cognition),
> Just as a swiftly turning point appears as a circle.

Concerning these verses Lâhîjî makes the following observation. The appearance of the world of Multiplicity as something "other" than the Absolute is due to the working of the faculty of imagination which is based on sense perception and which is by nature unable to go beyond the phenomenal surface of the things. In truth, there is solely one single Reality manifesting itself in a myriad of different forms. But in this domain sense perception is utterly untrustworthy. For it is liable to see a mirage as something really existent when it is in truth non-existent. It sees drops of rain falling from the sky as straight lines. A man sitting in a boat tends to think that the shore is moving while the ship stands still.[26] When in the dark a firebrand is turned very swiftly, we naturally perceive a burning circle. What is really existent in this case is the firebrand as a single point of fire. But the swift circular movement makes the point of fire appear as a circle of light. Such, Lâhîjî argues, is the relation between the Absolute whose state of Unity is comparable to a point of fire and the world of Multiplicity which in its essential constitution resembles the circle produced by the movement of the point.[27] In other words, the phenomenal world is a trace left behind by the incessant creative acting of the Absolute.

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[25] *Gulshan-e Râz* (*op. cit.*), v. 15, p. 19.

The philosophical problem here is the ontological status of the circle of light. Evidently the circle does not "exist" in the fullest sense of the word. It is in itself false and unreal. It is equally evident, however, that the circle cannot be said to be sheer nothing. It does exist in a certain sense. It *is* real as far as it appears to our consciousness and also as far as it is produced by the point of fire which is really existent on the empirical level of our experience. The ontological status of all phenomenal things that are observable in this world is essentially of such a nature.

Another interesting metaphor that has been proposed by Muslim philosophers is that of ink and different letters written with it.[28] Letters written with ink do not *really* exist *qua* letters. For the letters are but various forms to which meanings have been assigned through convention. What really and concretely exists is nothing but ink. The "existence" of the letters is in truth no other than the "existence" of the ink which is the sole, unique reality that unfolds itself in many forms of self-modification. One has to cultivate, first of all, the eye to see the selfsame reality of ink in all letters, and then to see the letters as so many intrinsic modifications of the ink.

The next metaphor——that of the sea and waves——is probably more im-

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26) To be compared with what the Zen master Dôgen says about the same situation in his *Shô Bô Gen Zô* (III *Gen Jô Kô An*): "If a man on board a ship turns his eyes toward the shore, he erroneously thinks that it is the shore that is moving. But if he examines his ship, he realizes that it is the ship that is moving on. Just in a similar way, if man forms for himself a false view of his own ego and considers on that basis the things in the world, he is liable to have a mistaken view of his own mind-nature as if it were a self-subsistent entity. If, however, he comes to know the truth of the matter through immediate experience (corresponding to the experience of *fanâ'* in Islam) and goes back to the very source of all things (corresponding to the Islamic idea of 'existence' in its original state of Unity), he will clearly notice that the ten thousand things (i.e. all phenomenal things) are ego-less (i.e. have no self-subsistence)".

27) *Sharḥ-e Gulshan-e Râz* (*op. cit.*), p. 19.

28) Cf. Ḥaydar Âmulî: *Jâmi' al-Asrâr* (*op. cit*), pp. 106–107.

portant in that, firstly, it is shared by a number of non-Islamic philosophical systems of the East and is, therefore, apt to disclose one of the most basic common patterns of thinking in the East; and that, secondly, it draws attention to an extremely important point that has not been made clear by the preceeding metaphors; namely, that the Absolute in so far as it is the Absolute cannot really dispense with the phenomenal world, just as the "existence" of the phenomenal world is inconceivable except on the basis of the "existence" of the Absolute, or more properly, the "existence" which *is* the Absolute itself.

Of course, the Absolute can be conceived by the intellect as being beyond all determinations, and as we have seen earlier, it can even be intuited as such, in its eternal Unity and absolute unconditionality. We can go even a step further and conceive it as something beyond the condition of unconditionality itself.[29]

But such a view of the Absolute is an event that takes place only in our consciousness. In the realm of extra-mental reality, the Absolute cannot even for a single moment remain without manifesting itself.

As Ḥaydar Âmulî says,[30] "the sea, as long as it is the sea, cannot separate itself from the waves; nor can the waves subsist independently of the sea. Moreover, when the sea appears in the form of a wave, the form cannot but be different from the form of another wave, for it is absolutely impossible for two waves to appear in one and the same place under one single form".

Ḥaydar Âmulî recognizes in this peculiar relationship between the sea and the waves an exact image of the ontological relationship between the stage of undifferentiated "existence" and the stage of the differentiated world. He remarks:[31] "Know that absolute existence or God is like a limitless ocean, while the determined things and individual existents are like innumerable waves or rivers. Just as the waves and rivers are nothing other than the unfolding of the sea according to the forms required by its own perfections which it possesses *qua* water as well as by its own peculiarities which it possesses *qua* sea, so are the determined existents nothing other than the unfolding of absolute existence under those forms that are required by its own essential perfections as well as by its peculiarities belonging to it as its inner articulations".

"Further, the waves and rivers are *not* the sea in one respect, while in another they are the same thing as the sea. In fact, the waves and rivers are different from the sea in respect of their being determined and particular. But they are not different from the sea in respect of their own essence and reality, namely, from the point of view of their being pure water. In exactly the same way, the determined existents are different from the Absolute in their being determined and conditioned, but they are not different from it in respect of their own essence and reality which is pure existence. For from this latter viewpoint, they are all nothing other than existence itself ".

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[29] This is known as the stage at which "existence" is conceived as *lâ bi-sharṭ maqsamî*, i.e. an absolute unconditionality in which "existence" is conceived as not being determined even by the quality of being-unconditional. The stage corresponds to what Lao Tzŭ calls the "Mystery of Mysteries" (*hsüan chih yu hsüan*) and what Chuang Tzŭ designates by the repetition of the word *wu* or "non-existence", i.e. *wu wu* meaning "non-non-existence".

[30] *Jâmi' al-Asrâr* (*op. cit.*), pp. 161–162.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 206–207.

It is interesting that Ḥaydar Âmulî goes on to analyze this ontological situation from a kind of semantic point of view. He says:(32) " The sea, when it is determined by the form of the wave, is called waves. The selfsame water, when determined by the form of the river, is called a river, and when determined by the form of the brook, is called a brook. In the same way it is called rain, snow, ice, etc.. In reality, however, there is absolutely nothing but sea or water, for the wave, river, brook, etc. are merely names indicating the sea. In truth (i.e. in its absolutely unconditioned reality) it bears no name; there is nothing whatsoever to indicate it. No, it is a matter of sheer linguistic convention even to designate it by the word *sea* itself ". And he adds that exactly the same is true of " existence " or " reality ".

There are still other famous metaphors such as that of the mirror and the image, and that of one and the numbers which are formed by the repetition of one. All of them are important in that each one throws light on some peculiar aspect of the relation between Unity and Multiplicity which is not clearly revealed by others. But for the particular purposes of the present paper, I think, enough have already been given.

The most important conclusion to be drawn from a careful consideration of the metaphors that have just been given is that there are recognizable in the metaphysical Reality or the Absolute itself two different dimensions. In the first of these dimensions, which is metaphysically the ultimate stage of Reality, the Absolute is the Absolute in its absoluteness, that is, in its absolute indetermination. It corresponds to the Vedantic concept of the *parabrahman*, the " Supreme Brahman ", and to the neo-Confucian idea of the *wu chi*, the " Ultimateless ". Both in Vedanta and Islam, the Absolute at this supreme stage is not even God, for after all " God " is but a determination of the Absolute, in so far at least as it differentiates the Absolute from the world of creation.

In the second of the two domains, the Absolute is still the Absolute, but it is the Absolute in relation to the world. It is the Absolute considered as the ultimate source of the phenomenal world, as Something which reveals itself in the form of

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32) *Ibid.*, pp. 207–209.

Multiplicity. It is only at this stage that the name God——Allâh in Islam——becomes applicable to the Absolute. It is the stage of the *parameshvara,* the supreme Lord, in Vedanta, and in the neo-Confucian world-view the position of the *t'ai chi,* the "Supreme Ultimate" which is no other than the *wu chi,* the "Ultimate of Nothingness" as an eternal principle of creativity.

Such is the position generally known as "oneness of existence" (*waḥdat al-wujûd*) which exercised a tremendous influence on the formative process of the philosophic as well as poetic mentality of the Muslim Iranians, and whose basic structure I wanted to explain to you in this paper. It will be clear by now that it is a serious mistake to consider——as it has often been done——this position as pure monism or even as "existential monism". For it has evidently an element of dualism in the sense that it recognizes two different dimensions of reality in the metaphysical structure of the Absolute. Nor is it of course right to regard it as dualism, for the two different dimensions of reality are *ultimately,* i.e. in the form of *coincidentia oppositorum,* one and the same thing. The "oneness of existence" is neither monism nor dualism. As a metaphysical vision of Reality based on a peculiar existential experience which consists in seeing Unity in Multiplicity and Multiplicity in Unity, it is something far more subtle and dynamic than philosophical monism or dualism.

It is interesting to observe, moreover, that such a view of Reality, considered as a bare structure, is not at all exclusively Iranian. It is, on the contrary, commonly shared more or less by many of the major philosophical schools of the East. The important point is that this basic common structure is variously colored in such a way that each school or system differs from others by the emphasis it places on certain particular aspects of the structure and also by the degree to which it goes in dwelling upon this or that particular major concept.

Now, by further elaborating the conceptual analysis of the basic structure, taking into consideration at the same time the major differences which are found between various systems, we might hopefully arrive at a comprehensive view of at least one of the most important types of Oriental philosophy which may further be fruitfully compared with a similar type of philosophy in the West. It is my personal conviction that a real, deep, philosophical understanding between the East and West becomes possible only on the basis of a number of concrete research works of this nature conducted in various fields of philosophy both Western and Eastern.

II

EXISTENTIALISM EAST AND WEST

EXISTENTIALISM EAST AND WEST

The main subject of my paper is a comparative consideration of the contemporary existentialism of the West as represented by Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre on the one hand, and on the other, the *waḥdat al-wujûd* type of philosophy as represented by Sabzawârî and his predecessors in Iran.

At first glance one might get the impression that the very formulation of this subject, putting European existentialists like Heidegger and Sartre and Iranian theosophers like Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî together into one single arena of comparison, is a bit far-fetched and unnatural. One might reasonably doubt whether it is justifiable at all to treat these thinkers of the East and West together under the title of existentialism on the sole ground that the representatives of the two schools of thought happen to be using one and the same word "existence" as the central key-term of their philosophical systems.

One might go a step further and say that there is hardly any significant relationship to be found between the two. Certainly, the key-term of the *waḥdat al-wujûd* philosophy is *wujûd*, an Arabic word which exactly corresponds to the English word *existence* (*Existenz* in German, *existence* in French). But we would commit a grave mistake if, on the basis of this linguistic coincidence alone, we should call the position of the Iranian philosophers "existentialism" and then put it side by side with the existentialism of Heidegger and Sartre, as if they were two variants of one single basic philosophical trend. For it might well be a case of *ishtirâk-e lafẓî*.[1] It might be that Western existentialism and Iranian existentialism have very little in common beyond the word. We might well be using the term "existentialism"——and consequently the word "existence" itself——in two different senses, without being aware of the semantic confusion we ourselves might be creating. I shall, in what follows, try to show that such is in reality not the case.

In so doing, however, I must make it clear at the outset that I do not deny the existence of a wide gap separating Western existentialism and Iranian existentialism from one another. The gap is too obvious to remain unnoticed by anybody.

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[1] *Ishtirâk(-e) lafẓî* means "homonymy", i.e. a case in which one single word is in reality two different words in terms of what they mean.

The contemporary existentialism of the West is undoubtedly a product of this particular historical epoch of ours which is characteristically dominated by physical science and its human adaptation, i.e. technology. The technological agglomeration of the life-order in highly industrialized modern society in the West has thrown man into an incurable isolation. The life-order created by technology is in reality a disorder in the sense that it is a vast and elaborate system of meaninglessness or absurdity. Man is forced to live in a huge dehumanized mechanism whose meaning he himself does not understand and, which, moreover, constitutes a standing menace to his individuality and personality. In such a situation, modern man necessarily becomes alienated from Nature and from his own self.

Contemporary Western existentialism is a philosophy of the alienated man who is so typically represented by Meursault, the hero of the famous novel of Albert Camus, *Étranger*. It is no wonder that, in such a situation, the kind of "existence" which forms the main concern of the modern existentialist is not existence in general; it is his *own* individual, personal existence, nothing else. Existence here is always *my* existence primarily. Then it is *your* existence, *his* or *her* existence. Existentialism in this sense is a philosophical world-view which takes its start from, and evolves around, *this* particular existence which is irreducibly mine, the existence which I myself am doomed to live whether I like it or not.

Thus it comes about that Western existentialism formulates itself through such characteristic key-terms as "uneasiness", "anxiety", "care", "project", "death", "freedom" etc.. And its philosophizing, as is exemplified by the works of the later Heidegger, naturally tends to end up by becoming a lyrical expression of the human pathos in the very midst of non-human, inhuman factual surroundings.

Alongside of this type of philosophy, the existentialism of the Iranian thinkers clothed in the armor of an intricate system of abstract concepts might seem at first sight quite colorless, bleak and chilly. Instead of the note of passion and lyricism which is so characteristic of the German and French existentialists, we see here an abstract and logical thinking being calmly and systematically developed in a rarefied air of reason and intellect, having nothing to do with the mundane problems of daily life. The central problem here is not *my* or *your* personal existence. It is existence in general. It is existence as something supra-personal, universal, and therefore, it might seem, essentially of an abstract nature. Thus we might easily be led to the conclusion that the "existence" which the Western existentialists talk about is completely different from what is meant by the word *wujûd* in the Iranian philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujûd*.

However, before we come to any hasty conclusion concerning this problem, we must consider the very important fact that, in spite of all these and still other outward differences between the Western and the Eastern existentialism, the two schools agree with each other on one essential point which concerns the deepest stratum of existential experience itself. In order to notice this point, we have only to apply an elementary phenomenological procedure of *epochē* to what the representative thinkers of these two schools have developed in a theoretical form.

Let us, for this purpose, remove from Western existentialism all the secondary factors, by putting them phenomenologically between parentheses, and try to bring out the structure of the most fundamental vision or experience of "existence". Let us try to break, on the other hand, the seemingly unbreakable shell of conceptualization that covers the entire surface of the metaphysics of a Sabzawârî, and to penetrate into the depth of the mystical or *'irfânî* experience itself on which is based the *waḥdat al-wujûd* type of philosophizing. Then we shall notice with amazement how close these two kinds of philosophy are to each other in their most basic structure. For it will become evident to us that both go back to one and the same root experience, or primary vision, of the reality of existence. This primary vision is known in Islam as *aṣâlat al-wujûd*, i.e. the "fundamental reality of existence". It constitutes the very core of the whole system of Sabzawârî's metaphysics. Let me first elucidate this concept in plain language, so that we might have an appropriate starting-point for the discussion of our problem.

We are living in this world surrounded by an infinite number of things. There are tables and chairs. There are mountains, valleys, stones, and trees. Each one of these things which surround us is, philosophically or ontologically, called *maujûd*, i.e. "existent", "that-which-is", "that-which-exists", or *das Seiende* in the terminology of Heidegger. Aristotelian metaphysics is precisely a philosophy of "things" understood in this sense. It stands on the assumption that tables, stones, mountains and trees *are* the ultimately real things. They are real reality, they are the pre-eminently real. This is what is technically known as the Aristotelian concept of "primary substances". And this view of "things" as primary substances accords very well with our common sense. For our common sense, too, naturally tends to consider the concrete individual things that surround us as ultimately real.

The metaphysics of Aristotle has exercised a tremendous influence on the historical formation of ontology, whether Western or Islamic, through medieval scholasticism down to modern times. It is precisely this Aristotelian tradition of ontology that the existentialists of both East and West stand in opposition to. Thus Heidegger in our days reproaches openly and with great emphasis the whole ontological tradition of the West for having been exclusively concerned with "that-which-is", *das Seiende, maujûd*, totally forgetting the crucial importance to be attached to the small verb *is* which appears in the phrase "that-which-is". What should be the central theme of ontology, he argues, is not "that-which-is" but rather the verb "is", *das Sein*, which forms seemingly quite an insignificant part of this phrase.

Fundamentally of the same nature is the position taken by Jean-Paul Sartre with regard to the true significance of the verb "be". "Existence" is a technical term of philosophy. In ordinary speech we express the same idea by the verb "be". We say for example: "The sky is blue". But this verb *is* is such a tiny word. It is a word with an extremely impoverished semantic content, so impoverished indeed that it has almost no substantial meaning of its own. When we say "The sky is blue", the verb *is* plays no other role than connecting the predicate (blue) with the subject (sky). Rationally we may know that the verb "to be" means "to exist". But the "existence" we vaguely think of, or imagine behind the word "be" is, as Sartre points out, almost nothing: "My head is empty", as he says.

But in reality, Sartre goes on to assert, behind this seemingly innocent and insignificant verb *is* appearing in "The sky is blue", there is hidden the whole plenitude of existence. But man ordinarily is not at all aware of the fact. This lack of awareness is clearly shown by the very form of the proposition: "The sky is blue", where existence curls itself up, as it were, in the tiniest imaginable form, "is", and remains in obscurity between the "sky" and "blue". The truth of the matter, according to Sartre, is that in this proposition, or in any other proposition of the same logical or grammatical structure, it is the verb "is", and the verb "is" alone, that points to absolute reality. That is to say, existence alone, nothing else, is the reality. Existence is there, as Sartre says, around us, in us, it is *us*. "I am suffocating: existence penetrates me everywhere, through the eyes, through the nose, through the mouth!" Nevertheless, existence remains hidden. We cannot grasp it by any ordinary means.

It is the awareness of existence in this sense, existence as the ultimate reality, that constitutes the starting point of modern existentialism. The discovery of the significance of what is really meant by the tiny verb "be" has been an event of decisive importance in the history of ontology in the West. Thus, if Heidegger——to come back to him again——so proudly declares that he is accomplishing a revolutionary break with the whole ontological tradition of Western philosophy comparable in importance to the Copernican revolution of Kant, it is due to his conviction that he, of all the Western philosophers, has at last discovered a new key to an authentic ontology by his discovery of the significance of "existence", *das Sein*, as distinguished from "existent", *das Seiende*.

It is interesting to observe, however, that the revolutionary break with the Aristotelian tradition of ontology which Heidegger regards as something unprecedented was already accomplished long time ago in Islam by the philosophers of the *waḥdat al-wujûd* school, whom I shall call here provisionally the Iranian existentialists.

The Iranian existentialists begin by analyzing all concrete things that are found in the world into two basic conceptual components: quiddity and existence. There is nothing in the world that cannot be analyzed into these two components.

Suppose for example there is in our presence a mountain. The " mountain " is different from the " sea ". It is different from the " table ", " man " or anything else. The " mountain " is different from all other things because it has its own essence which we might call " mountain-ness " and which does not belong to anything other than mountains. This " mountain-ness " is called technically the " quiddity " of mountain. At the same time, this mountain is here, present to us, making itself apparent to our eyes. This actual presence of the mountain here and now is called its " existence ". Thus everything in the world is ontologically to be understood as a combination of a quiddity and existence. An actually existing mountain, for example, is a combination of mountain-ness and its actual presence here and now. By the mountain-ness (which is its " quiddity ") the mountain is differentiated from all other things like chairs, tables, rivers and valleys. By its " existence " it is here in our presence, making itself apparent to our eyes.

This analysis, however, only and exclusively concerns the *conceptual* structure of things. It only tells us that at the level of conceptual analysis, things are composed of two factors, quiddity and existence. It does not say anything definite about the pre-conceptual structure of reality as it really is in the external world before we begin to analyze it by means of our ready-made concepts.

For lack of time I cannot go into the details of this important problem. It would make a very long story. To make it short, the Iranian existentialists take the position that in the pre-conceptual order of things, what is really real is existence, and existence only. Existence is the sole absolute, all-comprehensive Reality that runs through the whole universe. Or rather, the whole universe is nothing other than the reality of existence. All the so-called quiddities are like shadows cast by this absolute Reality as it goes on evolving itself. They are no other than internal modifications or phenomenal forms under which the absolute Reality reveals itself in the empirical dimension of human experience characterized by time-space limitations.

According to this view, we must not understand the proposition " The mountain exists " to mean——as Aristotle certainly would do——that a thing, a primary substance called " mountain ", having the quiddity of " mountain-ness ", does exist here. The proposition in reality means nothing other than that existence which is the ultimate Reality and which is the absolute Indeterminate, is here and now manifesting itself in a particular form of self-limitation or self-determination called " mountain ". Everything is thus a particular internal modification of the absolute Reality.

Such a view of things, however, obviously goes against our common sense.

Unlike Aristotelian metaphysics which is but a philosophical extension or elaboration of just the ordinary common-sense view of things, the position taken by the Iranian existentialists lies far beyond the reach of the sober intellect of an ordinary man. The mystery of the absolute ontological Truth is disclosed to human consciousness only when it happens to be in an unusually elevated spiritual state, when it is inebriated with the wine of *'irfânî* experience.

From the earliest periods of the development of philosophy in Iran, metaphysics and mysticism were put into an inseparable relationship with each other. As early as the twelfth century, Suhrawardî (1155-1191) gave a definite formulation to the ideal to be consciously pursued by both philosophers and mystics, namely the ideal of an organic unification of spiritual training and the most rigorous conceptual thinking, by declaring that a philosophy that does not culminate in the immediate experience of the absolute Reality is but a vain pastime, while a mystical experience that is not grounded on a rigorous intellectual training is always liable to degenerate into sheer aberration.

Exactly the same attitude was taken toward this problem by another great theosopher of the same period, Ibn 'Arabî (1165-1240) who came to the East from Spain. Since then this ideal has established itself as a firmly consolidated tradition in Iran and has produced many outstanding thinkers. Sabzawârî is the 19th century representative of this spiritual tradition.

Sabzawârî was in fact an unusually gifted master of mysticism who could at the same time philosophize in a rigorously logical way. The metaphysical system which he developed in his major work *Sharḥ-e Manẓûmah* discloses primarily and predominantly this latter aspect of his mind, namely, his logical and rational ability, to such an extent that a careless reader might not even notice that this is a work of a master of mysticism. Yet it is not so difficult to see palpitating just under the surface, the living *'irfânî* experience of the reality of existence. In fact the whole system of his metaphysics is but a philosophical or conceptual elaboration of the original vision of existence, the absolutely absolute Reality as it goes on evolving, modifying itself stage after stage into infinitely variegated phenomenal forms which, as we have seen earlier, are technically known as quiddities.

The position of the *aṣâlat al-wujûd*, the "fundamental reality of existence", of the Iranian existentialists presents a striking similarity to the position taken by modern Western existentialism with regard to the fundamental vision of the reality of existence. Of course, Western existentialism is quite a recent phenomenon, while the Iranian philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujûd* has behind itself a centuries-old tradition. It is no wonder that Western existentialism lacks that systematic conceptual perfection which characterizes Iranian philosophy. And yet, precisely because of this crudeness and freshness, it discloses to us nakedly the very nature of the original experience of existence, which remains hidden under the surface of conceptual thinking in the metaphysical system of a Sabzawârî.

Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, has given us a frightfully vivid description of existential experience in his philosophical novel *Nausée*. One day Roquintin, the hero of the novel, finds himself in the park sitting on a bench. A huge chestnut tree is there just in front of him, with its knotty root sunk into the ground under the bench. He is in a state of an extraordinary spiritual tension, a state which is comparable to that which is often experienced in various mystical traditions after a long period of concentrated training. All of a sudden, a vision flashes upon his mind. The ordinary consciousness of concrete, objective individual things disappears. The familiar daily world with all its solidly self-subsistent things crumbles away under his eyes. It is no longer the " root " of a tree that is there in front of him. There is no longer any substance called " chestnut tree ". All words disappear; all names that have been scribbled over everywhere by linguistic habits fade away, and together with them the significance of things, their ways of usage, their conceptual associations. Instead, Roquintin sees only soft, monstrous masses, something like dough, in utter disorder, naked in a frightful, obscene nakedness. He is here witnessing existence itself.

It is highly important to notice that in describing his existential experience, i.e. his first encounter with the " dough " of all things, he says that " all words disappear ". All words disapper, that is to say, all names that have hitherto marked off all things one from the other as so many independent substances, suddenly fall off and vanish from his consciousness. In the particular terminology of Iranian philosophy, this event may aptly be described by saying that the quiddities lose before his own eyes their seeming solidity or reality and begin to disclose their *i'tibârî* nature, i.e. their original ficticiousness. The quiddities, the " chestnut-ness ", " tree-ness ", " root-ness ", etc., consolidated by these linguistic forms, have in the past formed, so to speak, an insulating screen between him and the immediate vision of the all-pervading existence. It is only when these obstacles are removed that the reality of existence appears naked to man's eyes. It is upon such an unusual vision of the " dough " of things that existentialism, whether of the East or the West, is based.

I have tried in the foregoing to bring to light the most fundamental ontological intuition that seems to underlie both the contemporary existentialism of the West and the *waḥdat al-wujûd* type of Iranian philosophy. It is indeed interesting to note that an identical ontological intuition constitutes the very basis and the starting-point of all philosophizing for these two forms of existentialism.

It is no less interesting to observe that, starting from the basically identical vision of existence the philosophers of the two schools, one in the East and the other in the West, have produced two types of philosophy that are almost completely different from each other. But no wonder. As I have noted at the outset, the existentialism of the West is a child of this particular age of ours, in which the exorbitant development of technology has produced and is actually producing the most drastic convulsions in human life, an age in which the human life itself is in imminent danger of being strangled and stifled by the very products of the human brain. Besides, most of the leading existentialists are professedly atheists.

The *waḥdat al-wujûd* philosophy, on the contrary, owes its birth and formation to completely different historical circumstances. It is a product of the past ages, a product of a long spiritual tradition, supported by a markedly religious background. This, of course, should not be taken to mean that the Iranian existentialists have always lived in a serene atmosphere of spirituality. A long list of martyrs alone attests eloquently to the fact that they, too, had to pass through the most formidable crises, that they had to face desperate difficulties besetting their times. But their existential——in the contemporary Western acceptation of the word——trepidations did not affect in any essential way the products of their philosophizing. Philosophy in those ages was not yet so vitally involved in the mundane problems of daily life. For, in philosophizing, the eyes of the philosophers were definitely directed toward the eternal order of things.

It is obvious that each of the two types of existentialism has its own peculiar merits and demerits from the viewpoint of the function to be performed by philosophy in the present-day intellectual situation of the world. The existentialism of the West will have much to learn from its Oriental counterpart by way of overcoming the cultural nihilism toward which the West seems to be irresistibly drawn under the crushing power of the mechanization of life.

But Oriental philosophy, on its part, does not seem to be able to maintain its spiritual values in the face of the pressing problems that naturally arise from the actualities of our days, if it is to remain just as it has been in the past. It will find itself utterly powerless in the presence of the contemporary problems. For technology is no longer a Western phenomenon. It is rapidly extending its sway over the whole globe. And this actual situation is creating countless historical problems that man has never faced before in history. The philosophy of a Sabzawârî, if left untouched in its medieval form would seem to be no longer in a position to cope with these new problems.

It is my conviction that the time has come when we must begin making efforts to revive the creative energy contained in this kind of philosophy in such a way that its spirit might be resuscitated in the form of a new philosophic world-view powerful enough and alive enough to cope with the new problems peculiar to the new historical epoch into which we have just entered. Such, it would seem, is the intellectual task that is imposed upon us. And in the course of carrying out this task, we Orientals shall and must learn precious lessons from the way contemporary Western existentialism is struggling to solve the problems of human existence in the very midst of the dehumanizing and dehumanized structure of modern society. I believe, only through this kind of intellectual collaboration will the much hoped-for philosophical convergence of East and West be actualized.

III

AN ANALYSIS OF *WAḤDAT AL-WUJÛD*

——Toward a Metaphilosophy of Oriental Philosophies——

AN ANALYSIS OF *WAḤDAT AL-WUJÛD*

——Toward a Metaphilosophy of Oriental Philosophies——

Waḥdat al-wujûd which may be translated as "Oneness of Existence" or "Unity of Existence" is a metaphysical concept going back to an outstanding Spanish Arab mystic-philosopher, Ibn 'Arabî, of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (1165–1240). But what I am concerned with, at least in this paper, is the philosophical elaboration and development which this concept underwent in Iran in the periods subsequent to the Mongol invasion down to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Ṣadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî, or——as he is more commonly called——Mollâ Ṣadrâ (1571–1640), achieved a grand synthesis of Iranian-Islamic philosophy precisely on the basis of this concept.

I am interested in this particular aspect of this particular problem out of all the interesting problems offered by the history of Iranian Islam, not necessarily because of my own personal philosophical attitude, but rather, and primarily, because of my conviction that the concept of *waḥdat al-wujûd* is something which, if structurally analyzed and elaborated in a proper way, will provide a theoretical framework in terms of which we shall be able to clarify one of the most fundamental modes of thinking which characterize Oriental philosophy in general——not only Islamic philosophy, but most of the major historical forms of Oriental thought——so that we might make a positive contribution from the standpoint of the philosophical minds of the East towards the much desired development of a new world philosophy based on the spiritual and intellectual heritages of East and West.

Living as we are in a critical moment of human history, we naturally feel urgent need for many things. One of these things, as has often been pointed out by many people from various points of view, is a better mutual understanding among various nations of the world, which is often talked about also as the task of promoting a better understanding between East and West. Mutual understanding between the nations of the East and West is conceivable at a number of different levels. Here I am interested in only one of them; namely, the philosophical level of thinking.

It is undeniable that attempts have in the past sometimes been made to actualize a better mutual understanding between East and West at the level of philosophical thinking under the name of comparative philosophy. But it is no less undeniable that up till now comparative philosophy has remained rather in the peripheral regions of the intellectual activity of the philosophers. In most cases, the choice of the terms of comparison, to begin with, has been arbitrary, and the work consequently unsystematic. In short, comparative philosophy has, in my opinion, not been very successful, and it has not been given the kind of serious attention it duly deserves. And the main cause of this failure, I think, lies in its poverty in methodology.

In order to bring home the true significance of comparative philosophy, particularly for the purpose of promoting a real, deep philosophical understanding between East and West, it must first be developed in a more systematic way into what we might call a "metaphilosophy" of philosophies. I understand by *metaphilosophy* a comprehensive structural framework with a number of sub-structures at different levels, each of which will consist of a more or less large network of philosophical concepts that have analytically been taken out or worked out from the basic concepts found in the major philosophical traditions, both of East and West. The first practical step to be taken in the process of arriving at a metaphilosophy of this nature will, at least in my particular case, consist in a careful semantic analysis of the structure of the key-concepts of each philosophical system. And the result will hopefully be a vast, very complicated, but well-organized and flexible conceptual system in which each individual system will be given its proper place and in terms of which the differences as well as the common grounds between the major philosophical schools of the East and West will systematically be clarified.

It is with such an ultimate aim in view that I am actually engaged in analyzing the key-concepts of Oriental philosophies, although, I must confess, I am still at the very initial stage of this intended work. In this wide perspective, the concept of *waḥdat al-wujûd* represents but a narrowly limited partial field. But it is of such a nature that, if we succeed in bringing to light its fundamental structure, it will provide a basic conceptual model by means of which the majority of Oriental philosophies will be brought up to a certain level of structural uniformity concerning one at least of their most fundamental aspects.

This attitude of mine would naturally imply that I am not considering the *waḥdat al-wujûd* as something exclusively Islamic or Iranian. Rather, I am interested here in this concept and the philosophical possibilities it contains, as something representative of a basic structure which is commonly shared by many of the Oriental philosophies going back to divergent historical origins, like Vedantism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. The structure of the philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujûd* would in this perspective be seen to represent one typical pattern——an archetypal form, we might say——of philosophical thinking which one finds developed variously in more or less different forms by outstanding thinkers belonging to different cultural traditions in the East.

In undertaking a structural analysis of *waḥdat al-wujûd*, I must emphasize at the very outset that I do not agree with those who tend to understand the word "structure" in a purely formal sense. For a structure understood in the sense of a mere form or a formal external system is almost of no value for the purpose of constructing the kind of metaphilosophy I am aiming at. Of course, I also take the word "structure" to mean a form or system. For my particular purpose, "structure" means a system with inner articulations; or to express the idea in more concrete terms, it is to be understood as a linguistic or conceptual system of higher order constituted by a number of more or less well-organized and well coordinated key philosophical concepts. The important point, however, is that the system must be grasped as an external form of an inner spirit or an original philosophical vision which lies behind it and which manifests itself in that particular form. Methodologically, the essential thing for us is first to grasp that central vision of a whole system or the spirit that animates the system from within and informs it, and then to describe the system as an organic evolvement of that central vision.

Approaching now *waḥdat al-wujûd* from such a point of view, we find a magnificent system of metaphysics built up upon the basis of a peculiar vision of reality. As the very term *waḥdat al-wujûd* or Oneness of Existence clearly indicates, this basic vision centers around "existence". In other words, the philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujûd* is nothing other than a theoretical or rational reconstruction of an original metaphysical vision, which is conceived of as an intuition of the reality of "existence" (*wujûd*).

Having said this, I must immediately bring to your attention a very important fact; namely, that "existence" in this particular context is not the kind of "existence" of which all of us naturally have a common-sense notion. Otherwise expressed, it is not "existence" as it is reflected in our ordinary, empirical consciousness. Rather it is "existence" as it reveals itself only to a transcendental consciousness. It is "existence" as intuited by man when he transcends the empirical dimension of cognition into the trans-empirical dimension of awareness.

We may recall at this juncture that the problem of "existence" was from the very beginning of the history of Islamic philosophy *the* metaphysical problem that Islam inherited from the tradition of Greek philosophy. It is important to remember, however, that in the earlier periods of Islamic philosophy represented by such names as Kindî, Fârâbî, Avicenna, and Averroës, *wujûd* or "existence", in the sense of the *act* of existing, was an object of philosophical concern only indirectly and, let us say, accidentally, in the sense that, following the age-old Aristotelian tradition of metaphysics, the primary concern of the thinkers was with *mawjûd* rather than *wujûd*, that is to say, "existent" or a concrete thing that exists rather than the act itself of existing. The problem of *wujûd* was raised and discussed mainly as part of the inner constitution of "existents", i.e. real things that exist.

It is highly significant that the primary emphasis was shifted from "existent" to "existence" in a drastic way only after Islamic philosophy passed through the furnace of profound mystical experience in the person of Ibn 'Arabî. Avicenna in this respect stands just at the turning point, although as a matter of fact he still remains within the orbit of Aristotelianism in the sense that in ontology he is concerned with the problem of *wujûd* (*actus essendi*) mainly as a constituent factor of *mawjûd* (*ens*). But at least we might safely say that he gave a decisive impetus to the later philosophical elaboration of the concept of *waḥdat al-wujûd* by his explicit statement that "existence" is an accident or attribute of *mâhîyah* or "quiddity". To this statement, however, he added another statement, namely that the accident called "existence" is not an ordinary accident, but that it is a very peculiar kind of accident. This is indeed an extremely important point which we must clarify as an indispensable preliminary to an analysis of *waḥdat al-wujûd.*

At the empirical level of experience we constantly find ourselves surrounded by an infinite number of things, that is, substances that are qualified by various attributes or accidents. We distinguish a thing from its attributes by giving to the former an ontological status different from that of the latter. For at the level of daily, empirical experience, we naturally tend to think that the existence of the thing essentially precedes the existence of its attributes. That is to say, the attributes depend for their existence upon the thing, while the thing does not depend for its existence upon its attributes. We say for example: "The flower is white". It seems evident that the attribute "white" is actualizable only when the thing, the flower, is already existent, while the existence of the flower itself is not affected at all even if the flower loses its whiteness and changes its color.

This observation, however, does not apply to "existence" itself as an attribute. When for example we say: "The flower is existent", the actualization of the attribute does not presuppose the prior actualization of the flower. Quite the contrary, it is in this particular case the attribute that brings the flower into existence. This is in brief what Avicenna emphasized as a very peculiar nature of "existence" as an accident. It *is* an "accident", he says, but it is not an ordinary accident; it behaves in a totally different way from all other accidents.

Now in the view of those who belong to the school of *waḥdat al-wujûd*, this extraordinary or exceptional nature of "existence" as an accident comes from the very simple fact that in reality "existence" is *not* an accident of anything at all.

But the problem arises precisely because "existence" which in reality is not an accident, is grammatically and logically treated as an accident and is made to function as a predicate. Thus we say: "The flower is existent" just in the same way as we say: "The flower is white", as if these two propositions stood semantically quite on a par with each other.

But according to the people of *waḥdat al-wujûd,* there is in truth a fundamental difference between the two types of proposition with regard to their semantic behavior, i.e., with regard to the external structure of reality to which each one of them refers. In the case of propositions of the type: "The flower is white", there is a structural correspondence between grammar and external reality. Otherwise expressed, the grammatical or logical form of the sentence imitates and reproduces the structure of the external reality to which the proposition is intended to refer. But in existential propositions of the type: "The flower is existent", there is a glaring discrepancy between the grammatical form and external reality. Grammatically or logically, the "flower" is the subject, and as such it denotes a self-subsistent substance, while the predicate "existent" denotes a quality which qualifies and determines in a certain way the substance. But in the view of the people of *waḥdat al-wujûd,* the flower in reality is not the subject; the real ultimate subject is "existence", while the flower, or for that matter any other so-called things, are but qualities or attributes variously determining the eternal, ultimate Subject which is "existence". Grammatically, "flower" for example is a noun, but metaphysically it is an adjective. All so-called things are adjectives or adjectival in nature, modifying and qualifying the sole reality called "existence".

As one can easily see, this position exactly corresponds to the position taken by Advaita Vedanta regarding the same problem. In Vedanta, too, the Absolute which is indicated by the word *Brahman* is conceived as pure being or "existence" (*Sat*)——all-pervasive, non-temporal, non-spatial, absolutely unqualified and unlimited——while all so-called "things" are considered so many determinations and particularizations of this absolute Indeterminate. That is to say, here too, all quiddities are adjectival to "existence".

Thus the structure of external reality which is indicated by the proposition: "The flower is existent" proves to be completely different from what is suggested by the grammatical form of the sentence. What is existent in the fullest sense of the word is "existence" as the absolute Indeterminate, not the flower. Being-a-flower is but a special self-determination of this absolute Indeterminate. It is but a particular phenomenal form in which "existence" reveals itself in the dimension of the so-called external, sensible world. In other words, the "flower" here is an accident qualifying "existence", and determining it into a certain phenomenal form. "Existence" in itself, that is, in its purity, is attributeless. It is an absolutely simple unity or an absolute indiscrimination. Consequently, all differences that are perceivable at the level of sensible experience among various things are to be judged illusory. It is in this sense that Advaita Vedanta represented by Shankara declares: that all phenomenal things are nothing but illusions, that they are all illusory forms "super-imposed" (*adhyâsa*) upon the underlying pure unity of *Brahman*.

Both Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism take exactly the same position with regard to the nature of the seemingly self-subsistent things of the sensible world. Both are characterized by a thoroughgoing anti-essentialism. They are definitely against the position which in the Islamic tradition of metaphysics is known as the thesis of *aṣâlat al-mâhîyah*, i.e. the thesis that the various quiddities which we observe in the external world are possessed of a fundamental reality. Thus to give an example, the author of the *Ta Ch'êng Ch'i Hsin Lun*[1] "The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana", which is regarded as one of the most basic philosophical text-books of Mahayana Buddhism, remarks: "All men who are not yet enlightened discriminate with their deluded minds from moment to moment between things (i.e. differentiate the original absolute unity of Reality into various self-subsistent things), and become thereby estranged from the absolute Reality". The phenomenal things thus established by the discriminating activity of the mind are very significantly called *jan fa* "things of defilement"[2]; that is to say, the phenomenal things are here ontologically regarded as elements that "defile" and deform the purity of the one Reality. Again in the same book we find the following very straightforward statement of this position: "That which is known as the Mind-Nature (i.e. absolute Reality) is beyond all phenomenal determinations. It is only through illusions that all things become distinguished from one another as independent entities. Once we are freed from the illusion-producing movements of our minds, there will no longer be any appearance of the so-called objective world".

But this statement: namely that the things of the phenomenal world are all illusory appearances, requires partial correction, for the super-impositions that have just been mentioned are considered in Vedantism, Buddhism and Islâm alike, to be caused not only by the relative, and intrinsically limited epistemological structure of the human mind but also by the very structure of absolute Reality itself. I shall come back presently to this important point.

It would seem that the brief explanation which I have just given of the basic standpoint of the *waḥdat al-wujûd* type of philosophy has made us realize that we

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1) 大乘起信論.
2) 染法.

are in the presence of two metaphysical views of Reality which stand in sharp opposition to each other, an opposition which we may designate in a provisional way as "essentialism" versus "existentialism".

The first, essentialism, is a philosophical elaboration or extension of our ordinary common-sense view of things. In fact, at the level of our daily encounter with the world, we observe everywhere around us "things", i.e. quiddities or essences that are existent. In this perspective it is the quiddities that exist. Everything that we observe here is "something that exists", i.e. *mawjûd* or *ens*. Nowhere is "existence" (*wujûd*) itself as pure *actus essendi* observable in its immediate, pure state. It is always hidden behind the innumerable quiddities. In this view, it is the quiddities that exist, while "existence" is but an attribute or property of the quiddities.

In what we propose to designate by the word "existentialism", on the contrary, we find this relationship between quiddity and "existence" completely reversed. "Existence" is here the basis; it is in fact the sole Reality, and the quiddities are found to be adjectival to it; they are to be considered attributes qualifying the unique Reality.

It is important to remark that "essentialism" and "existentialism" as understood in this particular context do not stand opposed to each other on one single level of human experience. For unlike "essentialism" which, as I have said above, is a natural philosophical development of the ordinary ontological experiences shared by all men, "existentialism" in this context means, so to speak, a transcendental existentialism in the sense that it is a metaphysical system based upon, and born out of an ecstatic, mystical intuition of Reality as it discloses itself to a transcendental consciousness in the depths of concentrated meditation.

It will be interesting to observe in this connection that the Buddhist term for the Absolute is in Sanscrit *tathatâ* whose Chinese translation is *chên ju*[3] (which is read in Japanese *shin-nyo*). *Tathatâ* literally means "suchness", and *chên ju* "truly-such". That is to say, in both cases, the Absolute is referred to by words that signify "being as it really is" or "existence as it naturally is". But the expression "existence as it naturally is" does not refer to "existence" of things as we know it at the empirical level of experience. "Existence" here means the reality of "existence" as it reveals itself to us when we are in the state of contemplation, through the activation of the transcendental function of our mind, that is to say, the reality of "existence" prior to its being "defiled" and deformed by the discriminating activity of the ordinary consciousness in its waking experience. In Islam, this activation of the transcendental function of the mind is designated by a number of technical terms, the most important of them being the word *kashf*

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3) 真如.

which literally means "unveiling" or "taking off the veil". And the inner structure of this experience is usually described in terms of *fanâ'* and *baqâ'*.

For lack of time I regret I cannot go into the details of this problem, although the analysis of the *fanâ'-baqâ'* experience is in itself an extremely interesting subject of metaphilosophical consideration if undertaken side by side with an analysis of similar practices that have developed in Vedanta, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Here I shall confine myself to considering very briefly the theoretical aspect of the problem regarding how this kind of experience provides a basis upon which one could build up the metaphysical system of *waḥdat al-wujûd.*

The first of the two words, *fanâ'*, literally means "extinction" or something being annihilated, somewhat like the Buddhist concept of *nirvâṇa.* In the particular context in which we are interested now, it means the total annihilation of man's ego-consciousness resulting from an intense concentration of the mind in deep meditation. In this experience the seemingly hard crust of the empirical consciousness of man is dissolved and the ego-substance becomes totally absorbed into the underlying unity of "existence".

The metaphysical significance of this subjective annihilation lies in the fact that "existence" that has up to that moment been appearing in the pseudo-substantial form of an ego, loses this determination and turns back to its own original absolute indetermination. And since the human mind is the only locus in which anything can be subjectively actualized, "existence" too, becomes actualized or realized in its pure subjectivity only through man's experiencing the total dissolution of his own pseudo-subjectivity. This is what is referred to in Vedanta as man's realizing the total identification of *Âtman* with *Brahman.*

We must recall at this point that the metaphysical Reality in its purity is the absolute Indeterminate, and as such it defies all objectification, for objectification implies determination. The moment "existence" is grasped as an object, it ceases to be itself. "Existence" in its original indetermination can never be taken hold of as an object. It can only be realized as the subject of all knowledge in the form of man's self-realization, for it *is* the Ultimate Subject. This is——be it remarked in passing——why "existence" in its absolute indetermination is in Buddhism often called the *Mind*-Nature or *Mind*-Reality.

As the narrowly limited ego-consciousness of man thus becomes dissolved and absorbed into the limitless expanse of the absolute Consciousness, and as "existence" that has been crystallized into the determined form of an ego-substance returns to its original all-pervasive indetermination, all the determined forms of the objective world also go back to their original existential indetermination. For there is a fundamental functional correlation between the subjective state of the mind and the objective state of the external world. Where there is no subject, i.e. ego-substance to see things, there is no longer anything to be seen as an object. As a famous metaphor shared by so many Oriental thinkers goes: as all the waves that have been raging on the surface of the ocean calm down, the limitless Ocean alone remains visible in its eternal tranquility.

Metaphysically this is the stage of Nothingness for there is here neither subject nor object. But since the word "Nothingness" refers to "existence" in its pure and absolute indetermination, the stage is also called by another name which is of a more positive nature, namely, Oneness or Unity. The Buddhists often describe it as "one single piece with no articulation". The Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzŭ calls it "chaos" (*hun tun*)[4]. It is at this stage or from the viewpoint of this stage only that all the different things that are discernible in the empirical world are declared to be illusory. It is also from such a peculiar point of view that the Muslim philosopher, Mollâ Ṣadrâ, regards the so-called empirical things as "sheer connections" (*rawâbiṭ maḥḍah*) with no self-subsistence of their own. The representative Vedanta philosopher, Shankara, considers them as name-and-form (*nâma-rûpa*) multiplicity superimposed by ignorance (*avidyâ*). At the next stage, however, this veil of illusoriness is again removed from the things of the empirical world. The next stage is the stage of *baqâ'*-experience.

Baqâ' means "remaining" or "survival". Technically it refers to the spiritual stage at which all the things of the world that have once been dissolved into Nothingness and that have been lost in the absolute indiscriminate Unity of "existence", become resuscitated out of the very depth of the Nothingness. The entire phenomenal world of Multiplicity with its infinitely various and variegated forms again begins to evolve itself before man's eyes.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between the world of Multiplicity as observed at this stage and the same empirical world of Multiplicity as it appears to man before he passes through the stage of *fanâ'*. For at the stage of *fanâ'* man observes how all the things of the world lose their seeming ontological solidity, become fluid, and finally become lost into the original absolute indiscrimination of "existence". Now at the stage of *baqâ'*, the same things are observed as they loom up out of the very Ground of that absolute indiscrimination and regain their reality in the dimension of waking experience.

Thus the things are again established as so many different things which are clearly distinguishable from each other. And yet they appear *this time* deprived of self-subsistence. They are there, but not as self-subsistent entities; rather they are there as so many particularizations and self-determinations of the absolute Indeterminate. In this respect they are not to be regarded as sheer illusions. For they

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4) 渾沌, 渾敦.

are real in so far as each one of them is a particular form into which the Absolute has determined itself and in which the Absolute manifests itself. But they *are* empty and illusory if one considers them without reference to the original metaphysical Ground of which they are but various manifestations. They are illusory in so far as they are considered to be particular "things", self-subsistent and self-sufficient.

In reference to the ontological status of the phenomenal things, the Muslim thinkers of the *waḥdat al-wujûd* school often use expressions like *wujûd i'tibârî*, i.e. "fictitious existence", and *wujûd majâzî*, i.e. "metaphorical or transferred existence". These and other similar expressions simply mean that the things of the empirical world are sheer nothing if considered in isolation from the underlying unity of "existence", but that they *are* really existent if considered in relation to the latter. We have already seen above how Mollâ Ṣadrâ calls the things of the empirical world "sheer connections", that is, sheer relations. But the word "relation" (*iḍâfah*) should not be taken in the sense of an ordinary relation subsisting between two terms each of which is conceived as a self-subsistent entity. For in this particular context, "relation" means "illuminative relation" (*iḍâfah ishrâqîyah*). That is to say, the things of the empirical world are established as partial realities only through the illuminative or self-manifesting act of the one absolute Reality.

This Islamic view is in perfect agreement with the position taken by Shankara regarding the problem of the reality and unreality of the empirical world. Like Muslim thinkers, he takes the position that the empirical world is not ultimately and absolutely real, but that it is *relatively* real. It is not ultimately real because *Brahman* is not, and cannot be, experienced in the empirical world in its ultimate and absolute aspect, which is absolute indetermination. And yet, on the other hand, the empirical world is not entirely devoid of an objective basis of reality. Suppose, Shankaha argues, a man sees a rope lying on the ground, and takes it for a snake. The snake that appears to the eyes of the man is illusory, because in reality it is nothing but a rope. But the snake is not sheer nothing either, in so far as it has its objective basis in a really existent rope. In a somewhat similar way, each one of the things which we see in the empirical world has an objective ontological basis in *Brahman*. For, according to Shankara, every single phase of our waking experience *is* a real experience of *Brahman*. In a famous passage in the *Viveka-Cûḍâmani* (521) he says: "The world is an unbroken series of *Brahman*-perceptions, so that the world is in all respects no other than *Brahman*". That is to say, whenever we perceive something in this world we are in reality perceiving *Brahman* itself, not in its absolute aspect, to be sure, but in one of its particular phenomenal forms. In this sense, the empirical world is not an illusion; it is possessed of *vyâvahârika* reality, i.e. relative reality peculiar to the dimension of empirical experience, which it acquires in the capacity of a self-determination of *Brahman*, although from the *absolute* viewpoint, i.e. from the viewpoint of *Brahman* in its absolute purity, the empirical world is essentially illusory.

The theoretical basis that underlies this argument in the case of Shankara is the thesis known as *sat-kârya-vâda*, i.e. the doctrine that the effect is but a relative and conditioned manifestation of the cause, there being between the two no real separation. The empirical world in this view is nothing other than *Brahman*-as-the-world.

Exactly the same explanation is applicable to the view taken by the philosophers of *waḥdat al-wujûd* school on the relationship between *ḥaqq* and *khalq*, i.e. between absolute Reality and the created world. Thus to give one example, according to 'Abd al-Karîm al-Jîlî (1365–*c*.1428), the well-known author of the book *al-Insân al-Kâmil* ("The Perfect Man"), to call the things of this world "creatures" or "created things" is simply to call them by a "borrowed" name. Not that the various things and properties that are observable in this world are "borrowings". They are not "borrowings"; they *are* God Himself in the sense that they are various phenomenal forms assumed by the Absolute as it manifests itself at the level of the empirical experience of man. Only the name of "creatureliness" (*khalqîyah*) is a borrowing. God "lends" this name to His own Attributes in so far as they appear in the empirical world. "Thus", Jîlî says, "the Absolute (*ḥaqq*) is, as it were, the Prime Matter of this world. The world in this sense is comparable to ice, and the Absolute to water which is the material basis of ice. The congealed mass of water is called 'ice', which is but a borrowed name; its true name is 'water'".

All this naturally leads the philosophers of the *waḥdat al-wujûd* school to the conclusion that whatever is observable in this world has without exception two different aspects: (1) the divine aspect or the aspect in which it is absolute Reality itself, and (2) the creaturely aspect or the aspect in which it is something relative, something other than absolute Reality. One might describe this situation in plain language by saying: Everything in this world is in a certain sense God, and in another a creature. A creature *qua* creature is distinguishable, and must be distinguished, from God. But the creatureliness is ultimately reducible to divine Nature in so far as the former is an "illuminative relation" of the latter itself.

In order to explain the delicate relationship between these two aspects that are recognizable in everything, Muslim thinkers have proposed a number of metaphors. One of the most commonly mentioned is the metaphor of water and waves, which is also a favorite metaphor of the Mahayana Buddhists. I shall give here another typical one as explained by Ḥaydar Âmulî, an outstanding Iranian philosopher of the fourteenth century, in his *Jâmi' al-Asrâr.*[5] It is a metaphor based on a peculiar relationship between ink and the letters written with it. Ink structurally corresponds to the all-pervasive unique reality of "existence" while the letters written with it correspond to the "quiddities" (*mâhîyât*) as actualized in the forms of the various things in the empirical world. Here follows the gist of what Ḥaydar Âmulî says about this metaphor.[6]

Suppose we are reading a book. Our attention naturally is drawn toward the written letters. What strikes our eyes are primarily letters. We take notice only of the letters. We do not see the ink with which they are written. We are not even aware of the ink, while in reality we are seeing nothing other than various forms assumed by the ink. A slight shift of viewpoint will immediately make us realize that the letters are but of a "fictitious" (*i'tibârî*) nature. What really exists before our eyes is ink, nothing else. The seeming reality of letters is after all due to social convention. They are not realities (*ḥaqâ'iq*) in the most fundamental sense. Yet, on the other hand, it is equally undeniable that the letters do exist and are real in so far as they are various forms assumed by the ink which is the sole reality in this case.

Everything in this world is comparable to a letter in its double nature that has just been explained. Those who perceive only letters without taking notice of the underlying reality of ink are those whose eyes are "veiled" by the letters. To this fact refers the famous Ḥadîth which says: "God is concealed behind seventy thousand veils of light and darkness". Those of the people of this kind who recognize only the veils and do not recognize the hidden God behind them are, theologically, outspoken and straightforward infidels. Those who know at least vaguely the existence of the invisible God behind and beyond the visible veils are believers and monotheists in an ordinary sense. But they are imperfect monotheists or imperfect "men of unification" (*muwaḥḥidûn*) because what they actually perceive is nothing but letters, while in reality the ink is so clearly and nakedly visible in the letters. Letters are not even veils, for they *are* the ink. It is in reference to this point that Ibn 'Arabî says: "It is the empirical world that is a mystery, something eternally hidden and concealed, while the Absolute is the eternally Apparent that has never concealed itself. The ordinary people are in this respect completely mistaken. They think that the world is the apparent and the Absolute is a hidden mystery".

But, Ḥaydar Âmulî continues to say, those who see only and exclusively the ink without taking notice of the letters are also imperfect monotheists, for their eyes are veiled by the ink from the vision of the concrete forms assumed by the ink itself. A real " man of unification " must be a " man of two eyes " (*dhu 'aynayn*) whose vision is veiled by nothing—neither by ink nor by letters—a man, in other words, who sees Unity in Multiplicity and Multiplicity in Unity.

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[5] *Jâmi' al-Asrâr wa-Manba' al-Anwâr*, ed. Henry Corbin & Osman Yahya, Téhéran-Paris, 1969, p. 161, § 310, pp. 206–207, § 397.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 107, § 212.

The metaphor of ink and letters together with what preceded it has, I believe, made it abundantly clear that according to the thinkers of the school of *waḥdat al-wujûd*, " existence " (*wujûd*) is something that is one single reality (*ḥaqîqah*) and that has many divergent manifestation-forms (*maẓâhir*). This position is established upon the fundamental vision of the act of " existence ", which is the one absolute reality, running through, or flowing through, all things in the universe. This is what is called *sarayân al-wujûd*, i.e. the " pervasion of existence ", or *inbisâṭ al-wujûd*, i.e. the " unfolding of existence ". This fundamental vision of the reality of " existence " running through the whole universe, or rather we should say, producing the whole world of Being as various forms of its self-unfolding, has led the thinkers of this school toward constructing a metaphysical system in which the same reality of " existence " is given a number of degrees or stages in accordance with the various degrees of its self-unfolding or self-manifestation. In what follows I shall try to analyze the basic structure of this system in its most typical form. In so doing we shall have to confine our attention to the broad outlines of the problem which in reality is an extremely complicated one, particularly if we are to take into account the details of the historical development of the thought. There is in fact no perfect uniformity recognizable among the various systems that have been proposed by the representative thinkers of this school except with regard to the most fundamental metaphysical insight into the mystery of " existence " and with regard to the very general structural principles upon which they are constructed. Otherwise, there is no unanimity even with regard to the number of the major stages or degrees to be distinguished. The particular system which I am going to analyze here is an archetypal one in the sense that (1) its basic structure is more or less commonly shared by the majority of the systems, and that (2) it is formally of such a nature that it allows of the widest application in the broader perspective of metaphilosophical considerations.

One of the basic points on which all thinkers of the *waḥdat al-wujûd* school are in perfect agreement with each other, is that the Absolute itself has two aspects that are turned toward opposite directions: *bâṭin* and *ẓâhir*, i.e. " interior " and " exterior ". The first of these, the *bâṭin* or " interior ", is the self-concealing aspect of the Absolute, while the second, the *ẓâhir* or " exterior ", is its self-revealing aspect.

In its first aspect, the Absolute is an absolute Unknown-Unknowable. It is an eternal metaphysical mystery. Religiously, the Absolute here is the hidden God.

Thus from the viewpoint of human cognition, it is the purely negative side of the Absolute, although from the viewpoint of the Absolute itself it is the most positive of all its possible aspects, for it is the unconditional plenitude of "existence".

The second aspect, the *ẓâhir* or "exterior", on the contrary, represents for the human mind the positive aspect of the Absolute. In this aspect the Absolute is the metaphysical Source of the phenomenal world. Theologically the Absolute here is the self-revealing God. Through this aspect the Absolute manifests itself as various things at various stages which we are going to observe.

This basic distinction between the positive and negative aspects in the metaphysical constitution of the Absolute is common to all the major Oriental philosophies other than Islamic. In Vedanta, for instance, we have the celebrated thesis of *dvi-rûpa Brahma* "two-fold *Brahman*", that is, the distinction between the *nirguṇa Brahman* and *saguṇa Brahman,* i.e. the absolutely attributeless *Brahman* and the self-same *Brahman* adorned with all kinds of attributes. In Buddhism we have the distinction between "Suchness as absolute Nothingness" and "Suchness as non-Nothingness". Taoists distinguish between Non-Being and Being. Confucianists distinguish between *wu chi* or the Ultimateless and *t'ai chi*[7] the Supreme Ultimate.

It will be evident that, if we are to divide theoretically the entire sphere of "existence" into a certain number of metaphysical regions or stages, the Absolute in its *bâṭin* "interior" aspect will occupy the highest position. For the Absolute in its "interior" aspect *is* the Absolute itself pure and simple. Ontologically it is *dhât al-wujûd,* i.e. "existence"-itself, or "existence" in its absolute purity. Theologically it is *dhât Allâh,* i.e. the very Essence of God as He is supposed to be before He is described by any Attribute at all.

But it is noteworthy that already at this stage divergence of opinions begins to appear among the thinkers. According to quite a number of representative thinkers, "existence"-itself, i.e. "existence" at the highest stage is "existence" in the state of an absolute transcendence. It is sheer metaphysical indescrimination or the absolute Indeterminate to which reference was made in an earlier context. And since it infinitely transcends all relative distinctions, it is indescribable and ineffable. It is therefore essentially unknown and unknowable. It is a great Mystery (*ghaib*). The utmost we can say of this stage is that it is "one", not in the numerical sense but absolutely, in the sense that nothing is here visible, nothing is discernible. Technically this stage is known as the stage of *aḥadîyah* or "absolute Oneness".

There are, however, some thinkers who do not remain satisfied with this view, and who insist on pushing the highest stage of "existence" further beyond *aḥadîyah.*

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7) *wu chi* 無極, *t'ai chi* 太極.

Against those who see in *aḥadîyah* the ultimate metaphysical stage——Dâûd Qayṣarî (d. 1350) is one of them——they think that it is not completely right to equate the *aḥadîyah* directly with "existence"-itself in its absolute purity. Certainly they admit that the *aḥadîyah* is contained within the confines of the metaphysical region of the *dhât al-wujûd*, i.e. "existence"-itself in its purity, because it is sheer indiscrimination, the pure reality of "existence" without even an internal articulation, not to speak of external articulation. It is also absolute in the sense that it is absolute transcendence. But "existence" at this stage is *not* absolute in that it is determined at least by transcendence. It is conditioned at least by the condition of transcending all conditions. Those who think this way——'Abd al-Karîm Jîlî is one of them——take the position that the absolutely ultimate stage of "existence" must be beyond even the condition of unconditionality and transcendence. And since "existence" at this stage is unconditional to such an extent that it is not delimited even by being unconditional, it cannot but be absolute Nothingness from the point of view of human cognition. It is in this sense called the *ghayb al-ghuyûb* "Mystery of Mysteries" corresponding exactly to Lao Tzŭ's *hsüan chih yu hsüan*[8] which also can most appropriately be translated as "Mystery of Mysteries" or "Mystery beyond Mysteries". It was in order to give a logical formulation to this concept that the Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzŭ (4th century B.C.) devised the formula *wu-wu-wu* or "Non-Non-Non-Being". Its last element——i.e. "Non-Being" is the simple negation of the empirical existence of phenomenal things. The second ——i.e. Non-(Non-Being) is intended to be the absolute negation of the first, relative negation, and as such it refers to the total and unconditional indiscrimination of "existence", corresponding to the *aḥadîyah*. The third——i.e. Non-{Non-(Non-Being)}negates this very unconditionality, thus corresponding to the Islamic concept of "Mystery of Mysteries".[9]

In the technical terminology of later Islamic metaphysics, the "Mystery of Mysteries" is called "existence as absolutely non-conditioned" (*lâ bi-sharṭ maqsamî*) in contrast to the stage of *aḥadîyah* which is called "existence as negatively conditioned" (*bi-sharṭ lâ*). "Negatively conditioned" means that "existence" at this stage is conditioned at least by being not conditioned by any determination.

In this second system, namely, the system in which the "Mystery of Mysteries" is placed at the highest and ultimate position, the *aḥadîyah* is naturally relegated to the second place. Unlike in the first system, the *aḥadîyah* or the "absolute Oneness" is no longer considered to be the pure reality of "existence" prior to any self-determination. Quite the contrary, the *aḥadîyah* here is the stage of the first self-determination (*ta'ayyun awwal*) of the Absolute. It is the second of the metaphysical stages of "existence", and is naturally a step closer toward the world of the created things. It is interesting in this respect that Lao Tzŭ who refers to the absolutely unconditional aspect of the Way (*tao*) as the Mystery of Mysteries, immediately turns to its positive aspect and describes the Way in that aspect as the "Gateway of myriad wonders" 10), that is, the Gateway through which emerge all things into the phenomenal world. In the Islamic view too, the *aḥadîyah* is the source of all phenomenal things.

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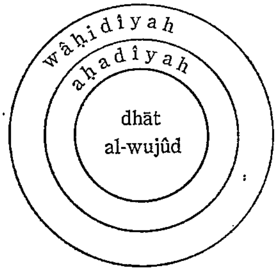
[8] 玄之又玄.

[9] For more details about the structure of this triple negation, see my Eranos lecture, *The Absolute and the Perfect Man in Taoism* (Eranos-Jahrbuch XXXVI, 1967), pp. 426–428.

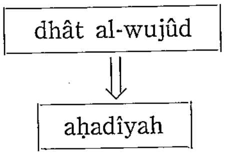
In fact, it is from the very midst of the *aḥadîyah* that the creative activity of the Absolute, i.e. the self-manifesting act of pure "existence", arises. This self-manifesting act of "existence" is technically known as the "most sacred Emanation" (*fayḍ aqdas*). The result of this Emanation is the appearance of the next metaphysical stage, that of *wâḥidîyah* or Unity.

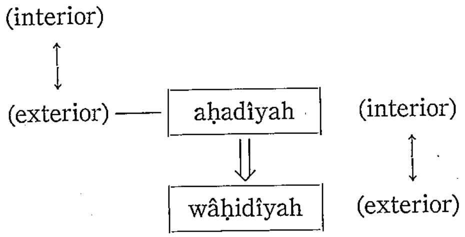
Fig. 1.



dhât al-wujûd
=existence-itself
or Mystery of Mysteries

It is to be remarked that both *aḥadîyah* and *wâḥidîyah* mean unity or oneness. But as technical terms they refer to two metaphysical situations that are different from one another. First of all, there is between the two a peculiar relationship of interiority and exteriority. That is to say, the *aḥadîyah* is the "interior" or the hidden aspect, of *wâḥidiyah*, while the latter is the "exterior" or the apparent aspect, of the former, just as the *aḥadîyah* itself occupies the place of the "exterior" in relation to the absolutely pure reality of "existence".





At the stage of *wâḥidîah*, the reality of "existence" still maintains its original Unity unimpaired, there being no external Multiplicity manifested. Internally, however, the Unity is here definitely articulated, although this is not yet the stage of the appearance of the phenomenal world.

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10) *Chung miao chih mên*, 衆妙之門; see my *The Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism*, vol. II, Tokyo, 1967, pp. 115–135.

The real situation will become clear if we approach the matter from the reverse side, that is, from the viewpoint of the human consciousness which, starting from the phenomenal commotion of the things of the empirical world, is gradually elevated in deep meditation up to this stage. From this viewpoint, the *wâḥidîyah* will appear as the stage at which all the things, qualities and events that have been raging with universal commotion in the phenomenal world become fused together into a vast unity. Thus, the *wâḥidîyah* is not existential unity pure and simple as is the case with *aḥadîyah,* but rather a comprehensive unity of an infinity of different things. The *wâḥidîyah* in this sense is Unity with inner articulations. But since, as we have just seen, the *wâḥidîyah* is but the "exterior" of the *aḥadîyah,* the inner articulations of the *wâḥidîyah* must be considered to be the external appearance of the hidden articulations inherent in the *aḥadîyah* itself. The *aḥadîyah,* considered in itself is pure and absolute Oneness, there being not even a shadow of Multiplicity. But if considered in relation to, and from the point of view of, the stage of *wâḥidîyah,* it is found to contain in itself a principle of diversity.

The principle of ontological diversity which plays an exceedingly important role in Vedanta under the name of *mâyâ* and in Mahayana Buddhism as *avidyâ* "Nescience" or "Ignorance"——the word Ignorance here being understood in a cosmic sense ——is in the philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujûd* understood and described in terms of Love (*ḥubb*). This peculiar concept of Love is based on a celebrated Ḥadîth Qudsî[11] which reads: "I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known. Thus I created the creatures so that I might be known. (*Kuntu kanzan makhfîyan, fa-aḥbabtu an u'rafa, fa-khalaqtu al-khalaqa li-kay u'rafa*).

The phrase "hidden treasure" refers to the stage of *aḥadîyah,* particularly in reference to the "exterior" aspect of the *aḥadîya*; namely, that aspect in which the *aḥadîyah* is turned toward the phenomenal world.[12] For in this particular aspect, the *aḥadîyah* is the ultimate source or Ground of all things that are to come out in concrete forms in the subsequent ontological dimensions, although in its "interior" aspect, i.e. that aspect in which it is turned toward the opposite direction, i.e. toward its own Source which is the "Mystery of Mysteries", the *aḥadîyah* is nothing but pure Oneness.

Thus the *aḥadîyah* considered in its "exterior" aspect is here designated as a

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[11] *Ḥadîth Qudsî* is a *ḥadîth* in which God Himself speaks in the first person.

[12] As explained above, the *aḥadîyah* is the "exterior" of the *dhât al-wujûd,* i.e. existence-itself or existence in its absolute unconditionality; and it is the "interior" of the *wâḥidîyah.* This would imply that we must distinguish in the *aḥadîyah* itself two aspects turned toward opposite directions, i.e. two faces, one turned toward its own "interior" (*dhât al-wujûd*) and the other turned toward its own "exterior" (*wâḥidîyah*). The same structure is found also in the *wâḥidîyah.*

"hidden treasure". The concept of "hidden treasure" is in its structure very close to Lao Tzŭ's concept of the "Gateway of myriad wonders" which, as has just been mentioned, indicates *Tao* or absolute Reality considered as the ultimate Source of all phenomenal things. Similarly the "hidden treasure" is rightly to be compared with the Buddhist concept of *tathâgata-garbha*, the "Storehouse of the Absolute" which is also the absolute Unity of "existence" in the particular aspect in which it is turned toward *saṃsâra*, "birth and death", i.e. the world of phenomenal transiency. The Storehouse of the Absolute is still absolutely one and immovable, but it somehow contains in itself a moving drive which, once activated, pushes the Absolute towards phenomenal evolvement.

The same is true of the ontological function of Love in the Islamic system. The creative movement, or, to use the technical terminology of *waḥdat al-wujûd* philosophy, the self-manifestation (*tajallî*) of the Absolute which is activated by the principle of Love, emerges for the first time at the stage of *aḥadîyah* and is called the "most sacred Emanation".[13] As the result of this Emanation, the stage of *wâḥidîyah* becomes established. The *wâḥidîyah*, is the ontological stage at which the original absolute Oneness of the reality of "existence" appears with inner articulations. These inner articulations are called, in accordance with the traditional terminology of theology, divine "Names" and "Attributes". In this sense the stage of *wâḥidîyah* is called the stage of the Names and Attributes (*asmâ' wa-ṣifât*). Another name of this stage is the stage of "Knowledge" (*'ilm*), i.e. divine Consciousness. This appellation comes from the idea that the *wâḥidîyah* is the stage at which God becomes conscious of Himself in the form of His own essential Perfections (*kamâlât dhâtîyah*). The essential Perfections of God that are thus established in divine Consciousness with clear demarcations are called the "eternal Archetypes" (*a'yân thâbitah*). Structurally, each eternal Archetype is considered to be the *ẓâhir* or "exterior" of particular divine Name which is the *bâṭin* or "interior" of the Archetype. The eternal Archetypes are to be regarded as ontological models which are eternally established in divine Consciousness and upon which the phenomenal things are produced in the empirical dimention of time and space.

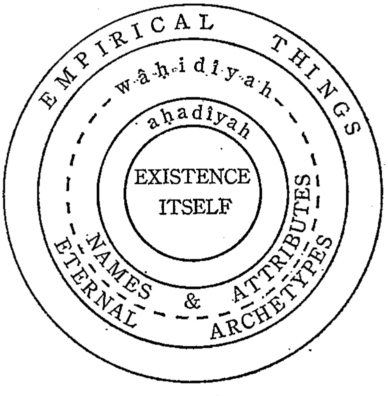

Fig. 2.

Ontologically, the stage of *wâḥidîyah* is called *wujûd bi sharṭ shay'*, i.e. "existence"-as-conditioned-by-being-something, which means "existence" as determined into the forms of particular things, not yet in the external world, to be sure, but in the eternal, supra-temporal, and supra-spatial dimension. Such a conception of the eternal archetypes clarifies the position taken by the philosophers of *waḥdat al-wujûd* with regard to the notorious problem of Universals. They necessarily uphold the thesis of *universalia ante res*, for the eternal Archetypes are *real* because the inner articulations of the *wâḥidîyah* of which they are the external appearances are definitely real. But in terms of the concrete empirical world, the Archetypes are not really existent. This is what is meant by Ibn 'Arabî when he says that "the eternal Archetypes have not yet smelt the fragrance of existence", the word "existence" in this context meaning empirical "existence".

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[13] Cf. *supra*, p. 49.

The eternal Archetypes become actualized as individual phenomenal things only at the next stage, that of the concrete existents, or the world of creaturely things. And the creative or self-manifesting activity of the absolute reality of "existence" by which this ontological "descent" is actualized is called the "sacred Emanation (*faiḍ muqaddas*) in distinction from the "most sacred Emanation" by which the *aḥadîyah* develops into *wâḥidîyah.*

Thus we have come down from the height of Nothingness to the world of empirical things. It is to be remembered that throughout the entire system what is observable is ultimately the one single reality of "existence" which runs through all the stages, manifesting itself differently at each stage. Moreover, the thinkers of *waḥdat al-wujûd* school recognize no distance in terms of time between the highest stage, i.e. that of the Mystery of Mysteries or "existence" in its absolutely unconditional purity, and the lowest stage, i.e. that of the phenomenal or empirical things. In other words, the process by which the reality of "existence" goes on manifesting itself is not a process of temporal evolvement as the preceding description might have suggested. "Time" appears only at the lowest stage, i.e. in the world of empirical things. In reality, the moment we posit pure "existence" we must posit——at one and the same time——the phenomenal "existence", just as there is no temporal discrepancy between the appearance of the sun and the appearance of light, although *essentially* light depends upon the sun, that is to say, although essentially the sun is prior and the light is posterior. Exactly the same kind of essential, i.e. non-temporal priority-posteriority relationship is recognizable between pure "existence" and phenomenal "existence". Ḥaydar Âmulî explains this relationship through the metaphor of the sea and the waves. The waves, he says, are ultimately nothing other than various forms assumed by the sea itself. In this sense the waves cannot subsist independently of the sea. But the sea, on its part, as long as it is sea, cannot be without waves. In each individual wave the sea appears in a different form from all others. But throughout all the different waves the reality of the sea remains one.

The important point here to remark is that, just as the waves cannot exist without the sea, so also the sea is inseparable from the waves. This would imply in a non-metaphorical language that the reality of "existence" is inseparable from the phenomenal things. The reality of "existence" cannot but manifest itself in various phenomenal forms; the original Nothingness cannot but determine itself into an infinity of divergent, concrete things. Thus is created the empirical world. Theologically we might express the same conception by saying that God out of His limitless Mercy, and because of His limitless Mercy, cannot but give Himself to all things. "Existence" which spreads itself through its variously manifested forms is called in this respect "Mercy" (*raḥmah*), or the "breath of Mercifulness" (*nafas raḥmânî*). Ontologically the same is called *wujûd lâ bi-sharṭ qismî*, i.e. "existence as non-conditioned" which must be distinguished from *lâ bi-sharṭ maqsamî* "existence as absolutely non-conditioned" which, as we have mentioned earlier, is the Mystery of Mysteries where "existence"-itself transcends even the condition of being non-conditioned. The *lâ bi-sharṭ* "non-conditioned" which applies to the "breath of Mercifulness", on the contrary, means that "existence" in its self-manifesting and self-revealing aspect, is "existence" which is not determined and particularized by being exclusively attached to any particular form. Rather it is the reality of "existence" considered as being capable of, and being ready to, appear in any determined form whatsoever. "Existence" here is conceived as being in a special mode of indetermination in the sense that it is the center of a limitless number of possible determinations.

And yet, as I have repeatedly pointed out, "existence" is one in whatever determined form it may appear. In this particular sense, the whole world of Being, including both its visible and invisible regions, is one single reality of "existence". It is precisely in this sense that the people of *waḥdat al-wujûd* understand the famous saying: *Kâna Allâh wa-lam yakun ma'a-hu shay'*, "God was, and there was nothing besides Him". This dictum which is usually understood to refer to the state of affairs before God created the world, is given a completely different interpretation by the people of *waḥdat al-wujûd*. According to them, this dictum must be understood as referring to an eternal ontological truth which is valid beyond all limitations of time. The statement hold true eternally. "God was, and there was nothing besides Him" is not a description of a particular state of affairs before the creation of the world. It is equally true of the situation of the world after it has been created. In other words, "God is, and God will be; and there is, and there will be, nothing besides Him", for in reality there is in the whole world of Being nothing which is legitimately entitled to be regarded as "other" (*ghayr*) than God.

The preceding analysis has thus brought to light as the basic structure of *waḥdat al-wujûd* type of metaphysics four stages of "existence" and four ontological modes of "existence".

The four basic stages are:

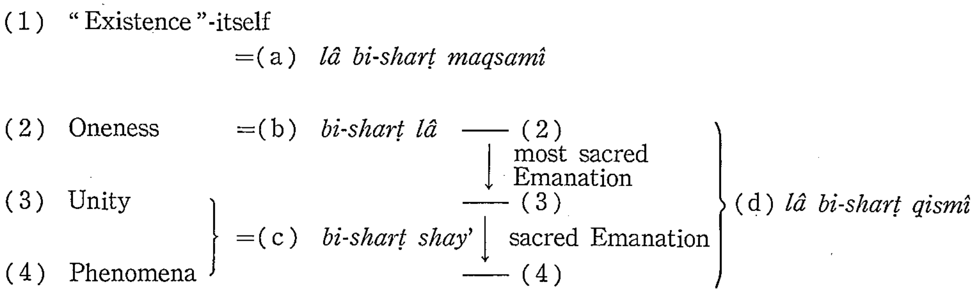
(1) *Dhât al-wujûd,* "existence"-itself in its absolute purity.
(2) *Aḥadîyah,* absolute Oneness; "existence" without any articulation.
(3) *Wâḥidîyah,* the Unity of Multiplicity; "existence" with inner articulations; the stage of the eternal Archetypes.
(4) Phenomenal "existence".

The four modes of "existence" are:

(a) *Lâ bi-sharṭ maqsamî,* "existence" as absolutely non-conditioned.
(b) *Bi-sharṭ lâ,* "existence" as negatively conditioned.
(c) *Bi-sharṭ shay',* "existence" as conditioned by being-something.
(d) *Lâ bi-sharṭ qismî* , "existence" as relatively non-conditioned.

The correlation of these two conceptual systems one with the other may be graphically shown by the following diagram:

Reality of "existence"


(1) "Existence"-itself
=(a) *lâ bi-sharṭ maqsamî*
(2) Oneness
=(b) *bi-sharṭ lâ*
(2)
most sacred Emanation
(3) Unity
(3)
(4) Phenomena
=(c) *bi-sharṭ shay'*
sacred Emanation
(4)
(d) *lâ bi-sharṭ qismî*

IV

THE FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE OF SABZAWARI'S METAPHYSICS

THE FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE OF SABZAWARI'S METAPHYSICS

Chapter 1

The Significance of Sabzawarian Metaphysics

Ḥâjî Mullâ Hâdî Sabzawârî, the thinker whose metaphysical doctrine we shall study in this work, was by common agreement an outstanding Persian philosopher of the nineteenth century in Persia. At the same time he was among the first-rate Ṣûfî masters of the age.

The fact that Sabzawârî was a philosopher-mystic of nineteenth century in Iran is itself, alone, of great significance to all who are interested in the history of Islamic thought. It will be of even greater importance for the many who have grown dissatisfied with the existing so-called "histories of Muslim philosophy" in both European languages and Arabic.

To elucidate this point we may divide the statement that Sabzawârî was a philosopher-mystic of the nineteenth century into two component parts which we shall consider separately: 1) that he was a philosopher-mystic, 2) that he was a man of the last century.

The first part of the statement refers to the fact that his metaphysical system in its entirety is a solid conceptual construction which is a result of philosophizing based upon a profound mystical or gnostic intuition of Reality. As a mystic, Sabzawârî was able by the most intimate and personal kind of experience to penetrate into the very depth of the so-called Ocean of Being and witness the secrets of Being with his own spiritual eye (*baṣîrah*). As a philosopher, equipped with a sharp analytic ability, he was able to analyze his basic metaphysical experience into well-defined concepts and then to put these concepts together in the form of a scholastic system. His metaphysics, in short, is a peculiar type of scholastic philosophy based upon a personal mystical intuition of Reality. Of this aspect of his thought we shall have more to say later on. We turn now to the chronological aspect of the problem, that is, to the significance of Sabzawârî's having been a thinker who lived and worked in the nineteenth century.

The interest of the Western world of learning in Islamic philosophy has, in the past, centered upon the active influence which Muslim thinkers exercised upon the historical formation of Christian scholastic philosophy in the Middle Ages. In order to study historically the philosophical ideas of such great thinkers as Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, for example, one cannot do without a detailed and accurate knowledge of at least two of the representative philosophers of the Muslim world, Avicenna (Ibn Sînâ, 980–1037) and Averroës (Ibn Rushd, 1126–1198). "Histories" of Western philosophy in the Middle Ages, in consequence, almost invariably include an important chapter on the history of Muslim philosophy.

Quite characteristically, however, the "history" of Muslim philosophy viewed from this perspective practically comes to an end with the death of Averroës, leaving the reader with the impression that Muslim philosophy itself also ceased to be when that great thinker died. In reality, what came to an end was only the living influence exercised by Muslim philosophy upon the formative process of Western philosophy. With the death of Averroës Muslim philosophy ceased to be alive for the West, but this does not mean that it ceased to be alive for the East as well.

It is important in this connection to remark that even those "histories" of Muslim philosophy written, not as chapters in the history of Western philosophy, but for their own sakes, are dominated by the idea that the golden age of Muslim philosophy is the period of three centuries extending from Fârâbî (872–950) to Averroës, and that after Averroës, in the ages subsequent to the Mongol invasion, except for few isolated prominent figures, the Muslim world produced nothing but commentators and super-commentators——a long chain of lifeless and mechanical repetitions, without any spark of real creativity and originality.

That this is not a true picture of the historical facts will immediately become clear if one but takes the pain to peruse some of the latest works on the intellectual activity of the Ṣafawî Dynasty.[1] It is only quite recently however, that scholars have begun to realize that philosophical thinking in Islam did not fall irretrievably into decadence and fossilization after the Mongol invasion.

In fact, the truth of the matter is such that we can go to the extent of asserting, and that without exaggeration, that a kind of philosophy which deserves to be regarded as typically and characteristically Islamic developed only *after* the death of Averroës, rather than *before*. This typically Islamic philosophy arose and matured in the periods subsequent to the Mongol invasion, until in the Ṣafawî period[2] in Persia it reached the apex of vigorous creativity. This peculiar type of Islamic philosophy developed in Persia among the Shî'ah, and come to be known as *Ḥikmat*[3] (lit. " wisdom ") which we may, following the suggestion advanced by Professor Henry Corbin,[4] translate as *theo-sophia* or theosophy.

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[1] See for example the article "The School of Ispahan" by Prof. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif, vol. II (Wiesbaden, O. Harrassowitz, 1966) pp. 904–932; and *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, vol. I, by Henry Corbin, (Paris, Gallimard 1964).

[2] Extending from the beginning of the sixteenth century down to 1737; over two centuries.

The tradition of the *Ḥikmat*-type of philosophy in Persia produced a long chain of outstanding thinkers and innumerable works of great value. Upwards, the chain goes back beyond the Ṣafawî period to Avicenna; downwards, it can be traced without interruption even to the present century. In the very middle of this long chain of philosophers stands the soaring figure of Ṣadr al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî, commonly known as Mullâ Ṣadrâ (1571/72–1640). He was the man who in the true sense of the word revivified Islamic philosophy, in that he assimilated all the important ideas developed by his predecessors, and elaborated them by his original philosophical genius into a grand-scale system of theosophy, at the same time opening the gate to a limitless possibility of further developments in future. Hâdî Sabzawârî represents precisely the highest peak reached by this philosophical tradition in the nineteenth century.

For our particular purpose,[5] the formal structure of the *Ḥikmat*-type of thinking may conveniently be analyzed from two angles: (1) as pure philosophy, and (2) as something based on mystical or gnostic experience of the ultimate Reality.

Looked at from the first of these two points of view, *Ḥikmat* discloses itself as a perfect scholastic philosophy. As such, it is a solid, and strictly logical system, or systems, of scholastic concepts, most of which go back to Avicenna. The main body of the philosophical terms and concepts——and, in particular, the metaphysical ones——used by the *Ḥikmat* thinkers are those firmly established by the Head of the Peripatetics, Avicenna, and further developed and elaborated by his immediate as well as indirect followers, such as Bahmaniyâr b. Marzbân[6] (d. 1066), Abû al-

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[3] For the composite nature of the concept of *Ḥikmat*, see the above-mentioned artielc by Prof. Hossein Nasr, *op. cit.*, p. 907.

[4] See his *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques* (Paris-Téhéran, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1965) pp. 82-83.

[5] The present paper purports mainly to bring to light the universal value of this kind of philosophy in the field of metaphysics. It is not concerned with localizing it, so to speak, as a characteristically Shî'î phenomenon. (Shî'î nature of the *Ḥikmat* has been fully brought to light by Professor Henry Corbin.) This should not be taken to mean that we underestimate the importance of the Shî'î aspect of the matter. Quite the contrary, we are fully conscious of the fact that the esoteric teachings of the Imams played a major role in the historical formation of the *Ḥikmat*. But this aspect of the matter is irrelevant to our immediate purpose.

[6] Or Abû al-Ḥasan al-Bahmaniyâr. Originally a Zoroastrian, later converted to Islam, he was one of the most notable immediate students of Avicenna. He left an important work on philosophy called *Kitâb al-Taḥṣîl*.

'Abbâs al-Lawkarî,[7] (d. 1066) Naṣîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî (d. 1273), Dabîrân al-Kâtibî al-Qazwînî[8] (d. 1276), Quṭb al-Dîn al-Shirâzî[9] (d. 1311), and others.

The most important of them all for our immediate purpose is Naṣîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî, because it was Ṭûsî who represented the authentic form of Avicennism for the subsequent ages of *Ḥikmat* philosophy. Avicenna, after his death in 1037, was severely attacked by al-Ghazâlî, (the Latin Algazel d. 1111), and Averroës.[10] The former attacked Avicenna in the name of true Islamic belief, and the latter in the name of an authentic Aristotelianism. Ṭûsî defended Avicenna against all these criticisms in the most logical and philosophical way. In his admirable commentary on *al-Ishârât wa-al-Tanbîhât,* he presented the Avicennian ideas in their original and authentic forms and reformulated them into a perfect system of Peripatetic philosophy. And in his *Tajrîd al-'Aqâ'id,* he presented his own theologico-metaphysical system.[11]

With regard to the mystical or gnostic experience underlying the whole struc-

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7) Abû al-'Abbâs al-Lawkarî was a disciple of Bahmaniyâr and the author of a book called *Bayân al-Ḥaqq bi-Ḍamân al-Ṣidq,* a systematic exposition of Peripatetic philosophy based on Avicenna and al-Fârâbî, and comprising Logica, Physica, and Metaphysica. Aside from the fact that it is one of the earliest systematizations of Islamic scholasticism, the book is of a particular historical importance because Lawkarî's intellectual activity is said to have been the direct cause of the wide spread of the philosophical disciplines in Khurâsân (cf. 'Alî b. Zayd al-Bayhaqî: *Tatimmah Ṣiwân al-Ḥikmah,* ed. Shafî', Lahore, 1935, p. 120).

8) A contemporary and friend of Naṣîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî, he is known as the author of two extremely important works: (1) *Shamsîyah* (more precisely, *Kitâb al-Shamsîyah fî-l-Qawâ'id al-Manṭiqîyah*), a complete system of Aristotelian logic, and (2) *Kitâb Ḥikmah al-'Ayn,* a systematic exposition of Peripatetic philosophy.

(9) A student of Naṣîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî, he was a famous astronomer and philosopher. In the field of Peripatetic philosophy, he left a remarkable work written in Persian entitled *Durrah al-Tâj* (*li-Ghurrah al-Dîbâj fî al-Ḥikmah*). His particular importance comes also from the fact that he was a disciple of Ṣadr al-Dîn al-Qunyawî or al-Qûnawî (d. 1273) who was himself the most notable of the disciples of Ibn 'Arabî and who contributed very much toward a scholastic systematization of his Master's mystic teachings. He was at the same time one of the most popular expositors of Suhrawardî's Illuminationist (*ishrâqî*) philosophy thus serving, as Professor Nasr puts it, as "the main link between these two great masters of gnosis", Ibn 'Arabî and Suhrawardî.

10) We may add Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî (d. 1209) as another intransigent critic of Avicennism. His arguments against Avicenna, however, are not, from our point of view, so important, because most of them are due to misunderstandings and hasty judgments on the part of Râzî.

11) This small book later became one of the most widely studied basic texts of philosophy and philosophical theology, and various scholars have composed commentaries upon it. One of them by 'Abd al-Razzâq al-Lâhîjî (d. 1662), a disciple of Mullâ Ṣadrâ and his son-in-law, entitled *Shawâriq al-Ilhâm* is a vast commentary upon the *Tajrîd.* It is a masterly work in this field of *Ḥikmat* philosophy. The book is especially important for our purpose because it is one of the main direct sources upon which Sabzawârî drew for his exposition of metaphysical problems.

ture of the *Ḥikmat* type of philosophy, we may begin by remarking that it is not the outcome of mere intellectual labor on the level of reason. It is rather an original product of the activity of a keen analytic reason combined with, and backed by, a profound intuitive grasp of reality, or even of something beyond that kind of reality which is accessible to human consciousness. It represents logical thinking based on something grasped by what we might call supra-consciousness. In this respect *Ḥikmat* philosophy is faithful to the spirit of Ibn 'Arabî (1165–1240) and Suhrawardî (1155–1191).

A perfect fusion of mystical experience and analytic thinking into a conceptual structure of scholasticism was achieved in a consistent and systematic fashion by Suhrawardî. He himself formulated this reciprocal essential relationship between mystical experience and logical reasoning as the most basic principle of both mysticism and philosophy. One would commit a grave mistake, he argued,[12] if one thought that "one could become a philosopher (lit.: a member of the 'people of Wisdom') by dint of studying books only, without treading the path of Sanctity (i.e. *via mystica*) and without having the immediate experience of the spiritual Lights. Just as a walker (of the path of Sanctity), i.e. a mystic, who lacks the power of analytic thinking is but an imperfect mystic, so is a researcher (of the Truth), i.e. a philosopher, lacking the immediate experience of the divine mysteries but an imperfect and insignificant philosopher".[13]

This is no proper place for going into detail about the Illuminationist (*ishrâqî*) metaphysics of Suhrawardî.[14] One point, however, must be mentioned because of the decisive influence it exercised upon the formation of the later *Ḥikmat* philosophy. Suhrawardî regarded "existence" (*wujûd*), as a mere concept, something mental which is a product of a subjective view-point of the human mind, and corresponding to nothing real in the concrete external world. Superficially, this is the exact opposite of the thesis held by such *Ḥikmat* philosophers as Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî, for whom "existence", in the sense of *actus essendi*, precisely is the reality or Reality. Upon reflection, however, we find the opposition merely formal and superficial. It is a mere matter of different formulations, or rather of different ways of experiencing the same Reality. For Suhrawardî establishes, in place of "existence", as something really "real" the spiritual and metaphysical Light (*nûr*) which is the one and single reality having an infinite number of degrees and stages in terms of intensity and weakness, the highest degree being the Light of all lights (*nûr al-anwâr*) and the lowest being Darkness (*ẓulmah*).

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[12] *Muṭâraḥât* § 111, *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica*, ed. Henry Corbin, vol. I (Istanbul-Leipzig, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1945) p. 361.

[13] *Ibid.*:

..... ظناً منهم أن الانسان يصير من أهل الحكمة بمجرّد قراءة كتاب دون أن يسلک سبيل القدس
و يشاهد الأَنوار الروحانية.

كما أَن السالک ، اذا لم يكن له قوة بحثيّة، هو ناقص ، فكذا الباحث، اذا لَم يكن معه مشاهدة آيات
من الملكوت، يكون ناقصاً غير معتبر ولا مستنطق من القدس.

[14] For an excellent introductory survey of the Suhrawardian position see Professor Hossein Nasr's papers: *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1964) pp. 52–82; and "*Shihâb al-Dîn Suhrawardî Maqtûl*" in *A History of Muslim Philosophy* ed. by M.M. Sharif, vol. I (Wiesbaden, O. Harrassowitz, 1963) pp. 372–398.

It is to be observed that this concept of metaphysical "light" exactly corresponds to that of "existence" as understood by philosophers like Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî. We shall discuss this point in full detail in the course of this paper. The later *Ḥikmat* philosophers were gravely influenced by this Illuminationist conception, so much so that they came to conceive of "existence", the ultimate reality, as being something of a "luminous" (*nûrî*) nature. The reality of "existence" is the Light, the very nature of "light" being to be "self-manifesting in itself and bringing others into manifestation" (*ẓâhir bi nafsi-hi wa-muẓhir li-ghayri-hi*). It is, in brief, the Presence (*ḥuḍûr*) of itself and of others. All this, however, cannot be grasped by rational demonstration. It is a truth that can be realized only through something completely different from thinking and reasoning, i.e. inner vision and inner illumination.15)

Ibn 'Arabî, another great master of gnosis of roughly the same period as Suhrawardî, took exactly the same position regarding the reciprocal essential relationship between philosophy and mysticism. The fundamental principle, namely, that a mystic without the power of conceptual thinking is an imperfect mystic, just as a philosopher without mystical experiences is but an imperfect philosopher, this principle which we found to be the guiding spirit of Suhrawardî's thought, is also the very basis on which stands the whole structure of Ibn 'Arabî's metaphysics.16) Ibn 'Arabî himself did not explicitly formulate the principle in this particular form. All his works, however, are nothing but a grand-scale exemplification of this principle.

As regards philosophy, that is, the Peripatetic type of philosophy, we may note that Ibn 'Arabî, while still a young man in Spain, was personally acquainted with the Muslim representative of Aristotelianism, Averroës; and that he was familiar with the philosophical concepts of Aristotle and Plato. Fully equipped with this conceptual apparatus, he was able in a most logical way to analyze his inner

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15) Cf. *Ḥikmah al-Ishrâq* ed. Henry Corbin, *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica*, vol. II (Paris-Téhéran, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1952) pp. 10–11.

16) For an analysis of Ibn 'Arabî's metaphysical world-view, see my work: *A Comparative Study of The Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism*, 2 volumes (Tokyo, Keio Univ., 1966–67), the first volume of which is wholly devoted to Ibn 'Arabî.

visions of Reality and elaborate them into an unusual metaphysical world-view. The latter is thus a solidly structured system of metaphysical concepts based directly upon his theophanic visions.

There are, according to Ibn 'Arabî, two aspects to the Absolute itself. In its first aspect it is the absolute unknown-unknowable, the Mystery of mysteries. The Absolute at this stage is beyond even the stage at which it manifests itself as "god".

The second of the two aspects is the stage at which the Absolute turns its face to the world of Being. Theologically speaking, it is the Face of God, God as He manifests Himself to others. But this latter expression is right only on condition that we understand the "others" to be nothing other than Himself, His self-manifestation or theophanies (*tajallî*, pl. *tajallîyât*). This second aspect of the Absolute further divides itself into a number of sub-stages constituting as a whole a vast hierarchical order of "existents" (*mawjûd*, pl. *mawjûdât*), the lowest stage being that of material and sensible things as we perceive them in the present world. Since those various stages of being are nothing other than so many self-manifestations of the Absolute, the whole world, ranging from the Mystery of mysteries to material things, is ultimately and metaphysically one. This conception is what is usually known as the transcendental Unity of existence (*waḥdah al-wujûd*). All existents are many, and at the same time one, one and at the same time many.[17]

These metaphysical ideas of Ibn 'Arabî exercised a marked influence upon the historical formation of the *Ḥikmat* conception of "existence". This is an extremely important point for a right understanding of Sabzawarian metaphysics.

We may begin by noting that in the school of Ibn 'Arabî itself, the above-mentioned two aspects of the Absolute were understood as two aspects of "existence". The first aspect or stage, that of the Mystery of mysteries, for the immediate followers of Ibn 'Arabî represented "existence" in its absoluteness, or as al-Qâshânî says,[18] it is nothing other than "existence" pure and simple (*wujûd baḥt*) *qua* "existence". The idea was taken over by the *Ḥikmat* philosophers with this understanding, and as we shall see presently, it played an exceedingly important role in their metaphysical systems.

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[17] On this aspect of Ibn 'Arabî, the best exposition is found in Professor Hossein Nasr's work *Three Muslim Sages*, pp. 83–121.

[18] In his famous commentary on Ibn 'Arabî's *Fuṣûṣ al-Ḥikam* (Cairo, 1321 A.H.) p. 3:

حقيقة الحق المسماة بالذات الأَحدية ليست غير الوجود البحت من حيث هو وجود، لا بشرط اللاتعيّن
ولا بشرط التعيّن. فهو من حيث هو مقدّس عن النعوت و الأَسماء ، لا نعت له ولا رسم ولا اسم ولا اعتبار
للكثرة فيه بوجه من الوجوه.

'Abd al-Razzâq al-Qâshânî or Kâshânî (d. 1335) is one of the most prominent figures in the school of Ibn 'Arabî.

It is interesting that the *Ḥikmat* philosophers came in this way to consider the ultimate Reality as "pure existence", that is "existence" in its absolute form. This fact is interesting because in other traditions of Oriental philosophy, like Taoism and Zen Buddhism for example, precisely the same entity is conceived as Nothingness. At the basis of this negative conception lies the realization that the Absolute in its transcendent absoluteness stands beyond the opposition of "existence" and "non-existence". Out of this limitless and beginningless metaphysical Nothingness there appears Existence, and through Existence the infinity of concrete existents issue forth to constitute the world of Being.

It is readily observable, however, that this absolute Nothingness——the "Oriental Nothingness" as it is often called——corresponds exactly, even in its being of a negative nature conceptually, to Ibn 'Arabî's conception of the Mystery of mysteries. Thus Existence, which in non-Islamic traditions makes its appearance only as the stage immediately following Nothingness, corresponds in the system of Ibn 'Arabî to the second stage of "existence", the stage of theophany at which "existence" of the first stage reveals itself. In *Ḥikmat* philosophy, this second stage of "existence" is conceived as "unfolded existence" or "everspreading existence" (*wujûd munbasiṭ*), while the first stage of "existence" is called, as we have just seen, "pure existence", that is, "existence" in its absolute purity. These two are the most basic of all the key-terms of Sabzawarian metaphysics, and as such they will be discussed in detail below.

Both Suhrawardî and Ibn 'Arabî exercised a tremendous influence on the thinkers who came after them and thereby radically changed the course of philosophy in Islam, especially in Persia. These two schools of mysticism tended to converge and were gradually welded into a particular form of philosophy by the efforts of men like Quṭb al-Dîn al-Shirâzî[19] and others. A decisive moment in the development came when, in the middle of the Ṣafawî period there appeared an extraordinary philosopher who, incorporating and integrating all the key-concepts of Avicenna, Suhrawardî, and Ibn 'Arabî——to mention only the greatest names——into his own thought, created a philosophical world-view of an immense dimension. That man was Mullâ Ṣadrâ of Shirâz. It was he who for the first time firmly established the self-subsistent theosophic system we now know as *Ḥikmat* philosophy, constructing it as a perfect unity of mysticism and scholasticism. The position he occupies in the history of the later development of Islamic philosophy compares favorably in both scope and depth with that of Aristotle in Greek philosophy and that of Avicenna in the earlier ages of Islamic thought.

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19) See above, note 9.

Like Suhrawardî, Mullâ Ṣadrâ was wholly convinced of the reciprocal relationship between mystical experience and logical thinking. All philosophizing which does not lead to the highest spiritual realization is but a vain and useless pastime, just as all mystical experience which is not backed by a rigorous conceptual training in philosophy is but a way to illusions and aberrations.[20] Such was the conviction he had obtained through his own personal experience. The meeting point, in this experience, of mysticism and philosophy was furnished by a sudden illuminative realization of the ultimate oneness of the subject (*'âqil*) and the object (*ma'qûl*)——the seer and the seen——and of the intellect (*'aql*) itself. For in such a spiritual state alone can the metaphysical reality of things be intuited as it really *is*, as opposed to the way it ordinarily *looks*.

The type of philosophy thus established by Mullâ Ṣadrâ produced a long chain of outstanding thinkers. Sabzawârî, as we said at the outset, represents the culmination of this school of Eastern scholasticism in the nineteenth century, although, to be sure, he differs from the founder of the school on several important points.

As we also said previously, the fact that Sabzawârî was a man of the nineteenth century is quite significant in a number of respects. Perhaps its greatest importance is the indication that, unlike in the West, the Eastern branch of scholastic philosophy was yet vigorously alive in the last century, as it still is to-day in a certain sense. Eastern scholasticism, thus, has had a much longer life and has achieved a far richer development than its Western counterpart. Metaphysical problems that had been raised long ago in the Middle Ages were still being hotly discussed and seriously considered in the nineteenth century. This is not a matter to be lightly dismissed as something "old-fashioned" or anachronistic. Just as a man who lives to a ripe old age, particularly if he happens to be a philosopher, tends to rise to many interesting and valuable insights never to be found in those who die young, Eastern scholasticism is characterized by an extraordinary ripeness and refinement of ideas that has been attained only by a centuries-old elaboration of its philosophical concepts. It possesses a degree of refinement not found in Western scholasticism, whose life was cut short by the rise of modern philosophy.

In the twentieth century, the scholastic way of thinking has been revived in the West in a somewhat modernized form by Catholic thinkers like Jacques Maritain and other so-called neo-Thomists. This intellectual movement, however, is nothing more than a revival of Thomism, the fundamental idea being that "all existential roads lead to Rome——or, more exactly, to the Paris of the thirteenth century where St. Thomas taught his doctrine of the priority of existence.[21]

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20) See Henry Corbin, the Introduction to his edition of Mullâ Ṣadrâ's *Kitâb al-Mashâ'ir, Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques, op. cit.*, pp. 4–5, 7.

21) William Barrett: *Irrational Man, A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York, Anchor Books, 1962) p. 106.

The existence of a wide break in the scholastic tradition in the West makes itself acutely felt in the handling of the concept of "existence" in modern Existentialism. The modern Existentialist is almost exclusively concerned, as Jacques Maritain puts it,[22] with the "existential spot of actuality", thus totally phenomenalizing the concrete "existent". From the view-point of a Mullâ Ṣadrâ or Sabzawârî, Maritain's criticism of modern Existentialism is not wholly justified. There *is*, according to them, a certain respect in which the philosopher has to stand face to face with "existence" pure and simple in complete isolation from all "existents", and in which the latter must be totally phenomenalized. It is also true that this most basic metaphysical truth can be realized only in and through the innermost heart of human "existence", that is "existence" as actualized in its pure subjectivity. This is true on condition that we understand the "subjective existence" in the sense of supra-consciousness, which a thinker like Sartre, however, would never accept.

Ḥikmat philosophy partially agrees with modern Existentialism, particularly in the latter's assertion of the fundamental reality of "existence", and the primacy of "existence" over "essence". At the same time, the representatives of *Ḥikmat* philosophy naturally disagree with the Existentialists on many important and basic points. The main difference between the two arises from the fact mentioned above that *Ḥikmat* philosophy is a result of an organic and harmonious unification of mysticism and conceptual thinking. Viewed from the particular perspective of *Ḥikmat* thinkers, modern Existentialism is found to be characterized by an obvious disharmony and imbalance.

For instance, Martin Heidegger's understanding of "existence", which he has reached in the latter phase of his career, is remarkably close and akin to the Oriental understanding. His idea of "existence" as an "open clearing" (*Lichtung*) into which man can and should ex-sist, i.e. transcend himself; his concept of the truth as the "unhiddenness" in the etymological sense of the Greek word *alêtheiâ*; his concept of "knowing" (*wissen*) as "being able to stand in the truth,——the *truth* meaning here the disclosedness (*Offenbarkeit*) of the existent"[23]——all these and other related basic ideas of Heideggerian metaphysics immediately evoke in our minds Suhrawardî's idea of "reality" and "knowing" as presence (*ḥuḍûr*) and Light (*nûr*).

Yet the two definitely part from each other when Heidegger makes it clear that his philosophizing about "existence" stands on the basis that "thinking only begins at the point where we have come to know that Reason, glorified for centuries; is the most obstinate adversary of thinking".[24] In such an understanding of "thinking" the *Ḥikmat* philosopher could in no way acquiesce, for he is firmly convinced that philosophy should not be only a series of mystico-poetical visions. The ultimate Reality for the *Ḥikmat* philosopher can be reached——if at all——only by a supra-sensible intuition in which the subject and object of cognition are completely unified and fused with each other. Once he has obtained the vision of Reality, however, he must return to the level of Reason, and on that very level analyze what he has seen in terms of rigorously defined concepts, reconstructing the whole as a solidly structured world-view. For him that precisely is the only authentic way of philosophical "thinking". Philosophy in this respect is totally different from poetry and mere mysticism.

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[22] Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (New York, Vintage Books, 1966) p. 25.

[23] These ideas have been picked up from Heidegger's works: *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* (1947), *Uber den "Humanismus"* (1949), *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (1943), and *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1953).

Alongside Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre appears as a sharp and thoroughgoing dialectician. His way of thinking is tenaciously logical and typically scholastic. We find in him, however, a conspicuous lack of an element present in Heidegger in superabundance and to satiety; namely, that spiritual realization of the "open clearing" of "existence". As in the case of Descartes and Kant, in Sartre's eyes the world of Being is irreparably split apart into the sphere of human consciousness (*l'être-pour-soi*) and the sphere of things (*l'être-en-soi*), subject and object. The chasm dividing these two fundamental spheres of Being can never be bridged over. The objective world of things is a self-contained world of solid entities, while the subjective world of consciousness is a world of perpetual movement, always wavering, uneasy, and radically insecure, being doomed to go perpetually beyond itself, and yet never able to go really out of its own subjective enclosure. We already know what kind of solution the *Ḥikmat* philosopher would offer to this difficulty of Cartesian dualism.

We may now come to some provisional conclusions. It has become clear that 1) Eastern scholasticism as represented by *Ḥikmat* philosophy fully deserves to be studied for its own sake and 2) that it furnishes a very interesting term of comparison with Western scholasticism. An entire new field of comparative studies is open to be explored in the field of East-West philosophy. For this comparative purpose, however, we should no longer be content merely with studying Avicenna and Averroës in relation to Thomas Aquinas.

In a wide perspective such as we now envisage, even Avicenna represents but a preparatory stage. For just as, in the West, Thomas and those who came after him were influenced by Avicenna, reacted to his ideas positively or negatively, and went on developing his ideas in a particular way, so also in the East the basic Avicennian theses were critically accepted, and went on being developed in quite

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24) W. Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

an original manner in the tradition of *Ḥikmat* philosophy. A comparative study of these two different forms of scholasticism, Eastern and Western, would surely yield a number of important results which might even go beyond the horizon of comparative philosophy to affect the very *Problematik* of the significance of philosophical thinking in general.

Chapter 2

The Notion and the Reality of Existence

It is quite characteristic of *Ḥikmat* scholasticism in general that the thinkers belonging to this school distinguish between two levels of reference, (1) the level of notion (*mafhûm*) and (2) the level of external reality, and try consistently and consciously never to lose sight of this basic distinction and never to confuse one with the other. Confusion between these two levels of reference leads, when it is done consciously, to sophistry; and, when it is done unconsciously, to mistakes or misunderstandings.

The Sabzawarian theory of "existence" contains an elaborate semantic system based on the principle of a straightforward, clear-cut distinction between the notion of "existence" and the reality of "existence". The structure of Sabzawârî's metaphysics can never be properly understood unless we grasp clearly the significance of this distinction between the two levels of reference.

The first of these two levels of reference, that of "notion", may also be called the "conceptual" level. The word "concept", however, is misleading in this context, because the original Arabic word *mafhûm* literally means "that which is understood", and it refers primarily to a preconceptual stage of understanding, though it does not preclude the stage of secondary elaboration of what has been understood at the primary stage. Only when it reaches the stage of elaboration does "what is understood" become fully entitled to be called "concept".

The very first thesis of Sabzawarian metaphysics is the self-evidence (*badâhah*) of "existence". In terms of the basic distinction just mentioned, it should be understood that this thesis concerns the level of notion, and the level of notion alone. It is also extremely important to note that the thesis refers to the self-evident nature of the "preconceptual" understanding of the verb *is* or *exists*. The notion of "existence" in the particular sense is something that occurs to our minds naturally and spontaneously. It is self-evident (*badîhî*). Whenever in ordinary life we hear a proposition of the type "*x* is" or "*x* exists", "There is a table" or "The table exists", for example, we immediately understand what is meant thereby.

The understanding is an instantaneous occurrence; we become conscious of what is meant without any reflection, and we react to the proposition accordingly. That which occurs to our minds in this way without the intermediary of any process of inference, that precisely is the "notion" or *mafhûm* of "existence".

Not only is this notion of "existence" itself self-evident, but the judgment that it is self-evident is also self-evident. No notion is more naturally evident than the notion of "existence". It is reducible to nothing else, while all other notions are ultimately reducible to it, in the sense that without this preconceptual understanding of "existence" we could not understand anything else.

It is not irrelevant to remark that this is the very problem that has been raised and so laboriously elaborated in our own day by Martin Heidegger. He also starts from the basic thesis that the notion of "existence" in the sense of a preconceptual understanding of the verb "to be" (*Sein*) is absolutely self-evident, that it is the most primary of all notions for every man in his ordinary life. For Heidegger, no less than for Sabzawârî, it is the fundamental notion to which all others are ultimately reducible and in terms of which alone all other things can be understood. But, Heidegger argues, its being self-evident in ordinary life does not mean that it is also evident and clear philosophically. "On the contrary, it remains in the dark because for most ordinary purposes we need not ask any questions about it. The whole aim of Heidegger's thinking is to bring this sense of Being into the light".25) Long before Heidegger decided to make this his major problem, the *Ḥikmat* philosophers, from the sixteenth century on, had been preoccupied with it as one of the central themes of their philosophical thinking.

Another important similarity between Heidegger and the *Ḥikmat* philosophers of the school of Mullâ Ṣadrâ should not remain unnoticed. It concerns the strict and thoroughgoing distinction which both make between the participial form of Being i.e. *mawjûd* "that-which-is" or "existent" (German *das Seiende*, Latin *ens*) and the verbal form of Being, i.e. *wujûd* "to-be" or "existence" (German *das Sein*, Latin *esse*, i.e. *actus essendi*). According to Heidegger the philosophical thought of Western man has, throughout its entire history, been exclusively preoccupied with the "existent" (*ens*), leaving the more fundamental "existence" (*esse*) in oblivion.26) This attitude has, in his view, determined the fateful course taken by ontology in the West. Mullâ Ṣadrâ would have said the same thing with regard

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25) William Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

26) This is certainly an oversimplification, for there have been notable exceptions like Thomas Aquinas and others. The statement is interesting, however, as indicative of Heidegger's passionate preoccupation with the notion of "existence", which is true also of Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî. In addition there is no denying that an almost exclusive preoccupation with the "existent", as a heritage of Aristotelian metaphysics, has dominated the intellectual history of Western man.

to the traditional form of Peripatetic philosophy that had come down to him. The same preöccupation with "existence", i.e. the act of existing, characterizes the thinking of Mullâ Ṣadrâ and his school. Professor Henry Corbin is right in this sense, when he speaks of a radical "revolution" brought about by Mullâ Ṣadrâ in the field of metaphysics in Islam.[27)]

We have expressly drawn attention to this particular point, because not a few authoritative scholars are of the opinion that the thesis of the primacy of "existence" (*esse*), in the sense of the primary self-evidence of the notion of "existence", goes back directly to Avicenna. In a very curious way, Sabzawârî himself is also involved in this view.

To cite a contemporary example, one of the leading authorities on Avicenna, Dr. F. Rahman writes.[28)]

> Avicenna starts his discussion of existence in *Kitâb al-Shifâ', Metaphysics*, Book I, ch. 5, by saying that existence is one of the primary or basic concepts. Just as in the sphere of judgment we start from certain basic premises which cannot be deduced from more ultimate ones, similarly, in the sphere of concepts there are those which serve as basic ones. If there were no basic concepts and universal ideas we should have to go on *ad infinitum*. The ideas of existence and of unity, therefore, are the starting-points on which all the rest of our concepts which apply to reality are based.

Taken as it stands, nothing could be a more explicit declaration of the thesis that the understanding of "existence" is primary and self-evident. One might take this passage as a clear indication that Avicenna upholds exactly the same idea about the primacy of "existence" as do Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî; namely, that "existence"——understood in the sense of *das Sein, esse, actus essendi*, the verbal *to-be*——is something with which we are most immediately acquainted, something which naturally occurs to the human mind without the intermediary of any process of inference and to which all other notions are ultimately reducible. But does Avicenna really maintain this view?

An examination of the original text on which the above statement is based discloses that the key-word actually used is *mawjûd*, i.e. "existent" (*ens*), not *wu-*

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27) In his introduction to *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, *op. cit.*, p. 62. Here are his words: "Mollâ Ṣadrâ opère une révolution qui détrône la véritable métaphysique de l'essence, dont le règne durait depuis des siècles, depuis Fârâbî, Avicenne et Sohrawardî. Même s'il n'est pas impossible d'en déceler antérieurement les indices précurseurs, cet acte révolutionnaire a chez Mollâ Ṣadrâ sa vertu propre, car il commande toute la structure de sa doctrine".

28) *Essence and Existence in Avicenna, Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, vol IV (London, The Warburg Institute, London University, 1958) p. 4.

jûd, i.e. "existence" (*esse*).[29] Far from being a minor point, as it might appear to some, this choice of words is decisive.

That it is of decisive significance will be clear to all who have understood the basic distinction Heidegger attempts to make between *das Sein* and *das Seiende*. It is also of decisive importance to the philosophers of the school of Mullâ Ṣadrâ. For them, the "existent" (*mawjûd*) is analytically the same as a "quiddity (*mâhîyah*) which actually exists" or "quiddity in the state of actualization"; it is different from the act of existing (*wujûd*) by which a "quiddity" is actualized.

What Avicenna was actually trying to assert in the passage referred to by F. Rahman is the primacy and self-evidence of the notion of the "existent", that is, the notion of an existent thing, something that exists. His words cannot be taken directly as meaning that "existence" (*esse*) is primary and self-evident. Against this interpretation one may argue that to assert that the "existent" is immediately self-evident naturally implies also the assertion of the self-evidence of "existence". This argument is certainly true. From the viewpoint of an existentialist metaphysics, however, the two questions are quite different, or at least the point of emphasis is different. In this respect we must admit that Avicenna remains within the confines of Aristotelian metaphysics which, as Heidegger has pointed out, is primarily and directly concerned with the "existent", and which has to do with "existence" only in a secondary and indirect way.

The same shift from "existent" (*mawjûd*) to "existence" (*wujûd*) in the interpretation of the Avicennian position in this problem is observable in Sabzawârî himself. This very transposition is characteristic of the "existential" tendency of the school of Mullâ Ṣadrâ. It discloses the cardinal importance they attach to "existence" in the sense of *actus essendi*. The transposition is extremely important and interesting for a right understanding of Sabzawârî's thought. This, however,

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29) The text reads as follows, *al-Shifâ'*, *al-Ilâhîyât* (Cairo, 1960) p. 29:

ان الموجود والشی و الضروری، معانیها ترتسم في النفس ارتساماً اوّلیاً . لیس ذلک الارتسام مما یحتاج
الی أن یجلب بأشیاء أعرف منها . فانه کما أن فی باب التصدیق مبادء أوّلیة یقع التصدیق بها لذاتها ،
و یکون التصدیق بغیرها بسببها .... کذلک فی التصوّرات أشیاء هی مبادئی للتصّور، و هی
متصوّرة لذواتها ، و اذا أرید أن یدل علیها ، لم یکن ذلک بالحقیقة تعریفاً لمجهول، بل تنبیها و
اخطاراً بالبال باسم او بعلامة ربما کانت فی نفسها أخفی منه، لکنها ، لعلّة ما و حال ما ، تکون أظهر
طلالة .

The Latin translation (Venice, 1508) quoted by Dr. Rahman renders the word *mawjûd* correctly: Dicemus igitur quod *ens* et res necesse (it should be: the thing and the necessary) talia sunt quod statim imprimuntur in anima prima impressione que non acquiritur ex aliis notoribus se......"

is quite a different matter from the question whether Sabzawârî's interpretation of the Avicennian position itself is objectively right or not.

The passage in question is found at the beginning of the first chapter of Sabzawârî's *Sharḥ-e Manẓûmeh*, dealing with the absolutely self-evident nature of the preconceptual notion of "existence". There he quotes, probably from memory, a short passage from Avicenna's *Kitâb al-Najât*. It runs as follows:

> *Qâla al-shaykh al-ra'îs fî al-Najât inna al-wujûd lâ yumkin an yushraḥ bi-ghayr al-ism, li-anna-hu mabda' awwal li-kull sharḥ, fa-lâ sharḥ la-hu, bal ṣûratu-hu taqûm fî al-nafs bi-lâ tawassuṭ shay'.*
>
> The chief (of the Peripatetic Philosophers) states in his *Najât*: Existence (*wujûd*) cannot possibly be explicated except lexically, because it is itself the first principle of all explication. So it does not allow of any explication (by anything else). Rather, its essential form (i.e. its "notion") finds itself in the mind without the intermediary of anything else.

The original text of the *Nâjat*, however, does not speak of "existence" (*wujûd*) but of "existent (*mawjûd*). It reads as follows.[30]

> *Naqûl inna al-mawjûd lâ yumkin an yushraḥ bi-ghayr al-ism, li-anna-hu mabda' awwal li-kull sharḥ, fa-lâ sharḥ la-hu, bal ṣûratu-hu taqûm fî al-nafs bi-lâ tawassuṭ shay'.*

As we can see, the Sabzawarian quotation reproduces the original words of Avicenna with precision, except for one single word which stands at the beginning of the passage. In the Avicennian text, we find the word *mawjûd* instead of *wujûd*. That Avicenna here uses the word *mawjûd* consciously and with intention is clear from the context in which the passage is found. His intention is not at all to talk about *esse* or the act of existing. He is here discussing the "existents" (*entia*), i.e. the "things that exist", with respect to their division into "substances" and "accidents".

Be that as it may, the Sabzawarian thesis itself, in spite of this transposition between "existence" and "existent" or rather because of it, stands patent. "Existence", according to Sabzawârî, at the level of notion is self-evident i.e. *a priori*. It is the *a priori* nature of "existence" that we mean by speaking of the "primacy" of "existence" in this context.[31]

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[30] *Kitâb al-Najât* (Cairo, 1938) p. 200.

[31] This meaning must be distinguished from the meaning of the word "primacy" used in reference to the question of the relation between "existence" and "quiddity", a question which will be dealt with in detail later.

Since it is self-evident, primary, and *a priori*, "existence" must be understandable to all men. Everyone knows what the word *is* means; everyone is supposed to have at least that minimum amount of metaphysical intuition. This, however, does not mean that the "existence" of all things *in concreto* is equally accessible to all men. Being understood or perceived is not identical with "existence", nor is the former the condition of the latter. Rather, it is the latter that conditions all cognition. "Existence", although it is to be known only through cognition, is something lying beyond cognition. This peculiar relationship between cognition (*idrâk*) and "existence" is explained in an interesting way by Abû al-Barakât al-Baghdâdî in a passage of the *Metaphysics* of his *Kitâb al-Mu'tabar*,[32] as follows:

> When a man perceives something by one of his senses such as sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, and becomes aware of the thing as well as of his own act of perceiving it, he says of the thing that it is "existent" (*mawjûd*). What he means by its being "existent" is different from its being actually perceived. Rather, what he means thereby is that the thing is in such a state that it could be perceived both before and after this particular act of perceiving, nay even before and after the perceiving of other perceivers. All this is due to the fact that the "thing" (*shay'*) is in itself in such a state that it could be perceived by any perceiver. And the thing (has always been, and is, and will be) in that very state before, and simultaneously with, and after, being perceived by a particular perceiver.
>
> It is this particular state (*ḥâlah*, which subsists before, with, and after, cognition) that is called——by those who prefer this appellation——"existence" (*wujûd*). And it is because of this state that a thing is called "existent" (*mawjûd*), what is meant thereby being that the thing is in such a state that it could be perceived.
>
> Then, on further reflection the mind realizes that perception (or cognition) is in no way inextricably involved in "existence", and that it (i.e. actual perception) is merely something that occurs to an "existent" in actual existence, something that occurs to it by being perceived by the perceiver. Thus being (actually) perceived is not something which belongs to the thing in itself. The real property which does belong to the thing in itself and by itself is merely that it is in such a state that it could be perceived.

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[32] Abû al-Barakât al-Baghdâdî, Ḥibat Allâh 'Alî b. Malkâ, a contemporary of Ghazâlî and Suhrawardî, who died a little after the year 1165. He was a Jew converted to Islam. He was quite an original philosopher who audaciously claimed that he had not learnt a great deal from his intensive study of the books written by others, but that rather he had developed his ideas by his own personal reflection on the "book of Being" (I, p. 3). Professor Pinès has made penetrating studies of this extraordinary thinker, beginning, with "Etudes sur Awḥad al-Zamân Abû l-Barakât al-Baghdâdî", *Revue des études juives*, III, 1938.

Furthermore there are, as is easy to observe, things which some men perceive but some others cannot. In such a case, the fact that the things are such that he who cannot perceive, cannot and does not perceive them, does not preclude them from being "existent". Nay, they *are* "existent" regardless of whether they be perceived or not. For it is quite possible that there are among the "existents" some which are not perceivable by anybody or by some people. This is true because cognition (i.e. being perceived) is not an essential condition of "existence". Rather, it is "existence" that is an essential condition of all cognition, although, to be sure, man becomes aware of the "existence" of an "existent" only through his perceiving it.

Thus it is not proper that the "existent" be defined as "something perceived" (i.e. an actual object of cognition); not even as "something which can be perceived" (i.e. a possible object of cognition), although it is true that the awareness thereof is actualized only through cognition.

Nay, "existence" and "existent" belong to the category of words whose meanings are primarily and immediately understood as soon as man, as we have just said, perceives and becomes aware of the objects. Thus it (i.e. "existence") does not need any definition to explain what is meant by the word, except by way of lexical explication and translation from one language to another.[33]

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[33] *Kitâb al-Mu'tabar* III, *Metaphysics* (Haydarâbâd, 1358 A.H.) pp. 20–21:

اذا ادرك الانسان شيئاً من الأَشياء بحاسّة من حواسّه، كالبصر والسمع و الشم والذوق و اللمس، و عرفه و عرف ادراكه له، قال عن ذلک الشئى إنه موجود. و عنى بكونه موجوداً غير كونه مدركاً، بل كونه بحيث يُدرَك قبل ادراكه له و بعده، و قبل ادراك مدرِك آخر له و بعده، فان الشئى يكون فى نفسه بحيث يُدرَك فيدرِكهُ المدرِك. وهو بتلک الحالة قبل ادراكه و معه و بعده. و تلک الحالة هى التى يسمّيها المسمّون وجوداً، و يقال للشئى لأَجلها انه موجود، وهو كونه بحيث يدرك. ثم إن الذهن يتاملّ فيعلم أن الادراك لا تشبّه لهٔ فى‌الوجود، و انما هو شئى يكون للموجود فى وجوده من المدرِك له. و ليس هو أمراً للشئى فى نفسه، و انما كونه بحيث يدرَك هو صفته التى له فى ذاته و بذاته. ثم نرى أَن من الأَشياء ما يدركها مدرك و يعجز عن ادراكها مدرك آخر. ولا يكون كونها بحيث لا ينالها المدرك الذى عجز عن ادراكها فلم يدركها قادحاً فى وجودها، بل هى موجودة، سواء ادركها او لم يدركها. فيجوز أَن يكون من الموجودات مالا يُدرَك او لا يدركه بعض المدركين. فان الادراك ليس شرطاً فى‌الوجود، و انما الوجود شرط فى الادراك، الا أَن اعتراف العارف بوجود الموجود و علمه به انما يكون من ادراكه له. فلا يصحّ أَن يحدّ الموجود بأنه المدرَك ولا بأنه الذى يصحّ أَن يدرك، و إن كانت المعرفة به حصلت بالادراك. بل الوجود و الموجود من الكلمات التى تدرك معانيها بأوائل المعارف من جهة الادراك و المعرفة، كما قلنا. فلا يحتاج الى حدّ يشرح الاسم، أَللهم الا كما تفسّر اللغات و تنقل من واحدة الى اخرى.

The important question which now arises is: What is that particular "state" (*ḥâlah*) that underlies every act of perception and cognition? This question leads us to the level of the "reality" (*ḥaqîqah*) of "existence" as distinguished from the "notion" (*mafhûm*) of "existence". But no sooner is the question raised than we find ourselves in an embarassing situation. The very fact that the notion of "existence" is self-evident and *a priori* indicates that the notion defies explanation. It defies explanation because "existence", as a notion, finds nothing more immediately evident than itself, while, as a reality, it is beyond all conceptual analyses. Conceptual analysis has nothing to lay hold on where there is no "quiddity" (*mâhîyah*).[34] "Existence" is precisely that which neither has a "quiddity" nor *is* a "quiddity". For by definition it is something "other" than "quiddity", and something opposed to "quiddity".

We may do well to recall at this juncture what we have observed about Heidegger's thesis that "existence", in spite of its self-evidence on the level of preconceptual understanding, remains in the dark because it escapes all attempts at conceptualization. What Heidegger is trying to say will be made more intelligible if we translate it into the terminology of *Ḥikmat* philosophy. The notion (*mafhûm*) of "existence" is self-evident and immediately given, while, when it comes to ascertaining that to which it corresponds in the external world of reality, we are faced with the fact that there is nothing more obscure than "existence". The word "existence" does have a meaning of which every one of us is aware. Since it has an obvious meaning, it must refer to something external. However, what kind of reality that Something is, what actual state of affairs it indicates, is extremely difficult to explain. To explain this is as difficult as to explain what God is. A man who believes in God may be immediately aware of Him; he feels His presence with the whole of his personality. Yet he will be embarrassed if called upon to explain what God really is. We do not speak analogically here, for as we have seen in the foregoing, in the view of the *Ḥikmat* philosophers, the Absolute is no other than Existence in its utmost purity. Metaphysically, the situation may be described by saying that the structure of the reality of "existence" is an enigma, although the notion of "existence" is self-evident. This is what is meant by Sabzawârî when he says:

Its notion is one of the best-known things

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[34] *Mâhîyah* is to be understood in the sense of what is technically known as "*mâhîyah* in the special sense" (*bi-al-ma'nâ al-akhaṣṣ*) i.e. that which is given in answer to the question: what is it?; not in the sense of "*mâhîyah* in the general sense" (*bi-al-ma'nâ al-a'amm*) i.e. that by which a thing is what it is. The distinction between the two will be fully explained later on. Suffice it to remark here that in this paper, whenever it is necessary to distinguish them one from the other, the word *mâhîyah* in the first sense will be translated by "quiddity", while in the second by "essence".

But its reality is in the extremity of hiddenness (vi 16)

Herein is disclosed the strange contradictory nature of "existence". The intellectual attempt to solve this unsolvable enigma of "existence" evolves in the form of Sabzawarian metaphysics.

Chapter 3

The Concept of Existence

At the beginning of the preceding chapter we pointed out that there are two stages distinguishable in the meaning of "notion" (*mafhûm*). The first stage, according to this distinction, is the "notion" in the sense of preconceptual understanding of the meaning of a word, the most elementary and immediate awareness of what is meant by a word. The second stage is that at which the content of this preconceptual understanding of the meaning signified by the word becomes further elaborated into the form of a concept.

For example, when we hear the word "man" uttered, we immediately become aware of something corresponding to it. We become aware of the presence of something in our consciousness. Something resisters upon our minds. This is the notion of "man" at its first preconceptual stage. The uttered word fulfills its daily function by furnishing us in this way with a useful piece of information about something in the external world. We react to it; we act upon it; and we behave variously according to our preconceptual understanding of the information. For most ordinary purposes this kind of immediate understanding is quite sufficient.

However, for the purpose of more theoretic thinking, we need a more elaborate form of understanding. We proceed to ask questions about what has been understood at the first stage; we analyze the content of such an understanding, and we finish by obtaining a more or less well-defined concept. "Man" as understood at this stage of secondary elaboration appears, for instance, as a "rational animal". It is irrelevant whether the conceptual understanding of "man" actually assumes such an analytic form or whether it still remains outwardly in its original non-analytic form. The content of understanding in any case has changed. At the first stage, the content of understanding was, so to speak, a *donnée immédiate de la conscience*. Now it is a step removed from the concrete and intimate kind of presence in the consciousness. It has become an abstract concept.

It often happens that the *Ḥikmat* philosophers do not make this distinction in such an explicit way. Instead, they often use one and the same word *mafhûm* for these two stages of notion. Hence there is a danger of our misunderstanding what they want to convey. In reading their writings we have to be careful to ascertain whether by the *mafhûm* of " existence " they mean the preconceptual understanding of " existence " or the concept of " existence ". For these two are of a completely different structure from each other. It is especially important to be clear about the notion of " existence ".

In the case of all things other than " existence "——the phrase " all things other than existence " means " existents " (*mawjûdât*) to the exclusion of " existence " (*wujûd*)——there is a direct connection between the first and second stages of notion. Otherwise expressed, we may begin from the preconceptual understanding of an " existent "——a man, for example——and go on gradually elaborating the preconceptual understanding by a process of rational analysis until we obtain its concept. The connection between these two stages is furnished by what the scholastic philosophers call " quiddity " (*mâhîyah*)35) as represented or reflected in the mind. This point may briefly be explained in the following way.

In accordance with the tradition of *Ḥikmat* philosophy going back to Avicenna,36) Sabzawârî recognizes two different modes of " existence " in everything. One is real (*'aynî*), external (*khârijî*) " existence ", " existence *in concreto* "; the other is a mental (*dhihnî*) and " shadowy " (*ẓillî*) mode of " existence ". It is his contention that one and the same " quiddity " in every case can assume these two modes of " existence ". For example with regard to a concrete individual man, Zayd, we may say that the " quiddity " of man exists in Zayd by the external mode of " existence ". When we represent Zayd in our minds as a man, the selfsame " quiddity " of man is said to exist by the mental mode of " existence ".

A " quiddiy " in the mental mode of " existence " furnishes the basis for concept-formation. Without this basis all concept-forming process is doomed to failure. We must remember however, that " existence " is precisely something which neither is nor has a " quiddity ". Therefore, it is utterly impossible that " existence " itself should exist by these two modes of " existence ". For what we call " existence " is nothing other than these two modes of " existence " themselves. Thus, it is meaningless to speak of " existence " as having " mental existence " or " external existence ".

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35) As remarked before, " quiddity " here means *mâhîyah* in the particular sense, i.e. that which is given in answer to the question: What is it?

36) In his *al-Ishârât wa-l-Tanbîhât*, vol. I, ed. Sulaymân Dunyâ (Cairo, Ma'ârif, 1960) p. 202, Avicenna explicitly refers to the " two existences " (*wujûdâni*), one being " existence in reality " (*wujûd fî-al-a'yân*), and the other " existence in the minds " (*wujûd fî-al-adhhân*). In the same place, Naṣîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî calls the first " external existence " (*wujûd khârijî*) and the second " mental existence " (*wujûd dhihnî*). The concept of " mental existence " raised complicated problems in the course of the history of Muslim philosophy.

That which can have no " mental existence " cannot be represented or conceived. This is tantamount to saying that the reality of " existence " forever escapes direct conceptualization. It cannot be grasped except as a *donnée immédiate de la conscience.*

Although " existence " in this way absolutely refuses by its own peculiar structure to be represented as it really is, we can and do form a concept of " existence " on a very high level of abstraction. Such a concept is achieved through a sort of purely mechanical process. Thus in ordinary life we say " x exists ", " y exists ", " z exists " etc.. These sentences can then be transformed into nominal forms: " the existence of x ", " the existence of y ", " the existence of z ".

This linguistic process has an ontological basis in the fact that the reality of " existence " (*wujûd*) in the world of actual reality is diversified into an infinity of particular " existences " (*wujûdât*), i.e. particular acts of existing. Each of these acts of existing is the " existence " of some particular " quiddity ", the " existence " of a man, for example, or the " existence " of a table, etc.. In the view of all *Ḥikmat* philosophers without exception, whether they be among those who uphold the fundamental reality of " quiddity " or among those who maintain the fundamentality of " existence ", " existence " and " quiddity " are *in concreto* completely unified with one another, there being no real distinction between them. On the level of rational analysis, however, each concretely existent thing can be divided into " existence " and " quiddity ", as if these were two different things. This division may take the form of referring to the " quiddity " of man which actually " exists ", or more briefly, to the " existence " of the " quiddity "-man.

Now, of these composite intelligible entities, we mentally put between parentheses the parts corresponding to " quiddity ". In this way, we obtain the notions of particularized " existences ": " existence of (man) ", " existence of (table) ", etc.. Each " existence-of " is a particular act of existing containing within itself a relational reference, indicated by the word " of ", to something, the latter being here provisionally obliterated from our consciousness. These particularized " existences " as reflected in the mirror of our consciousness are technically called " portions " (*ḥiṣaṣ*, sg. *ḥiṣṣah*) of " existence ".[37] Although " existence " itself in its purity cannot, as we have seen above, be directly represented in our minds, the particularized " existences " can be mentally represented, albeit indirectly, because each is essentially involved with a particular " quiddity ".

It is of the very nature of " quiddity " that it can be represented and conceptualized. Thus, whenever a concretely actualized " quiddity " is represented in the mind, its particular " existence " is thereby necessarily and inevitably represented through the representation of the " quiddity ". The reason can work upon the

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37) The concept of " portion " will be more systematically discussed in a later context.

diverse "existences-of" thus represented and elaborate them into a general abstract concept of "existence". The concept of "existence" obtainable in this way is on a very high level of abstractive thinking, and as an abstract concept, it behaves in many respects just like all other abstract concepts. At the same time, however, it has a number of remarkable peculiarities distinguishing it from ordinary abstract concepts. These distinguishing properties of the concept of "existence" must now be discussed. Like other abstract concepts, the concept of "existence" is characterized by universality. It applies to an infinite number of things. But unlike others, whose range of application is delimited by "quiddity" in terms of classes of things ——the concept of "dog", for example, is applicable to an infinite number of dogs, but not to other kinds of animal——"existence" is applicable to everything and anything. We say: "God exists" just in the same way as we say: "A table exists". On this level of abstraction, the verb "exists" means one and the same thing,38) whether the subject of the proposition be God or a table. In this respect it equalizes all things.

There is another more important feature in the semantic behavior of "existence". All other concepts, when predicated of a subject, give some positive information about it. "Existence", on the contrary, when attributed to a real subject, does not tell anything new and additional39) about it. In Islam this thesis goes back to Fârâbî who formulates the problem with remarkable lucidity as follows.40)

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38) An important distinction is, in fact, observable between the statements "God exists" and "a table exists" with regard to the meaning of "existence", on another level of thinking. This problem will be dealt with later when we discuss the analogicity of "existence".

39) The word *additional* in the present context must be understood differently from the same word appearing in the famous Avicennian thesis of "existence" being something *additional* to the "quiddity". There Avicenna is talking about something of a different order from the question at issue now. The two questions have often been confused with one another, however, in the interpretation of the Avicennian position. Averroës was the first to commit this confusion, and he attacked Avicenna on that basis. We shall discuss this important problem in detail in a later chapter.

40) *Risâlah li-al-mu'allim al-thânî fî jawâb masâ'il su'ila 'an-hâ*, given in the Cairo edition of *al-Jam' bayna Aflâṭûn wa-Arisṭûṭâlîs* (al-Sa'âdah, 1907) p. 57, §16.

سئل عن هذه القضية، و هى قولنا «الانسان موجود» ، هل هى ذات محمول ام لا؟ فقال: هذه مسئلة اختلفت
القدماء و المتأخرون فيها . فقال بعضهم إنها غير ذات محمول، و بعضهم قال إنها ذات محمول. و عندى
أن كلا القولين صحيحان بجهة وجهة. و ذلك أن هذه القضية و أمثالها ، اذا نظر فيها الناظر الطبيعى
الذى هو نظره فى الأمور، فانها غير ذات محمول، لأن وجود شئى ليس هو غير الشئى ، والمحمول ينبغى
أن يكون معنى الحكم (ص: معنى مع الحكم) بوجوده او نفيه عن الشئى فمن هذه الجهة، ليست هى
قضية ذات محمول. وأما اذا نظر اليها الناظر المنطقى، قبلها مركبة من كلمتين هما أجزاؤها ، و أنها
قابلة للصدق و الكذب. فهى بهذه الجهة ذات محمول.

> He (Fârâbî) was once asked as to whether the proposition, for instance, "Man exists" has a predicate or not.
>
> He answered: this is a problem upon which the Ancients and the Moderns have put forth divergent opinions, some of them maintaining that it has no predicate, and some others that it *does* have a predicate. In my view, both of these positions are right in a certain limited sense. This is due to the following fact. When considered from the viewpoint of a specialist in *Physica*, whose function it is to investigate concretely existent things, this and similar propositions have no predicate, for the "existence" of a thing (in this case) is no other than that very thing,[41] while a predicate (in the real sense of the word) must mean something (i.e. a property) together[42] with the judgement of the latter (i.e. that property) being existent or not in the thing (i.e. the thing indicated by the subject of the proposition). Thus from this point of view, the proposition in question must be regarded as having no predicate.
>
> But when a logician considers the same proposition, he will recognize it to be composed of two terms as its two parts. He will also recognize that the proposition is liable of being true and false. Thus from this point of view, the proposition does have a predicate.

The gist of Fârâbî's argument may be summarized as follows. "Existence", in a proposition like "Man exists", *is* a predicate from the point of view of grammar and logic. For those, however, who are dealing with real and actual things, "existence" is not a predicate in the true sense of the word, because it tells nothing about real and actual things except that they are actualized, while a real predicate is supposed (1) to indicate some positive quality and (2) affirm or negate it of the thing to which it is attributed. Such a function is not exercised by "existence" when it is used as a grammatical or logical predicate. It has nothing new to add to the content of the subject. As Professor N. Rescher[43] writes: "al-Fârâbî's insistence that the attribution of existence to an object adds nothing to its characterization, and provides no new information about it, effectively anticipates

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[41] Where the things considered are from the very beginning strictly and exclusively limited to those things that are actual and real, there is no meaning in attributing "existence" to a thing, for it will simply be a tautology. The "existence" of a thing in this sphere of Being is nothing other than the thing being real and actual. The idea is basically Aristotelian.

[42] I read: *yanbaghî an yakûn ma'nâ ma'a al-ḥukum bi-wujûdi-hi*. Professor Nicholas Rescher, quoting the passage from Dieterici's edition, translates this sentence: "and [for the scientist] a predicate must furnish information about what is excluded from being", *Studies in Arabic Philosophy* (Pittsburgh, Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1966). I think this translation misses the point Fârâbî is making.

[43] *Ibid.*

Kant's thesis that: *Sein ist offenbar kein reales Prädikat, d.i. ein Begriff von irgend etwas, was zum Begriffe eines Dinges hinzukommen könne*".[44]

Exactly the same thing is asserted by Averroës in his refutation of the Avicennian thesis that "existence" is an accident of the "quiddities". Although, as we shall try to show later, the criticism is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the Avicennian position, the assertion itself that the concept of "existence", like that of "one", adds nothing real to a "quiddity" when the latter is considered in the state of full actualization, remains perfectly true. Here is what Averroës says about this point.[45]

> When we say that something is "one", the latter indicates nothing additional to the thing itself in the extra-mental world of reality, as is the case, on the contrary, when we say about something actually existent that it is "white". For what is understood from the word "one" is nothing but a purely negative state, namely lack of divisibility.
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> ......No one would doubt that all properties of this sort are not essential properties, i.e. properties which really differentiate the thing to which they are attributed and which are additional to (i.e. something different and distinguishable from) the thing itself. They are merely negative or relational states. And the same is true of ("existence") when we say of a thing that it "exists", for it does not indicate a property which would be additional to the thing itself in the extra-mental world of reality, quite contrary to the case in which we say that the thing is white.

The upshot of these arguments is that the concept of "existence" is a vacant or barren concept. It is an abstract concept with universal extension, being applicable to anything whatsoever, but with an extremely impoverished comprehension,

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44) "Existence is evidently not at all a real predicate, i.e. the concept of something that would be additional to the concept of a thing"——taken from the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 598. Before Prof. Rescher, Van den Bergh had quoted the same sentence in connection with Averroës' position which we shall shortly discuss. Averroës: *Tahâfut al-Tahâfut*, ed. Sulaymân Dunyâ (Cairo, Ma'ârif, 1964) vol II, p. 80.

45) *Tahâfut al-Tahâfut*, *op. cit.*, pp. 324–326.

إن الوحدة ليست تُفهم فى الموجود معنى زائداً على ذاته خارج النفس فىالوجود، مثل ما يفهم من
قولنا : موجود ابيض ، و انما يفهم منه حالة عدمية، وهى عدم الانقسام .... فلايشک أحد أن هذه
الفصول (يعنى: الوحدة و واجب الوجود و ممكن الوجود) ليست فصولاً جوهرّية أى قاسمة الذات ولا
زائدة على الذات. و انما هى أحوال سلبيّة او اضافيّة، مثل قولنا فى الشئى إنه موجود فانه ليس يدلّ
علي معني زائد علي جوهره خارج النفس ، كقولنا فى الشئى إنه ابيض ،

so impoverished, indeed, that it tells practically nothing about the thing to which it is attributed. As such, it is just the opposite of what we know of "existence", at the above-mentioned first stage of its notion, through——to use the terminology of Bertrand Russel——"knowledge by acquaintance" as distinguished from "knowledge by description.[46] Herein is disclosed a peculiar characteristic of "existence".

As an abstract concept, "existence" is the most barren and vacant of all concepts because it has not even the minimum amount of substantial content. The external reality, however, to which it refers and to which it is related is the richest and fullest of all things, for it is the reality of all realities. Mullâ Ṣadrâ describes this peculiar situation in the following way.[47]

> The abstract and rational concept (*amr intizâ'i 'aqlî*) of "existence" is of the same nature as all other general ideas and mental notions such as "thingness" (*shay'îah*), "being-possible" (*mumkinîyah*)[48] and the like.[49] However, that which corresponds (externally) to this concept are concrete facts having a firm foundation in reality and actualization. In this respect it differs from other concepts like "thingness", "quiddity" etc..

In the first half of this passage, Mullâ Ṣadrâ places the concept of "existence" on the same level as "thingness", "possibility" and the like. This means that the concept of "existence" belongs to the class of concepts technically known as "secondary intelligibles" (*ma'qûlât thânîyah,* sg. *ma'qûl thânî*) as distinguished from "primary intelligibles (*ma'qûlât ûlâ,* sg. *ma'qûl awwal*). We have to begin by explaining this distinction.

The problem concerns the relation between two concepts combined into a unity in the subject-predicate form by the mental act of predication. Or, more precisely, it concerns the nature of a concept in the position of "predicate". The predicate-quality is said to "occur" (*'urûḍ*) to the subject-thing, while the subject-thing is described as "being qualified" (*ittiṣâf*) by the predicate-quality.

Now, in the case of a "primary intelligible", both "occurence" and "qualification" happen *in concreto* in the external world, as a real event. In this case, the quality indicated by the predicate——"whiteness" for example——has an independent subsistence in the external world, independent from the thing itself (the subject) to which it "occurs". There is also in the external world a concretely existent thing which is "qualified" by that quality, that is to say, there is concretely a "white thing". The concept of a quality like "whiteness" (*bayâḍ*) is called a "primary intelligible". When it is made a logical predicate in the form of "white" (*abyaḍ*) and is attributed to a thing——e.g. "the body is white"——it is called a "predicate by way of adherence" (*maḥmûl bi-al-ḍamîmah*). It is to be remarked that the concept "whiteness" is derived or abstracted from the concretely existent white thing.

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[46] On these two kinds of knowledge, see B. Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford, Univ. Press, first edition 1912), Chapter V.

[47] *Mashâ'ir, op. cit.* pp. 11–12.

[48] "Being-possible" or "possibility" (*imkân*) in metaphysics means "being able to exist as well as not to exist", and——when the thing to which it is attributed happens to be actually existent——"having been caused" or "having a cause for its existence".

[49] Such as "being-necessary" (*wâjibîyah*) and "being-one" (*waḥdah*).

In the case of a "secondary intelligible", on the contrary, both "occurence" and "qualification" take place in the mind, and in the mind only. Here the predicate-quality has no corresponding subsistence in the external world. Nor does the thing actually qualified by that quality exist outside the mind. In other words, the very source from which the concept of the quality is abstracted is itself a concept. "Being-a-universal" (*kullîyah*) is a good example of this kind of concept. When we say "Man is a universal" (*al-insân kullî*),⁵⁰⁾ we are conscious that we are talking about a relationship between two concepts. It is obvious that a quality "universality" has no extra-mental existence, for everything existent in the external world is, without a single exception, particular and individual. By the same token it is also obvious that there is in the external world nothing that is qualified by being a "universal". The source from which the concept "universal" is abstracted is no other than another concept, that of "man" in this case.

There are, however, "secondary intelligibles" of a kind different from the one just explained. In order to distinguish these two kinds of "secondary intelligibles" we shall give them each a name. The kind we have just described is called "logical secondary intelligible" (*ma'qûl thânî manṭiqî*) while the second kind which we shall now explain is called "philosophical secondary intelligible" (*ma'qûl thânî falsafî* or *ḥikamî*).

In the case of the "philosophical secondary intelligible", the "occurence" happens only in the mind, that is, conceptually, but the "qualification" is an event in the extra-mental world. This may be explained in the following way. The quality indicated by the predicate in this case is not a self-subsistent quality in reality, so that there can be no external real "occurence" of the quality to the thing. But the source from which the concept of that quality is abstracted is existent *in concreto*.

"Being-father" or "paternity" is an example usually given for the explanation of this kind of concept. Suppose Zayd to be the father of 'Amr. Unlike qualities such as "whiteness", etc., "paternity" is not a really existent quality. What *is* really existent in this case, corresponding to the proposition: "Zayd is a father", is the person Zayd, nothing else. The concept of his "being-father" is taken from the particular relation in which Zayd stands to another person, 'Amr. That is to

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50) Or "Man is a species" (*al-insân naw'*).

say, the concept is extracted from the concrete personal sphere of Zayd. But this very fact tells us that the "qualification" is a real external fact. There *is* in the extra-mental world something concrete and real, a real man, in the present case, having a real particular relationship with another real man. The concept "paternity" is an abstract concept extracted by reason from the observed situation in which there is found an actually existent man, Zayd.

Something "being-possible" and something "being-a-thing" belong to this class of "secondary intelligibles". So also does the concept of "existence". The concept of "existence" is a "philosophical secondary intelligible", because "existence" or "being-existent" is not a real quality, like "whiteness". Therefore its "occurrence" takes place only in the mind, on the level of conceptual elaboration and analysis. It is, however, a concept extracted from a real thing, i.e. a really existent "quiddity". Otherwise expressed, the "qualification" is here an external event.

But according to those who hold the primacy of "existence" over "quiddity", who accept the fundamental reality of the former and the fundamental unreality of the latter——and, we must remember, Sabzawârî is one of the representatives of this school——the above analysis has not yet reached the depth of the matter. In their view, what corresponds to the concept of "existence" in the extra-mental world is not: existent "quiddities". It is rather the reality of "existence" which is determined and delimited quiddity-wise in the form of particular "existences" (*wujûdât*). These particularized "existences" are the sources from which the abstract concept of "existence" is extracted.

In the world of concepts, "quiddity" precedes "existence", and the latter "occurs" to the former. In the world of reality, on the contrary, it is "existence" that precedes "quiddity", and it is "quiddity" that "occurs" to "existence" in the sense that "quiddities" are but various forms of the self-determination and self-delimitation of the reality of "existence". The "quiddities" are merely abstractions drawn by the mind from the divergent phenomenal forms of "existence". However, in order to understand this point more properly, we have to go further into details about the distinction between "existence" and "quiddity". This will be the main task of the three following chapters.

In the preceding pages we have been examining the notion of "existence" in its first and second stages of presence to our minds. By way of conclusion let us now consider the distance that separates the notion from the reality of "existence".

The *Ḥikmat* philosophers consider "existence" from a number of points of view on several different levels. According to them, for the philosophical consciousness of men, "existence" has a multistratified structure. Without going into details we may simply recall that "existence", considered on the level of conceptual abstraction, is the farthest removed from its reality; it still remains within the confines of "existence" in the broad and unconditional acceptation of the word. In the abstract concept of "existence", which is of all concepts the most barren and impoverished, there is not even the trace of that infinite abundance and fullness which characterizes the reality of "existence" and which is still observable in the first stage of its notion.

However, both the immediate understanding and the concept of "existence" are "self-evident" in that they are the most ultimate and fundamental of all notions. *Ḥikmat* philosophy calls the ultimateness of this kind of notions "self-evidence" (*badâhah*). Not only is the direct understanding of "existence" which is based on "knowledge by acquaintance", "self-evident" (*badîhî*), but its abstract concept also is "self-evident" in the sense that it is primary, that it cannot be reduced to anything else, while all other concepts are ultimately reducible to it.

It must be remembered that the "self-evidence" here in question is a fact only on the level of "notion" as distinguished from "reality". "Self-evidence" merely means that the concept (or notion) of "existence" is an absolutely primary one; not that the reality of "existence" itself is self-evident and fully disclosed to the human mind. Quite the contrary, the reality of "existence" is not revealed to an ordinary human consciousness. In itself, it is fully and absolutely disclosed; for, as we shall see, it is nothing but the very disclosure and "presence" of all things. The human mind, however, does not and cannot normally become conscious of this "presence" as it really is.

The reality of "existence" discloses itself to the human mind only at the level of supra-consciousness. In order that the human mind might obtain even the first and passing glimpses of the reality of "existence", a decisive leap must be taken from the normal level of consciousness to that of supra-consciousness. This leap of mind is known in most of the traditional religions as the experience of "seeing God" or *unio mystica* in which the human subject is said to be unified and fused in a certain peculiar way with the divine Subject. It is, in short, a mystical intuition.

It is to be remarked in this connection that even Jean-Paul Sartre, who is professedly an atheistic philosopher and who makes the experience of "existence" the very starting-point and ultimate basis of his philosophizing, describes the experience in his first philosophical novel *La nausée*[51] as an unusual revelation once given him at a non-daily level of consciousness, as something totally different from what ordinary men know of "existence". The Sartrian experience of "nausea" will be discussed later on when we take up the problem of the reality of "existence".

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[51] *La nausée* (Paris, Gallimard, first edition 1938), pp. 161–171.

Chapter 4

The Distinction between Essentia and Existentia

The distinction between "quiddity" and "existence" is undoubtedly one of the most basic philosophical theses in Islamic thought. Without exaggeration the distinction may be said to constitute the first step in ontologico-metaphysical thinking among Muslims; it provides the very foundation on which is built up the whole structure of Muslim metaphysics.

Indeed, from the earliest periods of Islamic thought, the dichotomy of *essentia* and *existentia* played such a conspicuous role that it deeply affected even the historical formation of Western scholasticism in the Middle Ages as one of the typically Islamic——or more strictly, Avicennian——theses. It is now a commonplace among scholars specialized in scholastic philosophy to say that Avicenna and his Western followers made a "real distinction" between *essentia* and *existentia*. Thus, to give an example picked up at random, Professor Louis de Raeymaeker of Louvain[52] says:

> On the contrary (i.e. contrary to the philosophical situation in the West), in Arabic philosophy, which equally depends upon both Aristotle and Neo-Platonism at the same time, the thesis of the real distinction between *essentia* and *existentia* is found clearly professed and is considered a fundamental truth. It is found already in al-Fârâbî (d. 947/950). And Avicenna (980–1037) makes it one of the principal ideas of his own system.

The crucial problem about this Western conception of the Islamic thesis concerns the way in which the expression "*real* distinction" is understood. For, depending upon how it is understood, this conception is liable to both truth and falsehood. This point will be fully elucidated in Chapter 6. Here we shall confine ourselves to an exposition of more basic facts about the dichotomy of "quiddity" and "existence".

It pertains to the most elementary and fundamental structure of our daily experience that we constantly encounter in our lives an infinity of things. We find ourselves surrounded by them, and we cannot escape from the consciousness of the presence of various and variegated things. The actual presence of things is their

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52) L. de Raeymaeker: *Philosophie de l'être—Essai de synthèse métaphysique* (Louvain, Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1947) p. 145.

"existence". They are there. They do exist, as we ourselves exist. On the other hand, they are not there in the form of pure "existences". They "exist" as various and variegated things: man, horse, stone, tree, table, etc.. This latter aspect of their "existence" is called "quiddity".

There is thus contained in everything a two-fold ontological principle. Each of the things we actually encounter in the world is composed of "quiddity" and "existence". Every *ens* (Arabic, *mawjûd*) is a composite of *essentia* (*quidditas*; Arabic, *mâhîyah*) and *esse* (*actus essendi*, Arabic, *wujûd*).

All things are different from one another, not only individually but also specifically. Nothing in the world is the same as the rest of things. A stone, for example, is a stone; it is not, it cannot be, a horse. And yet, all these things which differ from each other are found to share one and the same element: "existence". All are the same with regard to the fact that they do exist. For this reason we can truthfully say of the things which we find in our presence: "The stone exists", "The horse exists", "The table exists", etc., attributing one and the same predicate to all of them, in spite of the fact that the subjects of the propositions are definitely different from one another.

Thus, whatever is found in the world is, as Sabzawârî says,53) *zawj tarkîbî*, or a duality composed of "quiddity" and "existence", the former being that by which each thing is differentiated from all others, and the latter being a factor in which all things equally and without exception participate. The "quiddity" of man is admittedly different from the "quiddity" of horse, and the "quiddity" of horse is different from the "quiddity" of stone. But their "existence", that is, the "act of existing" by which they are actually in our presence is one and the same in all of them. This fundamental fact about the two ontological factors is what Sabzawârî refers to when he says that "existence" is the principle of unity, while "quiddities" raise only the dust of multiplicity.54)

All this might look quite a truism. However, when considered metaphysically, this seemingly simple fact proves to be not as simple and commonplace as one might imagine at first sight. For, in the view held by Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî, "quiddity" and "existence" do not stand on the same ontological level. Their view is based on a profound and extraordinary experiential intuition of "existence" which is of a Ṣûfî origin. This fact complicates the whole picture, as we shall shortly see. Suffice it here to remark in a preliminary way that, in the light of this unusual experience, all "quiddities" are found to be deprived of their seemingly solid self-subsistence and turn out to be nothing other than so many partial determinations and delimitations of the unitary reality of "existence". As Professor Norris Clarke says: "In every finite being there is an intrinsic ontological duality

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53) *Sharḥ-e Manẓûmeh*, *Metaphysics*, ad v. 17.

54) *Ibid.*, v. 22.

or tension between the perfection of the act of *esse* and a partial negation or limitation of the same act".[55] But before we go further in this direction, we must first stop to consider briefly the historical formation of the idea itself.

In Islamic thought the thesis of the distinction between "quiddity" and "existence" was first maintained explicitly and in a definite form by Fârâbî, and ever since it has dominated the whole history of Islamic philosophy. The idea itself, however, can be traced back to Aristotle.

When Aristotle established metaphysics as the science of the "existent" *qua* "existent" (*to on ê on*) and criticized the Platonic realism of Ideas, the problem of the distinction between "quiddity" and "existence" may be said to have been implicitly raised. Moreover, in a famous passage of his *Posterior Analytics* (Chapter VII), he clearly distinguishes "quiddity" from "existence". After having shown at the beginning of the same Chapter[56] that "essence" (*ûsiâ*) means the same thing as "what-is-it-ness" (*to ti estin*), i.e. literally "quiddity" he goes on to say:

> He who knows what "man"——or anything else——is, must necessarily know also that the latter exists. For no one knows (in the real sense of the word), concerning that which does not exist, what it is. Certainly one may know what a phrase or a word like "goat-deer"[57] means, but no one can know what it really is. Besides, if one is to show what a thing is and that it does exist, how could one do so by one and the same argument? Definition shows one thing, and demonstration shows another. And what "man" is and that "man" exists are two completely different matters.
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> What we want to maintain is this. Whenever something is said to be such-and-such, it must necessarily be proved by demonstration, unless (the predicate) be the very "essence" (of the subject). "To exist", however, does not constitute the "essence" of anything, for "existent" it not a genus. Therefore whether a thing exists or not must be shown only by demonstration. And this is exactly what the sciences actually do. The geometer, for instance, simply assumes what "triangle" means, but he has to prove that it exists. He who gives a definition of "triangle" shows nothing more than what "triangle"

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[55] W. Norris Clarke in the Preface to William Carlo: *The Ultimate Reducibility of Essence to Existence in Existential Metaphysics* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1966) XIV. This is said about Prof. Carlo's interpretation of the metaphysical position of Giles of Rome (Aegidius Romanus). It, therefore, has nothing to do with Islamic philosophy except indirectly through the influence exercised by Avicenna on Western scholasticism. The words, however, admirably suit for a description of the Sabzawarian position.

[56] 92, a, 34–35.

[57] The classical example in Islamic philosophy is *'anqâ'*, the name of a fabulous bird.

> is. Even when a man knows through definition what it is, he will still be in the dark as to whether it does exist.[58]

The gist of this argument may be reproduced as follows. It is impossible to know of something that does not really exist what it is. Even if one knows something about such a thing, that which he knows is limited to the meaning of the word. In this latter sense one can know even of a fabulous creature what it is. Such, however, is not a true knowledge. One can be said to know what "man" is in the real sense of the word only when one knows that "man" exists. But such a knowledge cannot be obtained through definition alone. Even if one is given a definition of something, he cannot know thereby that the thing actually exists. Its existence must be proved by demonstration. For what-a-thing-is (given by definition) is different from that-it-exists.

As we clearly see, the passage adumbrates the Avicennian thesis that a "quiddity" does not contain in itself "existence" as a constituent part, that, in other words, a "quiddity" does not imply its own "existence". However, one important difference separates these two thinkers from one another. As the first half of the passage which we have just quoted indicates, in the metaphysical system of Aristotle the distinction does not play a significant role. His primary——or we should rather say, exclusive——preoccupation is with "essences" that are really existent, or "existents" that are real, and, in particular, with real "substances" of which we can have a true knowledge in the above-explained sense. In this system, a real "essence" or a real "substance", in so far as it is *real*, implies by itself its own "existence". "Existence" is from the very beginning assumed in the notion of a real "essence" because an "essence" being real means nothing less than that it exists.

The world with which Aristotle is concerned is a world that is actually existent, the world of things that are existent. It is not a world of which it is possible to think that it could not exist. The creation of the world in the Biblical or Qur'ânic sense could not be a problem for Aristotle, for the world he conceives is one lacking the possibility not to exist, a world of which it is impossible that it could have not existed in some beginningless past. In such a metaphysical system there is no place for the problem of distinction and relation between "quiddity" and "existence", for "quiddities" that do not exist are from the very beginning excluded. Professor Etienne Gilson rightly calls this type of ontology *un chosisme intégral*,[59] a system in which the ontological structure of *les choses*, i.e. "things" ——or more specifically the "substances"——is considered on the ontological level on which things are already fully "constituted", a system in which *la substance*

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[58] 92, b, 4–18.

[59] Étienne Gilson: *L'être et l'essence* (Paris, Vrin, 1948) p. III.

(*est*) *conçue comme un bloc ontologique sans fissure, où l'essence, l'existence et l'unité ne font qu'un.*[60]

The idea here referred to, namely, that "substance" is conceived as an ontological block without any fissure, in which "quiddity", "existence" and "unity" are completely unified with one another, is expressed by Aristotle himself with utmost clarity in a passage of the fourth Book of his *Metaphysics*. There he establishes a number of interesting equations taking "man" as an example of "essence". The equations he establishes are: (1) *one* man=man, (2) *existent* man=man. (3) one *existent* man=one man, (4) *one* existent man=existent man. Here "existent" and "one" are inseparable from each other except as concepts; and the two, together with "essence", form a complete whole showing nowhere any internal fissure. Here is what Aristotle actually says.[61]

> Now if "existent" (*to on*) and "one" (*to hen*) are the same and are one nature in the sense that they accompany (i.e. imply) each other as do "principle" and "cause"——not in the sense that they are indicated by one single definition, although our argument would stand unharmed even if we understood their identity in the latter sense, nay it would even be better for our purpose to understand it in that way——"one man" (*heis anthrôpos*) means the same thing as "man" (*anthrôpos*) and an "existent man" (*ôn anthrôpos*) means the same thing as "man". And nothing will change even if we combine these expressions, for "one man" and "one *existent* man" mean the same thing. And it is evident that they are inseparable from each other both in the case of coming-into-being (of "man") and in that of passing-away. The same remains true if we consider the situation from the side of "being one"; the addition (of "one") will indicate nothing new. For "one (existent man)" is exactly the same as an "existent (man)".

One point is especially noteworthy. At the beginning of this passage Aristotle indicates that when he speaks of the identification of "existent" and "one", he is not thinking of the identification at the conceptual level. At the conceptual level, they *are* different from one antoher. "One", *qua* a concept, is "one", nothing else. Likewise, the concept of "existent" is "existent", nothing else. But the two are one and the same in the sense that the one is predicable of whatever allows of predication by the other.[62] The force of this statement, however, is attenuated, or

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60) *Ibid*., p. 90.

61) *Gamma*, 2, 1003, b, 26–27.

62) In order to describe the same distinction, the Muslim philosophers would say that "one" and "existent" are different from each other *qua* concepts, on the level of "essential and primary predication", while they are one and the same in the sense that they apply to one and the same extra-mental piece of reality (*miṣdâqan*).

even almost nullified, by the sentence which immediately follows it, if that sentence really comes from Aristotle himself. In any case Aristotle is concerned with the real, i.e. non-conceptual, unity of "one", "existent" and "essence".

This fact is remarkable for our purposes because precisely the conceptual difference between "existence" and "essence" which was thus neglected by Aristotle, became the main preoccupation of the Muslim philosophers. The famous Avicennian thesis of "existence" being an "accident" of "quiddity"——*quod esse sit accidens eveniens quidditati*——will be rightly understood only when one approaches it with this basic understanding. Before we come to Avicenna, however, we must consider the view of Fârâbî concerning this problem.

As we remarked before, Fârâbî was the first to introduce into Islamic philosophy the dichotomy of "quiddity" and "existence" in a clear and definite form. The most important point about this novel contribution is that in describing the relation between these two he used the words *'âriḍ*, i.e. "that which *occurs* (from outside)" and *lâzim*, i.e. an "inseparable or essential attribute", or "concomitant". The word *'âriḍ* is closely related to *'araḍ*[63] which derives from the same root and which in the *Categories* means "accident" or an accidental property of a substratum. The problem in this form was inherited by Avicenna, and it became the source of a major metaphysical discussion in both the East and the West.

The key-point in the argument developed by Fârâbî lies in the word *'âriḍ* which, as we have just observed, is undeniably confusing and ambiguous. In speaking of "existence" *occurring* or *happening* to "quiddity", is Fârâbî referring to an event that takes place only in the mind, on the level of conceptual analysis, when the reason analyzes a concrete existing thing into its conceptual components? Or is he thinking of a real event which takes place in the extra-mental world of reality? Fârâbî himself does not make the answer explicitly clear. Our conclusion is that he means both, and that the word *'âriḍ* forms the turning-point, or the point of transition from the first sphere of thinking to the second. But let us first read his argument. It is found in the beginning of his celebrated Ringstones of Wisdom[64]

Each of the things that we actually find around us has a "quiddity" and "ex-

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[63] Avicenna uses the word *'araḍ*, "accident", itself in describing the same situation.

[64] *Fuṣûṣ al-Ḥikam.* I quote from the text given in *Ḥikmat-i-Ilâhî* II, by Prof. Muḥiy al-Dîn Mahdî Qumshi'î (Teheran, Mu'asseseh-yi Maṭbu'ât-i Islâmî, 1345 A.H.) pp. 5–6.

الأَمور التى قبلنا ، لكل منها ماهيّة وهويّة. وليست ماهيته عين هويته، ولا داخلة فى هويته . ولو كان
ماهية الانسان هويته، لكان تصوّرك ماهية الانسان تصوّر هويته. فكنت اذا تصوّرت ما الانسان، تصورت
هو الانسان، فعلمت وجوده، و لكان كل تصور للماهية يستدعى تصديقاً بوجودها . ولا الهوية داخلة

istence" (*huwîyah*).[65] And the "quiddity" is not the same as "existence"; nor is "existence" contained (as a constituent element) in the "quiddity".[66] If the "quiddity" of man (for example) were the same as his "existence", whenever you represent in your mind the "quiddity" of man, you would be thereby representing his "existence". That is to say, whenever you represent the "what-ness" of man, you would *ipso facto* be representing the "is-ness" of man, i.e. you would immediately know his "existence".[67] Furthermore, (if, "quiddity" were no other than "existence") every act of representing a "quiddity" would necessarily produce a judgment that it exists.[68]

فی ماهیّة هذه الأَشیاء. والا ،لکان الوجود مقوّماً ، ولا یستکمل تصوّر الماهیة دونه، و یستحیل رفعه عن الماهیة توهّماً ، و لکان قیاس الهویة من الانسان مثلاً قیاس الجسمیة و الحیوانیة، و کان، کما أَن من یفهم الانسان انساناً لایشک فی أَنه جسم او حیوان، اذا فهم الجسم او الحیوان، کذلک لا یشک فی أَنه موجود. و لیس کذلک بل یشک ما لم یقم حسّ او دلیل. فالوجود و الهویة، لما بینا ، لیس من جملة المقوّمات من الموجودات. فهو من العوارض اللازمة. و بالجملة لیس من اللواحق التی تکون بعد الماهیة . و کل لاحق، فاما أَن یلحق الذات من ذاته ویلزمه، و اما ان یلحق عن غیره . و الوجودلایمکن أَن یکون من اللواحق التی تلحق الشئی عن ذاته، لأَنه محال أَن یکون الذی لاوجود له یلزمه شئی یتبعه فیالوجود. فمحـال أَن یکون الماهیة یلزمها شئی حاصل الا بعد حصولها . ولا یجوز أَن یکون الحصول یلزمه بعد الحصول، و الوجود یلزمه بعد الوجود، فیکون أُنه قد کان قبل نفسه. فلا یجوز أَن یکون الوجود من اللواحق التی للماهیة عن نفسها ، اذ اللاحق لا یلحق الشئی عن نفسه الا الحاصل الذی، اذا حصل، عرضت له أَشیاء سببها هو. فان الملـزوم المقتضی لللازم علّة لما یتبعه، و العلّة لا توجب معلولها الا اذا وجبت. و قبل الوجود لا تکون وجبت . فلا یکون الوجود مما تقتضیه الماهیة ، فیما وجوده غیر ماهیته، بوجه من الوجوه. فیکون اذاً المبدء الذی یصدر عنه الوجود غیر الماهیة. و ذلک لأَن کل لازم و مقتضی، فاما عن نفس الشئی ، و إما عن غیره. و اذا لم یکن الهویة للماهیة التی لیست هی الهویة عن نفسها ، فهی لها عن غیرها . فکل ما هویته غیر ماهیته و غیر المقوّمات، فهویته من غیره. فیجب ان ینتهیالی مبدء لا مـاهیة له مباینة للهویة .

[65] The word *huwîyah*, which Fârâbî uses in place of the more commonly used *wujûd* has two meanings in Islamic philosophy: (1) the state in which a thing is completely actualized in the extra-mental world (*al-taḥaqquq al-khârijî*), or the concrete and individual reality (*al-ḥaqîqah al-juz'îyah*) of a thing; and (2) that which brings a thing into such a state of actualization. In this second sense, *huwîyah* is synonymous with *wujûd*. And Fârâbî is evidently using the word in this sense.

[66] The text must be read: *Wa-lâ* (*huwîyatu-hu*) *dâkhilah fî mâhîyati-hi.*

[67] Note the difference between Fârâbî and Aristotle. The latter, as we have seen above, holds that it is impossible to know (in the real sense of the word) the "quiddity" of a thing without first knowing that it really exists.

[68] Because, on this supposition, the representation of a "quiddity" would be *ipso facto* the representation of "existence".

Nor is "existence" contained in the "quiddities" of these things. Otherwise, "existence" would be their essential constituent element, and the representation of a "quiddity" would not be completed without it, and it would be utterly impossible even in imagination to remove it from the "quiddity", so much so that "existence" would stand to "man", for example, in exactly the same relation as "being-a-body" and "being-an-animal". Thus, just as those who understand man *qua* man have absolutely no doubt about his being a body or an animal——if at all they understand what is meant by a "body" or an "animal"——so, in the same way, they would have no doubt about his being existent. But in fact such is not the case. On the contrary they would doubt (of his "existence") until it is proved by sense-perception or by logical demonstration.

From this we conclude that "existence" or "is-ness" is not a constituent element of any existent thing. So it must be something concomitant[69] that "occurs" (to "quiddity") from the outside. It is not one of those properties that attach to the "quiddity" after the latter has been actualized.[70]

Now all properties that occur to an "essence" are divisible into two classes: (1) those that occur to an "essence", caused by the latter itself and remain attached to it, and (2) those that occur to it, caused by something other than the "essence".

"Existence" cannot possibly be of those properties that occur to a thing, the cause of "occurrence" being the latter,[71] for it is impossible that something (i.e. a property) should occur and be attached to a thing (i.e. "essence") which has as yet no "existence", when it (i.e. the property) is of such a nature that it could exist only when the thing (i.e. the "essence") exists. Thus it is inconceivable that to a "quiddity" (which is as yet non-existent) something should be attached which could be actualized only after the actualization of the

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[69] The reason why it is regarded as "concomitant" (*lâzim*) is that a "quiddity" cannot subsist, whether in the external world of reality or in the mind without "existence", although conceptually and on a high level of abstraction "quiddity" can be differentiated from "existence" and considered in itself as pure "quiddity" without regard to "existence", whether external or mental.

[70] This sentence is intended to be an explanation of the concomitance of "existence". The particle "after" (*ba'da*) should not mislead us into thinking that "existence" is a property that attaches to the "quiddity" not *after* the actualization of the latter, but only *before*. What Fârâbî really means is: "neither *after* nor *before*, but *with*, i.e. *at the same time as*, the actualization of the quiddity.

[71] If existence were a property which is caused by the very "quiddity" to which it occurs, it must occur to the latter either (1) before the "existence" of the "quiddity" or (2) after its "existence"; in other words, the attribute "existence" must be caused either by a *non-existent* "quiddity" or by an already *existent* "quiddity". Fârâbî is going to prove that both cases are impossible.

"quiddity".

Nor is it conceivable that "actualization" should occur to it (i.e. the "essence") after the latter has been already actualized, that is to say, "existence" (as a property) should occur to the "essence" after (the latter's own) "existence". For in that case we would have to say that it *was* (i.e. already existed) before itself (i.e. before it became existent).

Thus it is impossible that "existence" should be one of the properties which occur to a "quiddity" out of the latter itself. A thing can be the source and origin of its own properties only when it happens to be in the state of actualization. Only when a thing is actualized do a number of things (i.e. properties) occur to it, the thing being the cause of them. For the thing to which a property occurs and which necessitates the latter is the "cause" of (the property) that follows it. And a "cause" does not necessitate its "caused" unless the former be itself "necessary". But it cannot be "necessary" without existing. Thus to conclude: "existence" can by no means be something required by a "quiddity" except in case the "existence" of a thing be its own "essence".[72]

All this makes it clear that the source from which "existence" issues must be something other than "quiddity". For (as I have just shown) every property which occurs to something as an effect of some cause must either have its source in the thing itself or something other than that thing; but it has already been proved that "existence" can never be caused by the "quiddity" itself, except when the latter happens to be identical with "existence". So "existence" must come to the "quiddity" from something other than the "quiddity". Everything whose "existence" is distinguishable from its "quiddity" and is not one of its internal constituent elements, gets its "existence" from something other than itself. And (the chain of "causes") must ultimately reach an Origin in which "essence" is not distinguishable from its "existence".

I have translated this fairly long passage not only for its historical importance——the importance may be measured by the influence the Farabian idea exercised upon Avicenna; indeed, the latter accepted and reproduced the whole argument in precisely this form and made it an integral part of his system——but also in order that we might examine and bring to light its basic structure. The right understanding of this argument is of decisive importance for a grasp of the subsequent development of metaphysical ideas in the Islamic tradition.

Fârâbî, like Aristotle, starts from concretely existent things which are the primary reality for him. He sets out to analyze a concretely existent thing——which, as we have seen above, is in itself a whole ontological block without any fissure

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[72] The reference is to the Absolute whose very "essence" is its "existence".

——into "quiddity" and "existence". Basing himself on the observation that we can represent a "quiddity" *qua* "quiddity" without any regard to its "existence", he argues that "quiddity" is essentially something different from "existence". Nor does the "quiddity" of a thing, he goes on to say, imply its "existence"; that is to say "existence" is not an essential constituent (*muqawwim*) of "quiddity" in the sense in which, for example, "being-a-body" and "being-an-animal" are constituents of the "quiddity" of "man". From the preceding argument he concludes that "existence" is an *'âriḍ*, something that "occurs" or something "accidental" to the "quiddity".

It is evident that the whole argument concerns the conceptual structure of an actual thing on the level of rational analysis. And the "occurence" in question is an event taking place in the sphere of concepts. As we remarked earlier, however, in the continuation of this argument there seems to be a transition from consideration of the purely conceptual structure of a real "existent" to consideration of its objective extra-mental structure. The transition-point is marked by the word *'âriḍ*. Otherwise expressed, Fârâbî is saying there is a certain respect in which we can speak of the "occurence" of "existence" to "quiddity" in the world of reality. At this point the argument assumes a markedly theological coloring, being implicitly concerned with the question of creation, and of the difference between the Creator and the creature. In terms of the relation between "existence" and "essence", the Creator is conceived as that whose very "essence" is "existence", while created things are presented as those things whose "essences" are not only not the same as "existence" but which are incapable of causing their own "existence". Their "existence" must come (must "occur") to them from another source, namely, the Creator, the Giver of "existences".

It is important to remark, however, that the conceptual analysis mentioned above casts its shadow even upon this argument. For Fârâbî concrete reality in itself is an "ontological block without any fissure"; therefore, there is properly no place in concrete reality for the duality of two elements. Only when we project the above conceptual distinction onto a concretely existent thing, can the latter be considered a composition of a "quiddity" and "existence". Only then can we speak of "existence" issuing forth from its creative Source and "occurring" to the "quiddity". In reality, what issues forth from the Source is rather the non-composite "ontological block", whose structure will be analyzed in the following chapter.

Avicenna simply inherited the dichotomy of "quiddity" and "existence" from Fârâbî and continued it. In the course of the history of scholastic philosophy, however, the thesis has come to be so closely associated with Avicenna that it is usually considered typically Avicennian.

Avicenna proves the distinction between "quiddity" and "existence" by exactly the same argument that Fârâbî employed.

> It often happens that you understand the meaning of "triangle" and yet entertain doubt as to whether it is qualified by "existence" *in concreto* or it is not "existent". This is in spite of your having represented (the triangle) in your mind as being composed of a line and a plane. (In spite of your having represented the triangle in this way) you may still have no notion as to whether it exists or not.[73]

> Everything having a "quiddity" becomes actualized, as an "existent" *in concreto* or as a representation in the mind, by all its constituent parts being actually present.[74] So when a thing has an "essence" (*ḥaqîqah*) other than (1) its (i.e. the thing's) being "existent", whether mentally or extra-mentally, and (2) its being constituted by "existence", "existence" must be something added (i.e. something different, and coming from outside) to the "essence" of the thing, whether it (i.e. that something additional) be inseparable (from the "essence") or separable.[75]
>
> Furthermore, the causes of "existence" are different from the causes of "quiddity".[76] "Being-man" (*insânîyah*), for instance, is in itself an "essence" and a "quiddity", for which its being "existent" *in concreto* or in the mind is not a constituent element, but is simply something added to it. If it were a constituent element of the "quiddity,[77] it would be impossible that the notion of the "quiddity" be actualized in the mind without being accompanied by its constituent part (i.e. "existence" which is supposed to be its constituent part). And it would be utterly impossible that the notion of "being-man" should be

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[73] Avicenna: *al-Ishârât wa-al-Tanbîhât* III, *op. cit.* p. 443 (No. I):

اعلم انک قد تفهم معنى المثلث و تشک هل هو موصوف بالوجود فى الأعيان ام ليس بموجود، بعد ما تمثّل
عندك أنه من خطّ و سطح، ولم يتمثل لک أنه موجود.

[74] The implication is that, if "existence" were one of the constituent elements of "quiddity", it would be present together with other constituent elements, and would never be separable from the "quiddity" whenever the latter is actualized in any form.

[75] "Inseparable existence" is the "existence" of those things that never cease to exist, while "separable existence" is that of perishable things——Ṭûsî: *Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 203, note 3.

[76] The causes of "existence" are the efficient cause, the final cause, and the substratum, while causes of "quiddity" are the genus and the specific difference. Ṭûsî, *ibid.*, p. 203, note. 4. The "causes" of "quiddity" are the same as its constituent parts.

[77] For further details about the relation between a "quiddity" and its constituent elements or parts (*muqawwimât*), see Avicenna *al-Shifâ', Kitâb al-Madkhal* (*The Isagoge*) (Cairo, al-Amîrîyah, 1953) p. 34.

> actualized as an "existent" in the mind and yet there should be doubt as to whether or not there is corresponding "existence" in the external world. Certainly in the case of "man" (and in other similar cases), there rarely occurs doubt regarding real "existence". But that is not due to the notion of "man"; it is due to the fact that we are acquainted with its particulars (i.e. individual men) through sense-perception.[78]

Thus Avicenna, following Fârâbî, establishes the distinction between "quiddity" and "existence". "Existence" in this metaphysical system is something which cannot be accounted for by the essential nature of "quiddity" alone. It is something more than "quiddity", something added (*zâ'id*) to it.

It cannot be emphasized enough that this dichotomy is an event occurring primarily in the sphere of concepts, on the level of conceptual analysis. The distinction thus established is a result of a conceptual analysis of the ontological reality, i.e. of concrete existent things.

This point is most important for a correct understanding of the Avicennian position, because it has often been claimed that Avicenna's metaphysics is fundamentally "essentialistic".[79] This view is due to a misunderstanding of the basic structure of his thought. The misunderstanding has been frequent not only in the West but also in the East.

It is to be observed, first of all, that the primary and ultimate object of all metaphysical thinking, for Avicenna, is the "existent" (*mawjûd*), the concrete thing which is actually existent. The whole system of his metaphysics is an intellectual analysis of the structure of this immediate reality. He does not start from "quiddities" as primarily and immediately given facts. As Professor F. Rahman remarks, "he does not initially take essence and existence as mutually separate elements and then try to fuse them, by a metaphysical chemistry, into an object".[80] On the contary, he begins with the concrete object, subjects it to a conceptual analysis, and finds in it two component elements: "quiddity" and "existence". To do so is not the same as asserting that the concrete object is factually a composite of these two elements. Suhrawardî's criticism is completely misplaced, when he says that if "existence" is something coming from the outside to alight upon a "quiddity", that very "quiddity" would be "existent" before it is qualified by "existence". This criticism stands on the assumption that the relation between "quiddity" and "existence" is, for Avicenna, something that takes place in the extra-mental world of reality. Such, however, is not the position taken by Avicenna.

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[78] The whole passage is found in *al-Ishârât wa-al-Tanbîhât*, I. pp. 202–203.

اعلم أَن كل شئى له ماهية، فانه انمّا يتحقّق موجوداً فيالأَعيان او متصوّراً فى الأَذهان بأن تكون أَجزاؤه حاضرة معه. و اذا كانت له حقيقة غير كونه موجوداً ، أَحد الوجودين، و غير مقوّم به، فالوجود معنى مضاف الى حقيقته، لازم او غير لازم. و أَسباب وجوده ايضاً غير أَسباب ماهيته. مثل الانسانية، فإِنها فى نفسها حقيقة ما و ماهية، و ليس أَنها موجودة فى الأَعيان او موجودة فى الأَذهان مقوّماً لها ، بل مضافاً اليها . ولو كان مقوّماً لها ، لاستحال أَن يتمثّل معناها فى النفس ، خالياً عما هو جزؤها المقوّم. فاستحال أَن يحصل لمفهوم الانسانية فى النفس وجود ويقع الشك فى انها هل لها فى الاعيان وجود ام لا. أُما الانسان، فعسى أَن لا يقع فى وجوده شك ، لا بسبب مفهومه، بل بسبب الإِحساس بجزئياته.

[79] For example, Étienne Gilson: *Le thomisme*, 5 ed. (Paris, Vrin 1944) p. 58, where he opposes Avicenna's "essentialism" to the "existential" philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

The immediate origin of the misunderstanding here lies, we think, in Avicenna's peculiar theory of "nature" (*ṭabî'ah*) or "natural universal" (*kullî ṭabî'i*) which he put forward in connection with the problem of Universals. It is his contention that every "quiddity" allows of being considered *per se*, in so far as it is that "quiddity" itself (*bi-mâ hiya tilka al-mâhîyah*, or *min ḥayth hiya hiya*). A "quiddity" in this aspect is neither one nor many, neither universal nor particular, neither "existent" nor "non-existent". The "quiddity" of man, for instance, is "man" pure and simple, neither more nor less, its content being exactly what is given by the definition of "man". It is above the distinction between "existence" and "non-existence". A "quiddity" in such a state is called "nature" or "natural universal", and since it is in itself neutral to both "existence" and "non-existence", it can be qualified by "existence" and transform itself into a "quiddity" actually existent *in concreto* or in the mind.

What is most important about this theory is the following. Avicenna is not asserting that "quiddities" are actually found in such a purified state in the world of concrete objective reality. Such an assertion would imply the absurd thesis that a "quiddity", prior to its "existence", is already "existent" in some way or other. What Avicenna wishes to say is that the reason, when it analyzes a concrete thing, can consider the "quiddity" which it finds therein (1) in the state of absolute purity away from all external determinations, just as it can consider the same "quiddity" (2) in so far as it is actualized *in concreto* as individual things, and (3) in so far as it is represented in the mind. He calls these three different aspects of one and the same "quiddity" the three ways of viewing the quiddity[81] (*i'tibârât thalâthah*). The word *i'tibâr* (pl. *i'tibârât*) means a subjective manner of looking at a thing, something produced or posited through the analytic work of the reason. It is an aspect of a thing which primarily appears in the subject and which, then, is projected onto the thing itself as if it were an objective aspect of the thing. In our present case the most basic——because it is purest——of the three *i'tibârât* of the "quiddity" is the "quiddity" *qua* "nature" or "natural universal".

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[80] The above-mentioned paper on *Essence and Existence in Avicenna*, p. 13.

[81] *Al-Shifâ'*, *Kitâb al-Madkhal*, *op. cit.* p. 15.

Avicenna argues that to the "quiddity" in such a state "existence" must be "added" from the outside in order that the concrete object be reconstructed in its original integrity. It will be evident now that all this happens only on the level of conceptual analysis. The distinction between "quiddity" and "existence" is in Avicenna a conceptual distinction.

As for the theological aspect of the problem of "existence", namely, the aspect which concerns creation, what has been said about Farâbî's position applies exactly to Avicenna's thought.

Practically the same solution is applicable to another important problem which is liable to produce, and which historically did produce, the same kind of misunderstanding. The problem concerns the celebrated Avicennian theory of "possibility". As is well-known, in Avicenna's thought the most fundamental division of the "existents" is into the categories of the "necessary existent" and the "possible existents". The "necessary existent" which is "existence" itself is the Absolute or God, while all other things are "possible existents". A "possible existent" is a thing which in itself is indifferent to both "existence" and "non-existence" in the sense that it can be and can not-be. A "possible existent", in order to exist actually, must obtain "existence" from the outside. The situation is, thus, the same as that which concerns the state of a "natural universal". We shall return to the problem of the "existence" of "possible existents" from a somewhat different angle in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5

The Primacy of Existence over Quiddity

The dichotomy of "existence" and "quiddity" which was introduced into Islamic philosophy by Fârâbî and Avicenna in the way we have described in the preceding pages, has become part of the well-established tradition of scholasticism, both Eastern and Western. In both the East and the West this dichotomy has been the source of a number of philosophical problems. One of these is the problem of principality or ontological fundamentality (*aṣâlah*), i.e. the question: which of these two is "fundamentally real" (*aṣîl*)? Formulated in a more precise way, the question may be stated: which of the two has a corresponding reality in the extramental world, "existence" or "quiddity"? One might even ask whether both are not equally "fundamentally real". The contrary of *aṣîl* is *i'tibârî* meaning "mentally posited", i.e. a notion or concept which is not directly and primarily drawn from a concrete extra-mental piece of reality.[82] If, therefore, only one of the two is *aṣîl*, the other will necessarily be *i'tibârî*.

The argument developed in the preceding chapter has, we think, made it clear how the analytic faculty of reason recognizes two elements in every concrete object both "existence" and "quiddity". The argument implies that these two elements found in, and extracted from, a concrete object are nothing other than notions or concepts. Our problem concerns the relation of these two products of reason to the basic ontological structure of the original object from which they have been extracted. Does the original object *in concreto* contain in its ontological structure two different "realities" corresponding to these two notions? Or does the original object have only one "reality" corresponding directly to one of the notions, the other having no directly corresponding "reality"? And if so, of which is this true?

To these questions the history of post-Avicennian thought has supplied three answers:

(1) Both "existence" and "quiddity" are *aṣîl*.
(2) Only "existence" is *aṣîl*, "quiddity" being *i'tibârî*.
(3) Only "quiddity" is *aṣîl*, "existence" being *i'tibârî*.

The first position is difficult to defend——the reason why will be given presently ——and in fact no prominent philosopher has ever taken this position. The only exception is said to be Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsâ'î[83] (d. 1826), a contemporary of Sabzawârî and the founder of a notable school known as Shaykhism.

The second position which is called the "principality of existence" (*aṣâlat al-wujûd*) was advocated in a systematic way by Mullâ Ṣadrâ (d. 1640). Sabzawârî, too, strongly upheld this thesis. Among Sabzawârî's contemporaries, Mullâ 'Alî Zunûzî[84] (d. 1889/90) may be mentioned as a remarkable exponent of this thesis.

The most notable representative of the third position is by common consent Yaḥyâ Suhrawardî (d. 1191). It is remarkable that Mullâ Ṣadrâ's teacher, Mîr Dâmâd (d. 1631) held the same view. At the present time the "principality of quiddity" (*aṣâlat al-mâhîyah*) is vigorously defended by Ḥâ'irî Mâzandarânî.[85]

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[82] The meaning of the word *i'tibâr*, from which is derived *i'tibârî*, has been provisionally explained toward the end of the preceding chapter. More will be said about it presently.

[83] See the *Introduction* by 'Imâd Zâdeh Iṣfahânî to the *Ḥikmat-i-Bû 'Alî Sînâ* by Ḥâ'irî Mâzandarânî, III (Teheran, Sahâmî, 1377 A.H.) p. 13, 16. He says that the position taken by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsâ'î is possibly due to a confusion on the part of Aḥsâ'î between "existence"——"quiddity", and "form"——"matter".

[84] In his book *Badâ'i' al-Ḥikam* (written in Persian, lithograph).

[85] In his *Ḥikmat-i-Bû 'Alî Sînâ*, I, pp. 364–375; p. 385, where he attacks Sabzawârî; and II, pp. 352–400.

We may conveniently begin discussion of this problem by recalling that the word *mâhîyah* in Islamic philosophy is used in two different senses: (1) *mâhîyah* " in the particular sense " (*bi-al-ma'nâ al-akhaṣṣ*) which refers to what is given in answer to the question about anything " what is it? ", the expression, *mâ huwa* or *mâ hiya* " what is it? " being the source of the word *mâhîyah* in this sense; and (2) *mâhîyah* " in the general sense " (*bi-al-ma'nâ al-a'amm*) referring to that by which a thing is what it is, i.e. the very " reality " (*ḥaqîqah*) of the thing, the source of the word *mâhîyah* in this second sense being the expression; *mâ bi-hi huwa huwa* (lit. " that by which it is it ").[86]

The *mâhîyah* in the general sense, i.e. in the sense of " essence ", is not opposed to " existence ", because " existence " itself has an " essence " in this sense. Rather, according to those who take the position of the principality of " existence ", " existence " has priority over everything else in having an " essence ", for it is the " real " in the fullest and absolute sense.

The *mâhîyah* in the particular sense or " quiddity ", on the contrary, definitely stands opposed to " existence ". It corresponds to the Avicennian concept of " natural universal " which has been explained in the preceding chapter. It is *mâhîyah* in this sense that is at issue in the problem of principality. Sabzawârî and those who share the same view contend that " existence " is *aṣîl* while the *mâhîyah* in this sense is *i'tibârî*.

With this preliminary understanding let us recapitulate the argument. We are in the presence of a concrete thing——an " existent " (*mawjûd*)——say, a stone. Our reason analyzes it into two parts: (1) the object's " being-a-stone " or " stoneness " and (2) its being actualized. The first is the " quiddity " by which the object is distinguished from all others, while the second is " existence " by which it is made actual and real and which it shares with all other " existents ". Thus we obtain out of one single concrete object two different notions.

It is evident that these two notions which in our minds are different from one another refer back to one and the same object in the external world. Logically speaking these two notions furnish two different predicates to be attributed to one and the same subject, namely, the original concrete object. Thus concerning a stone in our presence we say:

" This (object) is a stone "——in reference to its " quiddity ".

" This (stone) exists " (is an " existent ")——in reference to its " existence ".

Since the subject of these two propositions is the same, it is clear that the concrete object which it represents is one single entity, an ontological block without any fissure. Since, however, it has two different predicates, it is also clear that the single object has in itself two different aspects. Now the problem which arises here is: Do these two aspects of a concrete object indicate two different "realities"? Or does only one of them have a corresponding "reality", whichever it may be? It is impossible that both of them should be not "real" at the same time. If such were the case, the concrete object would lose its "reality" altogether, and there would be nothing "real" in the world.

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[86] In order to differentiate one from the other, I usually translate the first by " quiddity " and the second by " essence ".

It is equally impossible that these two aspects should be "real" at the same time because the "stone-ness" of a stone and its "existence" would indicate two different and independent "realities". If both were real, a stone would not in reality be a single entity, but a composite of two things. That is to say, a stone in its very being "one" would be "two" different things. In the case of two things that are independent concrete "realities", a composite of the two would, as Sabzawârî says, constitute a unity like that of a stone and a man put side by side. "Existence" would then cease to be the very actualizatian of "quiddity", for, on such a supposition, "quiddity" itself would have its own actualization, and "existence" another.

Since, as this argument shows, "existence" and "quiddity" cannot both be *aṣîl*, we are forced to say that only one of them is *aṣîl*, the other being *i'tibârî*. This much is certain. Our problem, therefore, is now to determine which is *aṣîl* and which is *i'tibârî*. Around this problem the Muslim philosophers divide themselves into two camps which are diametrically opposed.

Let us recall once again that when we say that a notion or concept is *aṣîl*, we do not mean that the notion or concept itself is "real". What is meant is that the notion in question has a corresponding "reality" in the extra-mental world primarily and essentially. This last phrase, "primarily and essentially" is important, because even a concept which is *i'tibârî* refers to a "reality" secondarily and and accidentally. Thus, when we say about a concrete stone in our presence that "it is a stone" ("quiddity") and that "it exists" ("existence"), the question is to know exactly to which one of these notions the extra-mental reality of the stone corresponds in a primary and essential way, not in a secondary and accidental way.

Those who take the position of the principality of "existence" (*aṣâlat al-wujûd*) assert that it is the notion of "existence", not that of "quiddity", which has a correspondent in the external world. This means that the external correspondent to the mental composite, "quiddity"+"existence", is nothing but "existence" in its various and variegated phenomenal forms. These forms, which the reason considers as independent "quiddities", are in reality nothing other than so many modalities of "existence". As we shall see more in detail in the following chapter, the "quiddities", in this view, are intrinsic limitations or determinations of "existence". They are merely internal modifications of the all-pervading "existence".

"Existence" itself is found everywhere. It fills up our world without leaving any interval. But it is, so to speak, something of an extremely elastic and plastic structure. It manifests itself under infinitely different forms: man, stone, table, etc.. These forms are definitely different from each other. A man *qua* "man" is different from a stone *qua* "stone". In so far, however, as they are internal modifications or modalities of one single "reality" called "existence", they are ultimately the same. The differences observable among various things are in the last analysis a matter of degrees. This point of view is commonly known under the name "the transcendental unity of existence" (*waḥdat al-wujûd*). It is no cause for wonder that the *Ḥikmat* philosophers of this school and the Ṣûfîs agree with each other with regard to the principality of "existence".

In this view, the attributive judgment, "This is a stone", is a kind of mental imitation of the external situation in which the all-pervading reality of "existence" manifests itself at this particular spot under this particular form which our reason is accumstomed to regard as "stoneness". Considered in this way, the "quiddity" ——"stoneness" in the present case——is but a "phenomenon" in the literal sense. It *seems* to have a solid independent subsistence of its own, but in reality it is something negative; in itself it is "nothing".

When we make an existential judgment about the same stone and say, "the stone exists", the subject——the stone——positively exercises its act of existing (*actus essendi*) in our minds in imitation of the external situation in which the seemingly independent object is exercising its act of existing. In reality, however, it is "existence" itself that is exercising its own act through one of its own modalities.

The thesis of the principality of "existence" as outlined here was established as the highest principle of metaphysics for the first time in the history of Islamic philosophy by Mullâ Ṣadrâ. It is not difficult to find the idea implicitly expressed in the writings of others who preceded Mullâ Ṣadrâ such as Avicenna, Ṭûsî, and others. Formulated explicitly and worked out in a conscious and systematic way, it became a principle capable of transforming the whole structure of metaphysics from Aristotelianism into something essentially non-Aristotelian. Professor H. Corbin goes so far as to say that the establishment of this thesis as the highest metaphysical principle was a "revolution" wrought by Mullâ Ṣadrâ. The statement is right on condition that we do not take it to mean that the whole of Islamic metaphysics prior to Mullâ Ṣadrâ, including the metaphysics of Avicenna, had been unconditionally "essentialistic". This qualification aside, it is true that the idea dominated the whole structure of Mullâ Ṣadrâ's philosophizing, and served as the basis on which he built up a gigantic system of metaphysics.

It is interesting to notice that Mullâ Ṣadrâ, who thus became the representative of the thesis of the principality of "existence", had been in his early days an enthusiastic champion of the opposite thesis, as he himself says:[87]

> In the earlier days I used to be a passionate defender of the thesis that the "quiddities" are *aṣîl* and "existence" is *i'tibârî*, until my Lord gave me guidance and let me see His demonstration. All of a sudden my spiritual eyes were opened and I saw with utmost clarity that the truth was just the contrary of what the philosophers in general had held. Praise be to God who, by the light of intuition, led me out of the darkness of the groundless idea and firmly established me upon the thesis which would never change in the present world and the Hereafter.
> As a result (I now hold that) the "existences" (*wujûdât*)[88] are primary "realities", while the "quiddities" are the "permanent archetypes" (*a'yân thâbitah*) that have never smelt the fragrance of "existence"[89] The "existences" are nothing but beams of light radiated by the true Light which is the absolutely self-subsistent Existence, except that each of them is characterized by a number of essential properties and intelligible qualities. These latter are the things that are known as "quiddities".

The last part of this passage clarifies his position better than any lengthy description. The "quiddities" are here described as "intelligible qualities" (*ma'ânî 'aqlîyah*), i.e. those subjective qualities that our reason perceives in, and extracts from, particular "existences"; these "existences", again, are no other than intrinsic determinations of the reality of Existence. Thus, in this view, the "quiddities" are the element farthest removed from the true Reality. They are at the very most mere shadows and faint reflections of Reality. This idea is clearly formulated by Mullâ Ṣadrâ in a number of places in his works. For instance:

> "Existence" is what is primarily real in every "existent"; it is the "reality". Everything other than "existence" (i.e. "quiddity") is, on the contrary, like a reflection, a shadow, or a similitude.[90]

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[87] *Mashâ'ir*, p. 35, no. 85.

[88] Plural of *wujûd*, meaning the various forms or modalities assumed by the reality of "existence".

[89] The expression *a'yân thâbitah* originates from Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240). It is an Arabic version of the Platonic Ideas, and corresponds to what the Peripatetics call "quiddities". The qualifying clause "which have never smelt the fragrance of existence" (*allatî mâ shammat râ'iḥah al-wujûd*) is also of Ibn 'Arabî. He means thereby that the "permanent archetypes" in themselves are not yet actualized in the world of external reality, although in the view of Ibn 'Arabî, they *are* "existent" in the consciousness of the Absolute.

[90] *Mashâ'ir*, p. 4, no. 4:

إنه (اى الوجود) الأَصل الثابت فى كلّ موجود و هو الحقيقة، و ما عداه كعكس و ظلّ و شبح.

> "Existence" is a unique self-subsistent entity, in spite of the fact that its species and individuals are different from each other with regard to "quiddity", and its genera and differentiae are distinguishable from one another in terms of "definition" and "essence". It has one single actualization which has divergent stages and degrees, higher and lower.[91]

It is quite clear from Mullâ Ṣadrâ's own description of his "conversion" from belief in the principality of "quiddity" to the opposite view by means of the guidance of the Lord, i.e., through an inner spiritual illumination, that the change was not a simple matter of his having abandoned one opinion and replaced it by another. It was not a mere change in rational outlook. The principality of "existence" was a philosophical conviction that originated in a personal experience on quite a different level of the intellect from that on which his former conviction stood. It was a philosophical position which had a deep root in a mystical experience of Existence. In this respect, the problem of the principality of "existence" was the point at which the guiding idea of all his philosophizing was actualized; namely, that a mystic who lacks the power of rational analytic thinking is but an imperfect mystic, just as a philosopher lacking the immediate experience of Reality is but an imperfect philosopher. In experience of Existence he brought these two aspects of spiritual life into a perfect unity. Sabzawârî faithfully followed in the footsteps of Mullâ Ṣadrâ in this matter. As a mystic he must have been fully conscious of the fact that ratiocination is due, as Thomas Aquinas once aptly remarked, to "a certain defect of the intellect" (*defectus quidam intellectus*),[92] but as a philosopher he rigorously observed the principle of rational demonstration. His *Sharḥ-e Manẓûmeh* in the main, or almost exclusively, shows this second aspect of his thought. Sabzawârî gives several rational proofs of the principality of "existence" in the book. As usual, his proofs are presented in a conspicuously concise form. We shall here reproduce two of them in a less concise way. The first is as follows.[93]

If, instead of "existence" being *aṣîl*, the "quiddities" were *aṣîl*, there would be no real "unity" (*waḥdah*) conceivable in the world. The absence of real "unity" would necessarily entail the impossibility of any ordinary act of judgment. The ordinary form of judgment, which in Islamic philosophy is called "common technical predication" (*ḥaml shâ'i' ṣinâ'î*),[94] is conditioned by both unity and divergence. When we make a judgment such as, "Man is capable of writing" (*al-insân kâtib*), the subject, "man", and the predicate, "capable of writing", must be different from each other. If they were completely one and the same, there could occur no subject-predicate relationship between them. There must, however, be a certain respect in which the two are unified. If they were separate and different from one another in all respects and had absolutely nothing to do with one another, they could never be brought together in the unity of the subject-predicate relationship.

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[91] *Ibid.*, p. 5, no. 4:

و إن الوجود كلّه مع تباين أنواعه و أفراده ماهية و تخالف أجناسه و فصوله حدّاً و حقيقة، جوهر واحد
له هويّة واحدة ذات مقامات و درجات عالية و نازلة.

[92] *Contra Gentiles* I, c. 57.

[93] *Sharḥ-e Manẓûmeh* vv. 22–23 with his own commentary upon them.

The aspect of divergence or duality in this kind of judgment comes from the side of "quiddity". The subject of the proposition is different from the predicate because the concept or "quiddity" of "man" essentially differs from the concept or "quiddity" of "writer". The aspect of unity and sameness is supplied by "existence", in the sense that the predicate "writer" is *externally* existent through the very same "existence" by which the subject "man" is existent.

The *concept* of "man" is definitely different from the *concept* of "writer". These two different concepts in some cases, however, pertain to one and the same object (*miṣdâq*) in the non-conceptual, i.e. real, world, of which it is true to say both that "it is a man" and "it is capable of writing". The identity is furnished by "existence". "Existence" here as elsewhere is in itself one single reality, and both the subject and predicate exist thereby. This same "existence", nonetheless, has two different aspects or stages; the subject exists in one of these stages and the predicate in the other[95]. The primary requisite of the "common technical predication", namely, the necessity of there being unity and duality at the same time, is thus satisfied by the collaboration of "existence" and "quiddities".

This, however, is possible only on the assumption that "existence" is *aṣîl*. On the opposite assumption, namely, that "existence" is *i'tibârî* and that whatever is actual in the external world is a "quiddity", there would be no real unity actualized, for a "quiddity" by definition is the principle of multiplicity and diversity. The "quiddity" of "man" would be there; the "quiddity" of "writer" would be there; but separately and independently of each other, there being no ontological link between them. On this assumption, "existence" which is supposed to supply such a link is *i'tibârî*, something unreal.

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[94] In contradistinction to the "primary and essential predication" exemplified by a proposition like "Man is man" or "Man is a rational animal". This type of predication is characterized by the fact that the subject and predicate are completely identical with each other, not only with regard to the external world but even as concepts.

[95] Cf. Taqî al-Âmulî: *Durar al-Farâ'id*, I (Teheran, Markaz-e Nashr-e Kitâb, 1377 A.H.) p. 39.

The second rational proof of the principality of "existence" which we shall reproduce is one that involves the "analogical gradation" (*tashkîk*) of "quiddity". The proof is developed around the relationship between the "cause" and the "caused".

Consider, for example, a case in which both the "cause" and "caused" belong to one and the same species as a fire (A) causing another fire (B). It is evident that (A) and (B) share one and the same "quiddity", i.e. "fire-ness" or being-fire. Now since, on the assumption of the principality of "quiddity", there is nothing real in the external world except "quiddities"——"existence" being merely *i'tibârî* ——we would have to admit that the "quiddity" of the fire (A) is the "cause" just as the "quiddity" of the fire (B) is the "caused". Since, further, a "cause" invariably has what is known as causal precedence or priority[96] over the "caused", the "quiddity" of (A) in being-fire would be prior to the "quiddity" of (B) in being-fire. We should then be compelled to conclude that the selfsame "quiddity" is "prior" in so far as it is in the "cause", and "posterior" in so far as it is in the "caused". This is tantamount to admitting "analogical gradation" in the "quiddity" of fire, namely, that the "quiddity" of fire is possessed of two stages or degrees, a "prior" degree and a "posterior" degree.

According to those who maintain the principality of "existence", such a position is absurd. A "quiddity" is forever itself. It does not admit of any variations. As Aristotle says in the *Categories*,[97] a "man" can never be "more or less man", whether we consider a particular individual at two different points of time or compare him with another man. Likewise, a man cannot be "prior" or "posterior" to any other man in "being-man", i.e. with regard to the "quiddity".

What makes the fire (A) "prior" and the fire (B) "posterior" in the "cause"-"caused" relationship is not the "fire-ness" of (A) and (B), for fire-ness is one and the same everywhere. The difference of priority and posteriority for the "quiddity" of fire is produced by "existence" which does have gradation in terms of priority-posteriority, intensity-weakness, etc.. The thing that is actually "prior" or "posterior" in our example *is* the "quiddity" of fire. The fire (A) is "prior" and the fire (B) is "posterior", however, not by virtue of the nature of the "quiddity" itself, but by virtue of "existence" through which "quiddities" are actualized in different degrees or stages.

The "quiddity" (being-fire) of the "cause" (A) is "prior" and "more intense" than that of the "caused" (B), not with regard to the character of the "quiddity" itself, but with regard to the degrees of "existence". The "quiddity" of fire in

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[96] For instance, when the movement of a hand naturally causes the movement of a ring, the former is said to have "causal priority" over the latter, although in terms of time there is no priority-posteriority relationship between the two movements.

[97] I, 5, 3b–4a.

(A) is at an ontological stage at which it has a peculiar property missing in the same "quiddity" at stage (B). We must remember also that the reality of "existence" is meant here, not merely the concept or notion of "existence". This "analogical gradation" of the reality of "existence" forms a cornerstone in the philosophy of those who hold the principality of "existence".

"Analogical gradation" (*tashkîk*), whether of "existence" or of "quiddity", is a concept of central importance characterizing the fundamental structure of *Ḥikmat* metaphysics down to its marraw. The problem will be fully dealt with in Chapter 7. Suffice it here to state in a preliminary way that "analogical gradation" is observable when a number of things, all sharing one and the same ontological ground or root, differ from each other by dint of the various intrinsic modalities of that very ground. Those who uphold the principality of "existence" assert that the ground is in every case nothing other than "existence", which, therefore, is to be regarded as something possessed of an infinite plasticity. The various intrinsic modalities of "existence" look to our eyes as if they were independent and self-subsistent entities called "quiddities". Nevertheless, in the last analysis, the "quiddities" prove to be products of rational elaboration by our minds. One object is, for example, whiter than another object, but the difference is due not to a difference in the degree of intensity in the "quiddity" of whiteness itself but to different degrees of "actualization", that is, "existence", of the selfsame "quiddity".

In opposition to these *Ḥikmat* philosophers, exponents of the principality of "quiddity" hold that the common ground spoken of in the argument above is invariably furnished by "quiddities"; for "existence", according to them, has no objective reality that will permit it to provide such an ontological ground. When, for example, an apple goes on increasing in redness during the gradual process of ripening, an infinite number of degrees are actualized within the "quiddity" of redness itself. They argue, however, that in spite of the actualization of infinite degrees and stages in the very interior of the "quiddity", the latter remains always one and the same specific nature as an objective "reality". Thus, in this view, between the first stage and the last there stands a wide range of possible variations, and this flexible whole constitutes a "quiddity". This is what is meant by the "analogical gradation" of "quiddity".

We must remark that for those who maintain the principality of "quiddity" it is difficult not to admit "analogical gradation" in the internal structure of "quiddity". Otherwise, they would have to admit that within a limited, i.e. finite, distance extending between the first stage and the last, there are actualized an infinite number of concrete "realities". In fact, a number of those who hold that "quiddity" is *aṣîl* and "existence" *i'tibârî*, do not admit "analogical gradation" in "quiddity". They simply take it for granted that the intensity in the "quiddity" of fire (A), for instance, by which it becomes the "cause" of another fire (B), belongs to the very internal structure of the "quiddity" of (A), just as the weakness of the "quiddity" of (B) constitutes an essential part of itself. In this case, however, the "quiddity" of (A) would have to be recognized to be a different "quiddity" from that of (B), because the latter would be a "quiddity" essentially lacking the intensity of (A). This stand would lead to the absurdity that an infinite number of "quiddities" are actualized in the extra-mental world within a finite distance extending between the first stage and the last.

We may add also that the second of the above-mentioned proofs of the principality of "existence"——the proof based on the "priority" and "posteriority" in the "cause"-"caused" relationship——is not valid against the opponent who admits the "analogical gradation" of "quiddity". As we have just seen, the difference regarding "priority" and "posteriority" between fire (A) and fire (B) can very well be explained in term of the internal stage of one and the same "quiddity".

Suhrawardî represents a position which combines the doctrines of the principality and the "analogical gradation" of "quiddity". This view, of course, implies the *i'tibârî*-ness of "existence". In order fully to understand the Suhrawardian position concerning this problem, we must begin by examining what he says about the dichotomy of "existence" and "quiddity" and his criticism of the Avicennian thesis.

In Chapter 4 we have already shown that the dichotomy between "existence" and "quiddity" of which Avicenna speaks must be interpreted as an occurence in the sphere of concepts, on the level of conceptual analysis, and not as an occurence in the sphere of concrete reality. We must, however, admit, that we have to do here with an interpretation of our own. Objectively it must be acknowledged that the words of Avicenna are not free from ambiguity. They allow also of a different interpretation. Avicenna himself does not make it explicitly clear, unlike Naṣîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî, that the distinction of "quiddity" from "existence" does not occur except in the sphere of mental representation.[98]

Suhrawardî, in fact, chooses a different interpretation, according to which Avicenna and the Peripatetic philosophers who followed him were guilty of a mis-

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98) *Commentary on Avicenna's a -Ishârât wa-al-Tanbîhât*, I, p. 301, where Ṭûsî says:

إن امتياز الماهية من الوجود لا يكون الا فى التصوّر.

It may be remembered that Ṭûsî was the most faithful interpreter of his master, so much so that he has always been considered the "mouthpiece" of Avicennian philosophy.

take in thinking that "existence" is something different and distinguishable from "quiddity" *in concreto*, in the very structure of the objective reality. He criticizes the Avicennian thesis precisely on this understanding.

Suhrawardî begins from the principle that "a mental difference does not necessarily imply a real difference",[99] i.e. that two things being distinguishable from one another *qua* concepts does not necessarily indicate that they are different also *in concreto*. On this basis he argues that "quiddity" and "existence" are two different things only on the level of conceptual analysis,[100] and that in the extra-mental world, on the contary, they are one single "reality", not a composite of two independent elements.

Up to this point, if our interpretation of the Avicennian position is right, Suhrawardî basically agrees with Avicenna. The only point which distinguishes him from Avicenna lies in the fact that he explicitly and emphatically states that the concept of "existence" is through and through *i'tibârî* there being nothing real that directly corresponds to it in a real "existent". In reality, the objective referent of the word "existence" is nothing but "quiddity" as it actually is (*mâhîyah ka-mâ hiya*). We encounter in the extra-mental world "quiddities" completely actualized, beyond which there is nothing else to which they might be related. It is "quiddity" that is primarily and fundamentally real; and the fundamental reality of "quiddity", when conceptually analyzed, produces the concept of "existence". This same is true of "unity".[101]

Suhrawardî differs radically from Avicenna in his view of the present problem because he does not interpret the Avicennian dichotomy in the way we have done. He takes it for granted that Avicenna meant a *real* distinction of two constituents in the internal structure of the extra-mental object. Repeatedly he comes back to this understanding of the Avicennian dichotomy. He argues against Avicenna's contention that "existence" must be something different from "quiddity" because it often happens that we represent in our mind a "quiddity"——triangle, for example——and yet doubt, after having represented it, whether it really exists or not,

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99) *Kitâb al-Talwîḥât*, ed. H. Corbin: *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica*, I (Istanbul, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1945) p. 22, § 12:

لا يلزم من التغاير الذهنى التغاير العينىّ

100) *Ibid.*, p. 23:

اذا قلنا: وجود كذا غير ماهيته، فإنما نعنى بحسب التفصيل الذهنى.

101) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

as follows.[102]

> It is not admissible to argue that " existence " in the external world is something different from " quiddity " on the ground that we can conceive of the latter quite independently of " existence ". (This is inadmissible) because in quite the same way we can form a mental image of "existence "——for instance, the " existence " of a fabulous bird, *'anqâ'*——without knowing whether it (i.e. that particular " existence ") does exist (i.e. is actualized *in concreto*) or not. Thus " existence " would require another " existence ", and so on and so forth until ultimately we would have to admit an infinite series of " existences " being actualized at one and the same time.[103]

Avicenna argues that " existence " is something different from " quiddity " in the external world for the reason that we are able to form the mental image of a " quiddity " and yet doubt its real " existence ". The same argument, however, may yield different conclusions. The ability to doubt the real " existence " of a mental image that has " existence " in the mind amounts to a belief in two kinds of " existence ", the second " existence " being something *really* different from the first " existence ".[104] The first " existence ", in order to exist, requires the second " existence ", and the second " existence " the third, etc., *ad infinitum*. This position is evidently absurd, and the absurdity results from the original assumption that

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102) The implication being, as Quṭb al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî (d. 1311) remarks in his *Commentary* on Suhrawardî's *Ḥikmat al-Ishrâq* (lithograph ed. Teheran, 1315 A.H.) p. 185, that " whenever of two things one is conceivable independently of the other, they are different from each other in the extra-mental world of reality; they are not one *in concreto*, so that existence must be something different from, and added to, quiddity in the extra-mental world."

كلّ امرين يعقل أَحدهما دون الآخر، فهما متغايران فى الأَعيان، لا متّحدان فيها . فالوجود مغاير للماهية
و زائد عليها فى الأَعيان.

103) *Talwîḥât* p. 22, § 13:

لا يجوز أَن يقال: الوجود فى الاعيان زائد على الماهية ، لأَنا عقلناها دونه. فإِن الوجود ايضاً ، كوجود
العنقاء ، فهمناه من حيث هو كذا ، ولم نعلم أَنه موجود فى الأَعيان. فيحتاج الوجود الى وجود آخر.
فيتسلسل مرتّباً موجوداً معاً الى غير النهاية .

104) Quṭb al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî, *op. cit.*, p. 185:

كما دلّ تعقّل الماهية مع الشک فى وجودها على زيادة الوجود عليها ، كذلک يدلّ تعقّل الوجود المضاف
الي الماهية مع الشک في وجود ذلک الوجود علي زيادة الوجود علي الوجود الأَصليّ .

"existence" is something real, i.e. something "existent" *in concreto*. The truth, according to Suhrawardî is that "existence" is *i'tibârî*, something "mentally posited", and that the distinction between "existence" and "quiddity" occurs only in the realm of conceptual analysis.

As we have pointed out earlier, Suhrawardî's criticism of the Avicennian thesis has no force once it is admitted that the criticism is based upon a misunderstanding of Avicenna. The weakness of the criticism, however, is but a minor point. Far more important for our purposes is to call attention to Suhrawardî's emphasis upon the *i'tibârî* nature of "existence". This view of the nature of "existence" is diametrically opposed to the fundamental idea of Sabzawarian metaphysics.

The Peripatetic philosophers[105] assert that "existence" is the primary and the most evident of all things so that it does not allow of being defined by anything else. This stand, Suhrawardî says, simply dodges the difficulty. In truth, there is a clear meaning or meanings discernible even in the ordinary usage of the word "existence". It is remarkable, he goes on to say, that all the discernible meanings of "existence" indicate that it is *i'tibârî*.

The first of its meanings is "relations", spatial or temporal, expressed in terms of propositions such as the following: "The thing *exists* in the house", "in the mind", "in reality", "in time" etc.. Here what is meant by the word "existence" is invariably the same as the meaning of the particle "in" (*fî*); in other words, it denotes the relation of an actual external "quiddity" (*mâhîyah khârijîyah*) to place and time. This relation, denoted by the word "existence", is itself a product of our reason.

The second meaning is the logical relation between the subject and predicate. In a proposition like: "Zayd *exists* as a writer" (i.e. "Zayd *is* a writer"), "existence" simply means the relation of a predicate to an *external* "quiddity" denoted by the subject of the proposition.

The third meaning is "essence" (*ḥaqîqah* or *dhât*). People often use the expression: the "existence" of a thing, meaning thereby the "essence" of the thing, or the thing "itself". The "essence" or "itself" in this sense is but a mental abstraction, an abstract notion which the anatomizing activity of reason extracts from the actually existent thing (i.e. the external "quiddity").

In all these three cases, what is denoted by the word "existence" are "rational aspects" (*i'tibârât 'aqlîyah*) which are put into relation with "quiddities" on the level of conceptualization alone. The "quiddities" are *real* things, actualized in the extra-mental world, but "existence" denotes those aspects which arise only in our.

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[105] The argument here developed is based on Suhrawardî's *Ḥikmat al-Ishrâq* with Quṭb al-Dîn's *Commentary*, pp. 189–191.

intellect, and which are then, so to speak, read into the objective structure of things *in concreto*.

Thus Suhrawardî counts "existence" among the "rational aspects" or "rational modes (*jihât 'aqlîyah*),[106] of which "possibility" (*imkân*), "oneness" (*waḥdah*) and the like are other examples. The notion of "existence" has no concrete form (*ṣûrah*) corresponding to it in the external world. "Existence" *is* different from "quiddity", but only when conceptualized. In the pre-conceptual or non-conceptual world of reality, there is no real entity which corresponds to "existence".

> I readily admit that "existence", "possibility" and the like are (conceptually) different and distinguishable from the "realities" (i.e. "quiddities") to which they are attributed. But I can never accede to the view that these distinguishable elements have their own concrete forms in the extra-mental world.[107]

Suhrawardî points out that the problem of the "rational modes" is of such a subtle nature that it has led many minds into confusion. In defence of the thesis that "existence", "possibility", "oneness" etc., are entities having "actualizations" (*huwîyât*) which are *in concreto* different from the "quiddities", some philosophers, for instance, argue as follows.[108]

> When we say: "The thing is *existent in reality*" or "is *possible in reality*", or again, "is *one in reality*", we are well aware of the difference between these and propositions like: "It is *possible in the mind*", "*one in the mind*" or "*existent in the mind*".
> This (awareness of difference between these two classes of propositions) is solely due to the fact that the "possibility" of the concrete possible thing (*mumkin 'aynî*) is a "possibility" *in concreto*. This because (the thing in question) *is* in reality "possible" and "existent"; not that it is "possible" and "existent" in the mind only. And the same is true of "existence" and "oneness".

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106) *Kitâb al-Mashâri' wa-al-Muṭâraḥât*, ed. H. Corbin, *op. cit.*, I, p. 343, § 101.

107) *Ibid.*, p. 346, § 103.

108) *Ibid.*, p. 344, § 103:

إنـاإذا قلنا «الشئى موجود فى الأَعيان» او «ممكن فى الأَعيان» او «واحد كذا»، ندرك تفرقة بين هذا و
بين ما تحكم «انه ممكن فى الذهن» او «واحد» او «موجود». فليس الا أَن الممكن العينّى امكانه فى
الأَعيان، و كذا الوجود و الوحدة. فانه ممكن و موجود فى الأَعيان، لا أَنه ممكن و موجود فى الذهن
فحسب.

This argument, according to Suhrawardî, rests upon a confusion between the structure of judgment and that of the objective reality. This is precisely the subtle point of which mention has been made. His argument runs as follows.[109]

> From the fact that the judgment we form on a thing that "it is possible in objective reality" is right, it does not necessarily follow that the "possibility" of that thing is an objective external fact. Nay, "*that it is possible in objective reality*" is the content of a judgment which is formed by the mind.[110] In a similar way, "that it is possible in the mind (i.e. conceptually)" is also the content of a judgment. Thus "possibility" is but a "mental attribute" (*ṣifah dhihnîyah*) which the mind attributes sometimes to what is in the mind and sometimes to what is in the objective reality. Sometimes the mind even forms unconditioned judgments having a neutral relation to both the mind and the objective reality.

It goes without saying that what is said here about "possibility" applies word by word also to "existence". In ordinary life we are constantly forming judgments of the type: "X is existent" or "X exists". According to Suhrawarî, "existence" in such cases remains confined within the sphere of a judgment; its reference never goes beyond the content of the judgment. It *is* only within the confines of human consciousness.

The passage just quoted speaks also of "possibility" being a "mental attribute" (*ṣifah dhihnîyah*). Consequently, "existence" too is to be considered a "mental attribute". The concept of "attribute" (*ṣîfah*), or "accident" (*'araḍ*) in connection with "existence" raises a very important and interesting problem in Islamic ontology. We shall deal with this problem in the following chapter. Here we confine ourselves to reproducing a passage in which the concept of "mental attribute" is neatly explained by Suhrawardî:[111]

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[109] *Ibid*., p. 346, § 103:

لا يلزم من صحّة حكمنا عليه (اى على الشئى) أَنه ممكن فى الأَعيان أَن يكون امكانه واقعاً فى الأَعيان.
بل هو محكوم عليه من قبل الذهن أَنه في الأَعيان ممكن، و محكوم عليه ايضاً أَنه فى الذهن ممكن.
فالامكان صفة ذهنية يضيفها الذهن تارة الى ما فى الذهن و تارة الى ما فى العين، و تارة يحكم حكماً
مطلقاً متساوى النسبة الى الذهن و العين.

[110] The mind *thinks* that the thing is in reality possible. This act of the mind does not immediately indicate that the thing *is* in reality possible.

> The attributes are divided into two kinds: (1) attributes that have "existence" both in the mind and outside the mind, like whiteness; and (2) attributes by which the "quiddities" are qualified, but which have no "existence" except in the mind. Nay, the very fact that they are in the mind *is* their objective "existence". This latter kind of attributes may be exemplified by the concept of "species" as it is predicated of "man", and the concept of "particular (or individual)" as it is predicated of an individual man Zayd. When we say, for example: "Zayd is a particular *in concreto*", we do not mean thereby that "being-particular" has in the extra-mental world a concrete form subsisting in Zayd. The same is true of the concept of "thing-ness" (*shay'îyah*), or "being-a-thing". It is, as many of the Peripatetics themselves admit, one of the "secondary intelligibles". Nevertheless, we can truthfully say: "X *is a thing in reality*".
>
> "Possibility", "existence", "necessity", "oneness" and the like are all of this kind.
>
> Thus something being a "particular (i.e. individual) in reality" or "impossible in reality" does not necessarily indicate that the "being-particular"——and the same is true of "impossibility"——has a concrete "form" and a "reality" which are additional to the thing itself in the external world. In just the same way, something being "possible in reality" or "existent in reality" does not necessarily mean that the "possibility" or "existence" itself of that thing is actualized in the external world.

We have outlined the celebrated Suhrawardian theory of the *i'tibârî*-ness of "existence". If, he argues further, "existence" were not *i'tibârî*, but something real in the extra-mental world, it would be "actualized"; that is to say, it would be "existent". This would imply that "existence" has "existence" and lead to an

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111) Ed. H. Corbin *op. cit.*, pp. 346–347, § 103:

إن الصفات تنقسم الى صفات لها وجود فى الذهن و العين – كالبياض – و الى صفات توصف بها الماهيات، و ليس لها وجود الا فى الذهن، و وجودها العينى هو أنها فى الذهن – كالنوعية المحمولة على الانسان، و الجزئية المحمولة على زيد – فإن قولنا: «زيد جزئى فى الأَعيان» ليس معناه أَن الجزئية لها صورة فى الأَعيان قائمة بزيد. و كذلك الشيئية كما يسلّمها كثير منهم أُنها من المعقولات الثوانى. و مع هذا، يصّح أَن يقال: «إن جيم شئى فى الأَعيان». و الامكان و الوجود و الوجوب و الوحدة و نحوها من هذا القبيل. فكما لا يلزم من كون شئى جزئياً فى الأَعيان او ممتنعاً فى الأَعيان ان يكون للجزئية صورة و ماهية زائدة على الشئى فى الأَعيان – و كذا الامتناع – فلا يلزم من كون شئى ممكناً او موجوداً فى الأَعيان أَن يكون امكانه او وجوده فى الأَعيان.

infinite regress.

Against this criticism, the strongest argument in the hands of those who maintain the principality of " existence ",——in fact both Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî consider this point the ultimate ground of their thesis——is that " existence ", in order to be actualized, is not in need of any other " existence ". " Existence ", they assert, is in itself " actualization ". All other things (i.e. " quiddities ") are " existent " by " existence "; but " existence " is " existent " by itself, by the very fact that it is " existence ". " Being-existent ", i.e. " actualization ", belongs to the " quiddities " by accident, while it belongs to " existence " by essence.

This idea, namely that " existence " (*wujûd*) in itself is " being-existent " (*mawjûdîyah*) Suhrawardî refutes in the following way.[112]

> Suppose a thing is actually " non-existent " (*ma'dûm*). You ask them: Is the " existence " of that thing " non-existent ", or is it " actualized "? It will be absurd to say that the thing is " non-existent " but its " existence " is " existent ". So the latter also must necessarily be " non-existent ".
>
> But since in this way the " existence " of something is conceivable together with the judgment that it (i.e. that " existence ") is of necessity " non-existent ", it is patent that " existence-being-existent " is not the same as " existence " itself. For otherwise, it would be utterly impossible for us to have the representation of " existence " judging at the same time that it is " non-existent " (i.e. not actualized) in the external world.
>
> Thus they will have to admit that " existence " becomes " existent " only by dint of something (i.e. another " existence ") which occurs to it when the " quiddity " becomes " actualized " and " existent ". That is to say, they will have to admit that " existence " becomes " existent " only through another " existence ". And this will lead to an infinite regress.

If we consider Suhrawardî's ability as a keen dialectician, and remember at the same time that he was *Shaykh al-Ishrâqîyah*, the Head of the Illuminationists, a mystic known for the profundity of his spiritual experiences, we can see how formidable an opponent he was for philosophers like Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî.

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112) *Ibid.*, pp. 358–359, § 109:

ربما تقول لهم: الشئى، اذا كان معدوماً، هل وجوده معدوم او حاصل؟ و محال أن يكون الشئى معدوماً و وجوده ثابت. فيجب أن يكون معدوماً. فاذا عقل وجود الشئى مع الحكم بأنه معدوم بالضرورة، يلزم أن لا يكون موجودية الوجود هو نفس الوجود. والا، ما تصوّر تعقّله مع الحكم عليه بأنه معدوم فى الأعيان. فلا بدّ من كونه موجوداً بأمر يحصل عند تحقّق الماهية و تحقّق وجودها. فيلزم للوجود وجود، و يتسلسل الي غير النهاية.

Suhrawardî combined in himself two aspects. On the one hand, he was a first-rate dialectician, a keen analytic mind. He fought with the Peripatetics on their own ground. On the other hand, he was one of the greatest mystics in Islam. In this second sphere, he spoke quite a different language, a language of extraordinary symbols and images, and that factor, precisely, complicates the position Suhrawardî took toward the problem of "existence".

As we have just seen, Suhrawardî severely attacked those who maintain the principality of "existence", and established instead the principality of "quiddity". All this he did by basing himself on the very ground occupied by his opponent. He developed his argument logically, as a man of reason. In the second of the two spheres of his interest, however, he does not speak of "existence" and "quiddity". Instead, he speaks of the spiritual-metaphysical Light (*nûr*), which is, for him *qua* mystic, the sole Reality in the fullest sense of the term, and which manifests itself in an infinity of grades and stages by dint of the "analogical gradation" pertaining to its very essential nature. In this respect, the structure of the Suhrawardian Light bears a remarkable resemblance to the structure of Existence as the concept was developed by Ibn 'Arabî and his followers. It is small wonder that Mullâ Ṣadrâ should have been greatly influenced by the Suhrawardian conception of the luminous Reality in elaborating his own conception of "existence" as the ultimate metaphysical reality. Since Sabzawârî faithfully follows Mullâ Ṣadrâ on this point, we shall never be able to account fully for the basic structure of Sabzawârî's metaphysics without taking into consideration the decisive formative influence exercised upon it by Suhrawardî. This point will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The controversy over the problem of principality described in the present chapter has a peculiar structure. If one fails to discern the structure, the whole discussion may appear to be merely a verbal quarrel.

As we have pointed out, the problem arises from the distinction between "quiddity" and "existence" on the level of conceptual analysis. The "principality" or "fundamental reality" (*aṣâlah*) of which the philosophers speak is not concerned with the "reality" of concepts. They do not mean to say that the concept, either in the aspect of "quiddity" or of "existence", is real in the extra-mental world. In other words, they do not uphold a doctrine of realism in regard to concepts. Their interest is rather to discuss whether there actually may be found a "reality" directly corresponding to the indicative act of the concept of "existence"; or whether the "reality" beyond the concept is nothing but "quiddity". The problem of the principality of "quiddity" is posed in the same framework. In this instance the problem is to discover: whether the "reality" underlying the indicative act of the concept of "quiddity" *qua* "natural universal" *is* really "quiddity"; or whether it is nothing but the reality of "existence".

This basic structure of the problem must always be kept strictly intact. If even one of the elements is misplaced, the whole controversy becomes meaningless. Such is the case with those who understand the word *mâhîyah* in the phrase *aṣâlah al-mâhîyah* in the "general sense",[113] i.e. in the sense of "that by which a thing is what it is". In the nineteenth century, Mîrzâ Aḥmad Ardakânî Shîrâzî,[114] who thought the controversy to be essentially verbal, proposed to solve the problem at one stroke by introducing a simple change into its internal structure.[115] According to his proposed solution, the "existence" which those who maintain its *i'tibârî*-ness have in mind, is the abstract concept of "existence", while the "quiddity" they have in mind is "quiddity" as actualized *in concreto*. In contrast, the "existence" which is spoken of by those who maintain its *aṣâlah*, is the "reality" of "existence", not the concept, of "existence", while the "quiddity" to which they refer is "quiddity" *qua* a "natural universal" considered in itself. This solution, however, as Professor Âshtiyânî points out, will satisfy neither of the two parties.

Chapter 6

Is Existence an Accident?

The "accidentality of existence" is a momentous problem bequeathed by Avicenna to posterity, not only in the Muslim East but also in the Christian West. In the golden age of medieval scholasticism in the West, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Christian doctors were engaged in heated discussions over the problem whether or not "existence" is something super-added to "quiddity" as an "accident" (*sit aliquod superadditum ad modum accidentis*).[116] We see, for example, Siger of Brabant, the greatest representative of Latin Averroism and a contemporary of Thomas Aquinas, in the *Prolegomena* to his Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* raising as one of the basic problems of metaphysics *utrum ens vel esse in rebus causatis pertineat ad essentiam causatorum vel sit aliquod additum essentiae*

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[113] As distinguished from *mâhîyah* in the particular sense. The distinction has been explained above at the beginning of the present chapter.

[114] Known as the author of a commentary on Mullâ Ṣadrâ's *Kitâb al-Mashâ'ir*, entitled *Nûr al-Baṣâ'ir fî Ḥall Mushkilât al-Mashâ'ir*. Cf. H. Corbin's *Introduction* to his edition of the *Mashâ'ir*, p. 51.

[115] Cf. Jalâl al-Dîn Âshtiyânî: *Hastî az Naẓar-e Falsafah va-'Irfân* (Mashhad, Châpkhâne-yi Khorâsân, 1379 A.H.) pp. 217–218.

[116] Thomas: *In IV Met.*, lect. 2.

illorum.[117] Thomas Aquinas took the position that the "existence" (*esse*) of a thing, although it is something distinguishable from the "quiddity" of the thing, should, nevertheless, not be considered something super-added in the manner of an "accident", but something constituted, as it were, by the intrinsic principles of "quiddity" itself (*quasi constitutum per principia essentiae*).[118] This is, of course, directed against the Avicennian thesis, as he understood it, namely that "existence" is an "accident" of "quiddity" in the way an ordinary "accident" like whiteness qualifies a substance. Otherwise, he himself does use the word "accident" in describing the relation of "existence" to "quiddity", for he holds that "existence" is not included in the definition of any "quiddity", that it is something *praeter essentiam* (outside the "quiddity").[119]

This understanding of the Avicennian thesis, however, is evidently a misunderstanding. As we shall see presently, Avicenna himself in his *Ta'lîqât* distinguishes between two kinds of "accidents", and shows that, although he uses the term "accident" (*'araḍ*) or "attribute" (*ṣifah*) in describing the relation of "existence" to "quiddity", he does not mean an "accident" like whiteness inhering in a substratum. This misunderstanding is historically very significant, however, having arisen among the Latin scholastics because of a similar failure to comprehend on the part of Averroës.

Averroës took the Avicennian doctrine of the "accidentality" of "existence" to mean that "existence" is just an ordinary "accident" like whiteness, and severely attacked Avicenna on this basis.[120] Thomas Aquinas inherited this interpretation together with this criticism from Averroës, and since that time such a view of Avicenna has become common in Western scholasticism. Even today the Avicennian doctrine is commonly understood in the light of this interpretation. Dr. Manser, for instance, in his *Das Wesen des Thomismus* calls the doctrine, understood in this way, Avicenna's "erroneous assertion" (*sein irrtümliche Behauptung*) and remarks.[121]

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117) "Whether being-existent or existence in caused things (i.e. created things or possible things, as Avicenna would say) pertains to the very quiddities of things, or whether it is something added (from the outside) to their quiddities". Siger himself chose the first alternative.

118) *Op. cit.*, lect. 2.

119) Cf. for example his *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1, 21, ed. Marietti.

120) Cf. *Commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, I, ed. Bouyges (Beirut, Univ. Saint Joseph) p. 313, 315.

121) P. G. M. Manser: *Das Wesen des Thomismus* (Freiburg [Schweiz] St Paulsdruckerei, 1935) p. 469: Hier verwechselt also Ibn Sînâ das Akzidens *logicum* und *ontologicum* oder praedicabile und praedicamentale. Wahr ist es, dass die Existenz jedes *ens contingens* zum fünften Praedicabile (=zur zufälligen Aussageweise) gehört. Falsch ist es, dass die Existenz der kreatürlichen Substanz ein Akzidens praedicamentale (=*ens in alio*) sei. Sie bildet vielmehr ein substantielles Mitprinzip der aus Wesenheit und Dasein aktualisierten Substanz.

> Here Avicenna confuses the "*logical* accident" (i.e. "accident" as a predicate) with the *ontological* "accident" (i.e. accident as opposed to "substance" in which it subsists), or the "accident" as *praedicabile* with "accident" as *praedicamentale*. Certainly it is true that the "existence" of each contingent "existent" (*ens contingens*) belongs to the fifth predicable (i.e. the fifth Universal in the order of the Porphyrian theory of Universals, namely, "accident" in the sense of *'araḍ 'âmm*). But it is a mistake to think that the "existence of any created substance is a "predicamental accident" (*ens in alio*, something existent in something else). "Existence", in truth, must be considered a substantial co-principle of a substance which is actualized out of the "quiddity" and "existence".

The phrase *ens in alio* used by Dr. Manser is typical of this way of understanding, or misunderstanding, the Avicennian view of the "accidentality" of "existence". If "existence", as understood by Avicenna himself, were an *ens in alio* "something existent in something else", it would be just an ordinary "accident" subsisting and inhering in a substance, like whiteness subsisting in a body. Such an understanding of "existence" inevitably leads one into a blind alley when he turns to consider the ontological status of "quiddity" prior to the "occurence" of "existence".

A predicamental or categorical "accident", i.e. an "accident" understood in the sense of *ens in alio*, is a property which, coming from outside, alights upon the thing (the substratum) and inheres therein, the substratum forming a kind of "locus" for the "occurring accident". The phrase "coming from outside" here means nothing other than that the "locus" considered in itself, i.e. without taking into consideration any of the secondary circumstances, subsists by itself and does not need the "accident". Whiteness, for example, is not needed by the body itself; for the latter, in so far as it is a body, subsists regardless of whether the property of whiteness "occurs" to it or not. Whiteness "occurs" to it only at a stage posterior to the stage of the subsistence of the "quiddity".

Now, if "existence" were one of such "accidents", the "quiddity" which is essentially independent of any "accident" of this nature would have to subsist, that is, "exist" in some form or other even without the "occurrence" of "existence". But what will be the form of "existence" of a "quiddity" prior to its "being existent"? In a discussion of theological inspiration, particularly under the influence of Neoplatonism, the difficulty may be simply solved by our saying that "quiddities" in such a state do exist in the Consciousness of God.(122) Ontologically, how-

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122) But even this does not solve the problem completely; see F. Rahman; *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

ever, this will not do. We should still have to admit willy-nilly that such a "quiddity" exists somewhere in some mysterious way as an ontological monster.

To understand "existence" as a categorical "accident", like whiteness, occuring to a "quiddity" which subsists independently of the "accident", is to understand the "occurrence" of "existence" to "quiddity" as an event taking place in the extra-mental world of reality. The difficulty just mentioned and many others, all arise precisely from this understanding of the Avicennian thesis. We have repeatedly pointed out that this understanding is due to a mistaken interpretation of Avicenna's words.

Nevertheless, Avicenna has been commonly misunderstood both in the East and the West. From among the great names in the earlier periods of Islamic philosophy who perpetuated a wrong view of Avicenna, we may mention Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî (d. 1209) who raised a number of pseudo-problems on the basis of this misunderstanding. We are not interested here to discuss these so-called "Fakhrian sophism" (*shubuhât fakhrîyah*). Far more important is the decisive answer given by Ṭûsî in defense of the Avicennian position, for it brings to the fore the true meaning of the "accidentality" of "existence".

> Razî's argument is based on his conception that "quiddity" previous to its "existence" has (from the very beginning) a kind of subsistence in the external world, and that, then (at the second stage) "existence" comes to inhere in it. But this conception itself is mistaken. For the being (or subsistence) of a "quiddity" *is* its "existence".
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> "Quiddity" can never be independent of "existence" except in the intellect. This, however, should not be taken as meaning that "quiddity" in the intellect is separated from "existence", because "being in the intellect" is itself also a kind of "existence", namely, "rational existence",[123] just as "being in the external world" is "external existence". The above statement[124] must be understood in the sense that the intellect is of such a nature that it can observe "quiddity" alone without considering its "existence". Not considering something is not the same as considering it to be non-existent.
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> Thus the qualification of "quiddity" by "existence" is an event that occurs only in the intellect. It is different from the qualification of a body by whiteness. For it is not the case that "quiddity" has a separate "existence" and the attribute which "occurs" to it and which is called "existence" has another (separate) "existence", in such a way that the two become united just as a

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[123] Also called "mental existence" (*wujûd dhihnî*).

[124] That "quiddity" is separated from "existence" in the intellect.

recipient and a thing received become united. Nay, a "quiddity" when it *is*, that *being* itself is its "existence".[125]

As the last sentence of this quotation indicates, when a man, for example, as a concrete individual, is found in our presence, that is, when the "quiddity" of "man" is actualized as an individual "reality", it is meaningless for us to ask whether the "quiddity" exists or not. Its very "actualization" is its "existence". It is in reference to this ontological level that Mullâ Ṣadrâ speaks of the "self-sameness of existence and quiddity" (*'aynîyah al-wujûd wa-al-mâhîyah*). "Existence", he says,[126] whether extra-mental or mental, is the very subsistence of a "quiddity" and its (i.e. the "quiddity"'s) own "existence"; it does not signify that something other than the "quiddity" is actualized in the "quiddity". Thus on this level, i.e. in the external objective world of reality, the proposition "Zayd exists" (*Zayd mawjûd*) says the same thing as "Zayd is Zayd" (*Zayd Zayd*). Both are an emphatic affirmation of the reality of Zayd.[127] The structure of the reality is such that there is no place here even for talking about "unification" (*ittiḥâd*) of two components, for it is, as we have remarked before, an ontological block without any fissure.

The situation, however, radically changes when we transfer the problem to the level of conceptual analysis. On the conceptual level the intellect anatomizes the integral ontological block into "quiddity" and "existence" and distinguishes between them. Even at this stage, however, "quiddity", as Ṭûsî points out in the passage quoted above, is not separated from "existence", for it still exists by "mental existence". The intellect pushes its analytic activity ahead a step further, and considers the "quiddity" in complete abstraction from everything else, including even "existence". Only when the "quiddity" is conceived in this way in a state of

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125) Naṣîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî: *Commentary* on Avicenna's *al-Ishârât wa-al-Tanbîhât*, III, pp. 462–463:

إن كلامه هذا مبنى على تصوّره أن للماهية ثبوتاً فى الخارج دون وجودها ، ثم إن الوجود يحل فيها . و هو فاسد. لأن كون الماهية هو وجودها ، و الماهية لا تتجرد عن الوجود الا فى العقل، لا بأن تكون فى العقل منفكّة عن الوجود ـ فإن الكون فى العقل ايضاً وجود عقلى، كما أن الكون فى الخارج وجود خارجى ـ بل بأن العقل من شأنه أن يلاحظها وحدها ، من غير ملاحظة الوجود. و عدم اعتبار الشئى ليس اعتباراً لعدمه. فاذن، اتّصاف الماهية بالوجود أمر عقلى، لبس كاتّصاف الجسم بالبياض . فإن الماهية ليس لها وجود منفرد، و لعارضها المسمى بالوجود وجود آخر، حتى يجتمعا اجتماع القابل و المقبول. بل الماهية ، اذا كانت، فكونها هو وجودها

126) *Mashâ'ir* p. 27, no. 71.
127) *Ibid.*

total abstraction, is " existence " represented as " occurring " to it from the outside. This is what is meant by the " occurrence " (*'urûḍ*) of " existence " to " quiddity ". " Existence " is here——and here only——conceived as an " accident " of " quiddity ".

A great stumbling-block for historians of Islamic philosophy with regard to this problem has been the so-called Avicennian doctrine of the " reality " of the " possibles ". As mentioned above, Avicenna divides all " existents " into " necessary " and " possible ". A " possible existent "——and everything other than the Absolute is ontologically " possible——is neutral with regard to " existence " and " non-existence "; it can be and not-be. In order to tilt this balance on the side of " existence ", there must appear a " cause " *in actu* which will change the " possible " into a " necessary existent ". " Necessary " here is understood in the sense of " made-necessary-by-something-other-than-itself " (*wâjib bi-al-ghayr*).

According to an interpretation that has been, and still is, prevalent, a " possible " in its state of neutrality, that is, before it is transformed by a " cause " into an actual and " necessary " thing, cannot be said to be completely " non-existent ". Certainly, a " possible " in such an ambiguous state does not yet " exist " in the fullest sense of the word; but neither is it an unconditional " nothing ". It must have some degree of actuality, however attenuated this may be, even if it is so attenuated that it may not be called " existence ". Thus the Avicennian " possible " must be described as something which is ontologically in a very strange state, " hovering with ghostly determination in the Platonic heaven until it is given existence, and possessing being of itself in some way before it exists ".128)

Such, however, is not the correct interpretation of the Avicennian position. The process by which a " quiddity " as a " possible " is drawn out of its ontological neutrality by its " cause " into the state of actuality is, again, an event occurring on the level of conceptual analysis. It is, we might say, a dramatization, an artificial dramatic presentation of a state of affairs which is already there, actualized. It is not Avicenna's contention that a " quiddity " is first established somewhere in reality as a " possible " into which, at the next stage, " existence " is infused by its " cause ". The concept of the ontological " possibility " is the result of an intellectual analysis of what is actually existent. The process of this analysis, as Professor Âshtiyânî describes it, is somewhat as follows.129) The intellect finds an already existent concrete thing in its presence. The concrete object is taken as a datum, as a given fact to be elaborated by the intellect. In so far as it is already there, actualized, the thing is " necessary ". But the intellect, urged by its own nature, reflects analytically upon the ontological structure of the thing and judges

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128) William Carlo: *op. cit.*, p. 105.

129) Jalâl al-Dîn Âshtiyânî, *op. cit.*, p. 123. Cf. also Avicenna: *al-Shifâ'*, *al-Ilâhîyât*, p. 37.

that the thing was *not* "*existent*" before, and that it *is now* "*existent*". The intellect considers the thing in that imagined state in which it was not yet existent, as "possible". The ontological "possibility" thus understood is but a mental notion. Looking back from the state of actuality, which is the only "reality" in the extra-mental world the intellect tries to picture to itself the ontological status of the thing previous to its real "existence". As the result of such an intellectual analysis "possibility" is obtained. As Abû-l-Barakât says:130)

> An "existent" is either (1) existent by itself and out of itself, or (2) existent by its "existence" having been made "necessary" by something else (i.e. the cause); not that its "existence" is "necessary" by itself. This is a rational division that can be applied mentally to every "existent" there being no exception to it.

The intellect is in this way capable of considering an actually existent thing as a "possible thing". This consideration, however, does not imply that the actually existent thing is in reality qualified by an external quality called "possibility" in the way that an object *in concreto* is qualified by an external quality like whiteness. The extra-mental state of affairs corresponding to the proposition: "This thing is a possible", is merely the fact that the thing has a "cause". The extra-mental referent of this proposition is simply an external relation subsisting between the thing and its "cause" which is not contained in the latter. Such a relation is evidently nothing but a mental property; it cannot qualify a thing as whiteness does.

In objective reality, a thing in the state of pure "possibility" is not even a "thing"; it is purely and simply "non-existent". The extra-mental object of reference for the concept of a "possible thing" without considering its "cause", is "non-existence" or pure "nothing". In this respect Averroës is certainly right when he says:131)

> An "existent" whose "existence" has a "cause" can only provide of itself the

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130) *Kitâb al-Mu'tabar*, III, p. 22, see above Chapter 2, note 8:

نقول: إن الموجود منها إما أَن يكون موجوداً بذاته و عن ذاته، و إما أَن يكون وجوده وجب عن غيره، ولم يجب له بذاته. و هذه قسمة عقلية تعتبر فى الأَذهان فى كل موجود، ولا يخرج عنها موجود.

131) *Tahâfut al-Tahâfut*, pp. 328–329:

ذلک أَن الموجود الذى له علّة فى وجوده ليس له مفهوم من ذاته الا العدم، أَعنى أَن كل ما هو موجود من غيره، فليس له من ذاته الا العدم.

> notion of "non-existence". That is to say, anything which is existent through something else is by itself pure "nothing".

Despite all this, as we pointed out earlier, it is undeniable that Avicenna himself originally put forward the thesis concerning the relation between "quiddity" and "existence" in somewhat ambiguous and misleading terms. When, for example, one reads such a statement as: The "quiddities" are by themselves merely "possible existents", and "existence" *occurs* (*ya'riḍ*) to them from the outside,[132] one is naturally liable to be misled into thinking that what Avicenna wants to assert is the "accidentality" of "existence" in the common and ordinary acceptation of the term "accidentality". Moreover, Avicenna and his immediate followers even use the words *'araḍ* ("accident") and *ṣifah* ("attribute") in referring to "existence".

Bahmaniyâr b. Marzbân[133] (d. 1066), one of the disciples of Avicenna, says:

> Every "existent" having a "quiddity" (i.e. all "existents" other than the Absolute) has a "quiddity" in which there is an "attribute" (*ṣifah*) by which it (i.e. the "quiddity") has become existent. And the "reality" of that "attribute" is the fact that it (i.e. the "quiddity") has become "necessary".

This statement too, using the word *ṣifah* as it does, is misleading, except that Bahmaniyâr makes what he wants to convey quite clear by the last short sentence. He clarifies there that by "attribute" is meant not an ordinary "attribute" residing and inhering in a substratum. The word refers simply to the extra-mental situation ("reality") in which a "quiddity" is "necessary", i.e. actualized.

Avicenna in a passage of *al-Ta'lîqât* makes his thought still more explicit, by sharply distinguishing "existence" as an "accident" from all other "accidents". In this passage he admits that "existence" *is* an "accident", but adds that it is a unique and very particular "accident", so particular, indeed, that its behavior is opposite to that of other "accidents".

> The "existence" of all "accidents" in themselves is their "existence for their substrata",[134] except only one "accident", which is "existence". This differ-

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132) From *al-Shifâ'*, quoted by Prof. Âshtiyânî in *op. cit.*, p. III:

و تلك الماهيات هى التى بأنفسها ممكنة الوجود، و انما يعرض لها وجود من خارج.

133) The passage is found in his *Kitâb al-Taḥṣîl*. It is quoted by Prof. Âshtiyânî in *op. cit.*, p. 68. III:

فكل موجود هى ماهية، فله ماهية فيها صفة بها صارت موجودة و تلك الصفة حقيقتها أنها وجبت.

134) I.e. that an "accident" exists means that it exists not for itself, but for its substratum, to inhere in the latter and qualify it,

> ence is due to the fact that all other "accidents" in order to become existent, need each a substratum (which is already existent by itself) while "existence" does not require any "existence" in order to become existent. Thus it is not proper to say that its "existence" (i.e. the "existence" of this particular "accident" called "existence") in a substratum is its very "existence", meaning thereby that "existence" has "existence" (other than itself) in the same way as (an "accident" like) whiteness has "existence".[135] (That which can properly be said about the "accident"-"existence") is, on the contrary, that its "existence in a substratum" is the very "existence" of that substratum. As for every "accident" other than "existence", its "existence in a substratum" is the "existence" of that "accident".[136]

This passage throws a clarifying light on what is really meant by Avicenna by the "accidentality" of "existence", showing at the same time how erroneous is the view of those who think that Avicenna identified "existence" with an ordinary "accident" like whiteness. Far from making such an identification, he clearly distinguishes one from the other and puts them into sharp contrast. An ordinary "accident" like whiteness, he says, is a quality which in itself is different and separate from its substratum. Its "existence" is nothing other than its inherence in the substratum. The relation between "existence" and substratum is therefore an extrinsic one. Even if the "accident" disappears from the substratum, the latter is in no way affected in its own "existence". "Accident"-"existence" is totally different from such an "accident", for its "existence in a substratum" constitutes the very "existence" of that substratum. The relation between the "accident" and the substratum in this case is intrinsic, in the sense that the disappearance of this "accident" is the disappearance of the substratum.

Now at last we are in a position to give a short and definite answer to the question which forms the title of the present chapter: Is "existence" an "accident"? It *is* an "accident", but of a very peculiar nature; and its "occurrence" to "quiddities" is an event that takes place only in the sphere of conceptual or rational analysis.

We may recall at this juncture what was said in Chapter 3 about the "secondary intelligibles". There we provisionally regarded "existence" as a "philosophical secondary intelligible". "Existence" is a "philosophical secondary intelligible" in the sense that there is in the extra-mental world a concrete entity which corresponds to the concept of "existence", and from which the concept is derived.

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[135] I.e. the fact that whiteness *is* whiteness does not constitute the "existence" of whiteness; rather, its being existent in its substratum is its "existence".

[136] *Al-Ta'lîqât*, quoted by Mullâ Ṣadrâ in the *Mashâ'ir* p. 34, § 83.

But this statement must be understood again in a very peculiar way. In the case of an ordinary " philosophical secondary intelligible ", like " being-father ", the object to which an " accident " occurs and which is qualified thereby remains the same. The only difference between " occurrence (*'urûḍ*) and " qualification " (*ittiṣâf*) in this case is that the former takes place in the mind, while the latter takes place in the extra-mental world, that is to say, the object qualified by the " accident " is existent *in concreto.*

According to the view of those who maintain the principality of " existence ", however, this analysis does not apply to " existence ". The object to which the " accident "-" existence " occurs on the level of conceptual analysis is certainly " quiddity "; but, according to the philosophers of this school, there is in the extra-mental world no real entity to be qualified by the " accident "-" existence ". Thus, as long as we hold on to the viewpoint of " quiddity ", we shall have to admit that the " qualification " of " quiddity " by " existence " is no less a *mental* event than the " occurrence " of " existence " to " quiddity ".

Nevertheless, these philosophers do not deny altogether the fact of extra-mental " qualification ". They admit that in the world of objective reality " qualification " regarding " existence " does happen, but they add that the external " qualification " takes place in a reversed order. On the level of conceptual analysis, " existence " occurs as an " accident " to " quiddity ", but on the level of objective reality it is " quiddity " that occurs as an " accident " to " existence ", and it is " existence " that is qualified by " quiddity ". In the external world " quiddities " are " accidents " of " existence ", instead of the latter being an " accident " of the former.

We must emphasize once again that when we speak of the relation between " quiddity " and " existence " in the extra-mental world, we are simply projecting these concepts, which we have obtained through rational analysis, back onto the ontological structure of reality. Objective reality in itself has no distinction of this kind. Looking back from the vantage-point of conceptual analysis we assert that the " really real "——*ontôs on* as Plato put it——in the external world is " existence " i.e. the reality of " existence ", and nothing else, the so-called " quiddities " being all intrinsic modalities of " existence " itself.

Although in the sphere of concepts " existence " is an " accident " that occurs to " quiddity ", and the latter is the recipient of that " accident ", in the external world " existence " is not an " accident ". On the contrary, it is that which is " fundamentally real ", all " quiddities " being nothing but determinations, limitations, or modifications of the single reality of " existence ".

The reality of " existence " in its absoluteness is unlimited and undetermined. In itself it cannot be anything particular; it is in this sense " nothing ", quiddity-wise. Only when it descends, so to speak, from the highest stage of absolute metaphysical simplicity and receives various limitations and determinations, does it appear as particular things. These limitations and determinations of "existence" by which the latter leaves the stage of absoluteness and becomes particularized, are "quiddities".

This relation between the reality of "existence" and its limitations is often explained metaphorically in terms of the nature of the light of the sun.[137] Sunlight in itself has no determinations; it is neither square nor triangular, neither long nor short, neither red nor blue. When it is shed upon a square building it becomes square; when it falls upon a long wall, it becomes long; and when it passes through red glass, it becomes red, etc.. Throughout all these modifications, sunlight itself remains the original one single reality. These various forms and qualities assumed by sunlight are produced and actualized by the sunlight itself, but the sunlight in itself transcends them all. Such is also the relation between "existence" and "quiddities".

This metaphor of sunlight is not strictly speaking a proper one, however, because it presupposes the previous "existence" of the "quiddities". In order that the light of the sun appear square, there must be a square object from the very beginning. No "quiddity", as we have seen above, has such a pre-existing "existence" of its own. The relation of "existence" to "quiddities" must be understood as an "illuminative relation" (*iḍâfah ishrâqîyah*). That is to say, "quiddities" themselves are internal productions of "existence". Instead of understanding "quiddities" as *extrinsic* determinations of "existence", we must understand them as *intrinsic* determinations.

For a better understanding of "quiddity" as the intrinsic limitation of "existence", Professor William Carlo[138] proposes another metaphor. The thesis of "quiddity" being an *extrinsic* limitation of "existence" may be explained by comparing "existence" to an infinite ocean and "quiddity" to a vessel or container into which the water is received. Each container, i.e. each "quiddity", receives as much water, i.e. "existence", as it can hold within its limits of circumscription. In this metaphor, "quiddity" is given a kind of self-subsistence and the positive capacity of limiting, determining, and contracting "existence".

The thesis of "quiddity" being the *intrinsic* limitation of "existence" does not understand the situation in such a way. Let us consider water ("existence") Professor Carlo proposes, as if it were poured out from a container simultaneously with a sudden drastic drop in temperature. Under freezing conditions, the water becomes transformed into a solid before it reaches the ground. The particular shape assumed by the solid is a self-determination or self-limitation of the water itself,

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137) See, for instance, Muḥiy al-Dîn Mahdî Qumshi'î: *op. cit.*, I, pp. 18–19.

138) *Op. cit.*, pp. 103–104.

for "there is nothing in water which is not water", and "there is nothing in an existent which is not existence".

Professor Carlo proposes another ingenious metaphor. "Existence" this time is compared to a mountain stream frozen, again, by a sudden drop in temperature. We cut this frozen stream into several blocks. In this case, there will be nothing in the blocks but frozen water. Yet one block will be distinguishable from another by the places where they stop and the myriad forms in which they are crystallized. "Quiddity", according to this understanding, is not a self-subsistent entity that determines and delimits "existence" from outside, but it is the intrinsic determination and specification of "existence" itself.

Professor Carlo proposes these metaphors for the purpose of bringing to light the "existential" nature of Thomistic metaphysics. Whether this is the right interpretation of the position taken by Thomas Aquinas regarding the relation between "quiddity" and "existence" is a question we are not interested to discuss. The point we wish to make is that the thesis of the fundamental reality of "existence" thus described admirably clarifies the basis of Sabzawârî's metaphysics. For Sabzawârî, all "quiddities" are but variously limited manifestations of the all-embracing act of "existence".

Chapter 7

The Structure of the Reality of Existence

In the last few paragraphs of the foregoing chapter we touched upon the problem of the reality of "existence". In the present chapter the problem will be dealt with in more detail and in a more systematic manner.

Already at the outset of this paper, however, we remarked that the *reality* of "existence" is of such a nature that it escapes conceptualization. Reason has no access to "existence" as it really is in the extra-mental world. The only way of access open to us is what we might call metaphysical intuition—the "illuminative presence" (*ḥuḍûr ishrâqî*) as Mullâ Ṣadrâ calls it. He describes this situation in the following way.[139]

> The reality of "existence" as it really is can never be actualized in our minds. For "existence" is not something "universal". Quite the contrary, the "exist-

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139) *Mashâʻir* p. 24, §57.

> ence" of every "existent" *is* that "existent" itself in the external world. And the "external" can never be transformed into the "mental". That which is capable of being mentally represented of "existence" is merely a general mental notion. The latter is what is called the "attributive existence" which is found in propositions. The knowledge of the reality of "existence" is obtainable only by an "illuminative presence" and an "immediate witnessing". Only when one has experienced this does the concrete "reality" of "existence" become absolutely indubitable.

The above is said in answer to Suhrawardî's criticism that the "existence" of "existence" is liable to be doubted even after the "existence" of something has been represented in the mind.

However, the experience of the "illuminative presence" which is the only way of access to the reality of "existence" is not within the capability of everyone. It is an unusual experience, a kind of mystical intuition, a vision that flashes upon the mind in moments of an extraordinary spiritual tension which is sometimes actualized after a long period of concentrated training or by dint of an inborn capacity. It is not for everybody to have such an experience.

That the experience of the "illuminative presence" is rarely obtainable may more easily be understood if we reformulate the problem in the ordinary terminology of monotheistic religions. To know the reality of "existence", even if it is only a matter of catching a fleeting glimpse of it, is equivalent in a monotheistic context to knowing God directly and through an immediate vision.

It will be interesting to observe in this connection how a contemporary existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, who is professedly an atheist, describes his own personal encounter with the reality of "existence". It is described as an awful, uncouth and crushing experience. The illumination (*ishrâq*), with him, is a dark illumination. *Je voudrais tant me laisser aller, m'oublier, dormir. Mais je ne peux pas, je suffoque: l'existence me pénètre de partout, par les yeux, par le nez, par la bouche...... Et tout d'un coup, d'un seul coup, le voile se déchire, j'ai compris, j'ai vu.*[140)]

He is in the park sitting on a bench. A huge chestnut tree is there just in front of him, with its knotty root sunk into the ground under the bench. Suddenly the consciousness that it is the root of a tree disappears. All words disappear, and together with them the significance of things, their ways of usage, the feeble points of reference which men have traced on the surface of things. He *sees* only soft,

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140) *La nausée*, p. 160. "How I wish I could let myself go, forget myself, fall asleep. But I cannot, I am suffocating: existence penetrates me everywhere, through the eyes, through the nose, through the mouth......And suddenly, all of a sudden, the veil is torn away, I have understood, I have seen".

monstrous masses, in utter disorder, naked in a frightful obscene nakedness.[141]

It is of importance that at this moment "all words disappear". Language is of an "essentialist" nature. Each word fixes and consolidates a particular "essence" or "quiddity" out of the limitless mass of "existence". Once a portion of "existence" is given the name "table", for instance, it acquires the "table-ness", i.e. the "quiddity" of table; the "table-ness" determines its special use; and it is given a significance. The "quiddities" thus created serve as an insulating screen between us and our immediate vision of the all-pervading "existence".

He goes on to say:[142]

> The experience left me breathless. Never, until these last few days had I realized what is meant by the verb "to exist". I was just like the others, like the people strolling along the seashore, all dressed up in their Sunday best. I used to say like them: "The sea *is* green", "That white point up there *is* a seagull"; but I did not have the consciousness that it existed, and that the seagull was an "existing seagull".
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> Ordinarily, existence remains hidden. It is there, around us, in us, it is *us*; we cannot say two words without mentioning it. Nevertheless, one cannot touch it by any means. Even when I believed that I was thinking of it, I was, I am sure now, thinking nothing; my head was empty except that there was just one word "to be".
>
> Or else I may have been thinking......how could I explain it? I was thinking of *belonging*. I was telling myself that the sea belonged to the class of green objects, or that green was one of the qualities of the sea.
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> Even while looking at things, I was far far away from imagining that they existed. They all looked to me like scenery. I used to take them up in my hands, they served me as tools, I foresaw their resistance. All this happened, however, on the surface. If anyone had asked me what existence was, I would have answered in all sincerity that it was nothing, just an empty form which was added to things from the outside without bringing about any change in their nature. But then, all of a sudden, there it was; it was as clear as day. Existence had suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost its innocent-looking face of an abstract category. It revealed itself as the very paste of things. That root of the tree had been kneaded into existence.

Sartre in this passage describes his own personal encounter with the reality of "existence". One could scarcely hope for a more forceful and vivid description of this kind of experience. The experience of "existence" here described may be, as

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[141] *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162.

[142] *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162.

Professor Étienne Gilson says,[143] a "descending ecstasis" (*une extase vers le bas*). It may well be, as he says too, a "diabolic mysticism" (*mystique diabolique*) as opposed to the "divine mysticism" (*mystique divine*) of Catholicism. It is, nevertheless, a precious record of the immediate experience of "existence" as it reveals itself in its crude original nakedness before it is modified by "quiddities" and transformed into various things. The metaphysics of a Mullâ Ṣadrâ or a Sabzawârî is a philosophical world-view that has its deep root in this kind of metaphysical experience. Whether it be a "descending ecstasis" or "ascending ecstasis", the content of the metaphysical experience as the immediate presence of the reality of "existence" is capable of furnishing a solid basis on which one can build a whole philosophical world-view.

In order to locate exactly the reality of "existence" in such a world-view, let us start from the very beginning. We begin by distinguishing between the *notion* (or *concept*) of "existence" and the *reality* of "existence". Each of these two is again bifurcated, so that we obtain a system composed of four basic terms.

(a) "absolute existence" (*wujûd muṭlaq*)
↗
I) The notion of "existence"
↘
(b) "portion of existence" (*ḥiṣṣah*, pl. *ḥiṣaṣ*)

(c) "general unit" (*fard 'âmm*)
↗
II) The reality of "existence"
↘
(d) "particular unit" (*fard khâṣṣ*, pl. *afrâd khâṣṣah*)

The word "existence" is used in these four meanings which must be clearly kept apart from one another whenever we endeavor to analyze the structure of "existence".

The first (a) is the "self-evident", primary concept of "existence", which we elucidated in the first part of the present paper. It is a concept of the widest extension, being applicable to all things without discrimination. "Existence" at this stage is represented in the mind in its absolute simplicity, without any determination whatsoever, whether intrinsic or extrinsic. It is evident that "existence" thus understood is completely different from "quiddity". For the *concept* of "existence" is "existence"; it could be nothing else. The same is true of "quiddity". The Ash'arîyah theologians, however, who maintain the complete identity of "existence" and "quiddity", assert that even at this conceptual stage, there is no distinction to be made between the two; that the fact is that one and the same concept is sometimes expressed by the word "quiddity" and sometimes by "existence".

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[143] *L'être et l'essence*, pp. 297–298.

The second (b) which is also called "determined existence" (*wujûd muqayyad*), is the general concept of "existence" (a) as particularized and determined by a "quiddity", to which it is related in such a way that the "relation" is considered an integral part of the concept, to the exclusion of the "quiddity" itself; for instance the concept of the "existence-of" (man), the "existence-of" (horse), the "existence-of" (table), etc.. The distinguishing mark of "existence" at this stage is that it contains within its semantic sphere the concept of "relation" as an inseparable element (*ma'nâ ḥarfî*).

With the third (c), which is called "general unit" (*fard 'âmm*),[144] we step into the sphere of the reality, as opposed to the notion, of "existence". The adjective "general" (*'âmm*) in this particular phrase means "all-comprehensive" or "all-inclusive". It refers to the totality of all external existential realities considered in their original state of unity. In the terminology of Ibn 'Arabî's metaphysics it is the self-manifesting aspect of the Absolute. "Existence" at this stage is still a "unity"; it is not yet actually diversified, but it is ready to be diversified; it is a "unity" comprising in itself "multiplicity". It is also known as *wujûd munbasiṭ*, i.e. "ever-spreading existence" or "unfolded existence". "Existence" shows itself here as a "reality" having in itself an infinite number of degrees and stages (*marâtib*). "Existence" can be considered at a still higher metaphysical level, but at that level, which is the highest, "existence" is, as Ibn 'Arabî says, absolutely unknown and unknowable, a Mystery about which nothing can be said except negatively.

The fourth (d) is the stage at which the original unity of the reality of "existence" appears diversified in manifold forms. These are the "particular units" (*afrâd khâṣṣah*), each one of which is a concrete "existent" actualized in the world of external reality. In the view of those who maintain the principality of "existence", they are properly to be regarded as "particular existence", or, as Sabzawârî says, as the various "particular aspects of existence", because they are nothing other than intrinsic limitations and determinations of the single all-inclusive reality of "existence".

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[144] Sometimes it is also called "absolute existence" (*wujûd muṭlaq*), which, however, is very confusing because (a) too is called by that name. It has still other names: the "universal unit" (*fard kullî*), and "absolute unit" (*fard muṭlaq*).

Against the Ash'arîyah theologians who refuse to recognize any distinction, whether conceptual or extra-mental, the philosophers belonging to the school of the principality of "existence" assert that at all four of these stages, "existence" is different and distinguishable from "quiddity". It requires very little effort to see that at stages (a) and (b), that is, in the sphere of concepts, "existence" and "quiddity" are not identical. Even, however, in the sphere of external reality, that is, at stages (c) and (d), the two are distinguishable from one another. Although "quiddity", in their view, is nothing actual in the extra-mental world that stands opposed to "existence"——for it is in itself "nothing", being itself only mentally elaborated out of a particular limit or stage of "existence"——it is evident that "something limited" or "determined" is not exactly the same as the "determining limit". In our present case, the object limited is "existence", and "quiddity" is its "determining limit". Thus "quiddity", which, if considered in itself, is "nothing", nonetheless, in so far as it is considered as the "determining limit", is different from "existence" which it delimits and specializes.145)

With regard to the four stages of "existence" thus established, various thinkers or schools take various positions.

There are those who, like the famous Shî'î philosopher of the fifteenth century Ṣadr al-Dîn al-Dashtakî (d. 1497), altogether deny the *reality* of "existence", whether mental or extra-mental.146) They recognize only stages (a) and (b). For them "existence" is nothing more than a product of a subjective attitude by which the mind lays hold of concrete things, i.e. an *i'tibâr* pure and simple. In the view of these thinkers, when the predicate derived from "existence", i.e. "existent" (*mawjûd*), is truthfully predicated of something, it means simply that the concept of "existent" is unified with that thing; it does not mean that the source of derivation, i.e. "existence", really subsists in the thing.

Concerning, again, the level of the external reality, there are those who maintain the real multiplicity of "existence", not only of "existents". "Existence" for them is "realities" (*ḥaqâ'iq* pl. of *ḥaqîqah*) each of which is a completely independent entity. All "existences" differ from one another totally and essentially; they are not different from each other only through specific differences or by individualizing properties. Furthermore, the Absolute is only one of these independent and self-subsistent entities, albeit a very special one because it is "necessary". On this understanding there is no unifying thread running through all things in the world. The world of Being consists of an infinity of separate entities that have nothing in

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145) See a lucid exposition of this point in Muḥammad Riḍâ Sâliḥî Kirmânî: *Wujûd az Naẓar-e Falâsifah-i Islâm*, I (Qum, n. d.) pp. 158–159.

146) This paragraph is based on Mullâ Ṣadrâ's explanation of this position in the *Mashâ'ir*, p. 28, §§ 71–72.

common among themselves. It goes without saying that this view is diametrically opposed to the thesis of the "analogical gradation" of "existence". Sabzawârî ascribes this doctrine to a group of the Peripatetic philosophers.147)

Quite opposite to the thesis of the multiplicity of "existence" and "existent" is the thesis of the unity both of "existence" and "existent", which is held by the Sûfîs. Shaykh Muḥammad Taqî Âmulî148) divides the Sûfîs into two groups relative to this problem. The first group, which Âmulî calls the "ignorant" among the Sûfîs, hold that there is but one single "reality" in the extra-mental world corresponding to the concept of "existence". This unique entity, they assert, directly takes on various and variegated phenomenal forms without any gradation. In the sky it is sky, in the earth it is earth, and in the table it is table, etc.. These phenomenal forms are for us the "reality" of "existence". Since, however, the phenomenal forms are in fact but of an *i'tibârî* nature——i.e. they *are* for us, but are nothing in themselves——their multiplicity does not in any way compromise the original unity of the "reality".

The second group is represented, as Âmulî says, by the great Sûfîs who take the position that "existence" does have a "reality" quite apart from its various phenomenal forms. "Existence" at this absolute stage they call "existence" in the state of the "negatively conditioned" (*bi-sharṭ lâ*).149) They mean to indicate "existence" in its absolute purity, it being associated with nothing else. Nevertheless, they go on to say, "existence" in all its many phenomenal forms is no less "necessary" than "existence" considered at the stage of absolute transcendence. The only difference between transcendental "existence" and the phenomenal "existences" consists in the fact that the latter are in need of the former, or we should say, they *are* in need of transcendental "existence" itself. This metaphysical "need" (*faqr*, lit. "poverty", "want") does not contradict their "being-necessary", because in the last analysis it is nothing more than their requirement for the "reality" of transcendental "existence". As we shall see presently, this position stands closest to the position taken by the school of the Pahlawî philosophers, to which Sabzawârî belongs as an important member.

Next to be considered is the position ascribed to the so-called school of the "tasting of theosophy" (*dhawq al-ta'alluh*). This is a position represented by several thinkers including Jalâl al-Dîn al-Dawwânî (d. 1501/1503) of the school of Suhrawardî, Mîr Dâmâd (d. 1631), the famous teacher of Mullâ Ṣadrâ, and Mullâ Ṣadrâ himself in his youth. According to this view, "existence" in the extra-

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147) *Sharḥ-e Manẓûmeh*, v. 36.

148) *Durar al-Farâ'id*, I, pp. 87-88.

149) This important technical term will be explained later.

mental world has only one single "reality" in which there is absolutely no multiplicity, neither in terms of species nor in terms of individuals, nor even in terms of degrees and stages. This single "reality" is the only external entity which corresponds to the concept of "existence". Apart from it, the concept of "existence" finds no real object to which it may apply in the extra-mental world. Theologically speaking, this "reality" is God, the Absolute. All the so-called non-absolute, i.e. possible, "existences" are not real entities; they are no more than conceptual "portions" of "existence". In other words they are "existence" at stage (b) according to the above-given scheme, not at stage (d). These "portions" share some common accidental properties by which they are identical in somewhat the same way as the whiteness of this ivory and of that ivory and of a third ivory, etc., are identical in the external world. But in reality they cannot go beyond the sphere of concepts. What really corresponds to them in the external world is the multiplicity of "existents", i.e. "quiddities" which, according to this view, are real, not *i'tibârî.*

These really existent "quiddities" are essentially and completely different from each other, having no unity at all among themselves. How then can "existence" be equally predicable of them, so that we can say they are all "existent?"

To this question the thinkers of this school answer that when we say: "X is existent", "Z is existent", etc., the meaning of the predication is simply that X, Y, and Z, which are *real* "quiddities", are related to the unique reality of "existence", each separately; and that this relation is merely accidental.

$$\begin{tikzcd}
X & \\
Y & \text{“existence”} \arrow[ul] \arrow[l] \arrow[dl] \\
Z &
\end{tikzcd}$$

Their relation to existence is comparable to the external and accidental relation which subsists between a man who sells fruit and the fruit, or a man who by profession catches fish and the fish. A man who catches fish is in himself simply a man, nothing else. *Qua* man, he has no internal relationship with the fish he catches and sells. The relation between them is one of occupation or business, but because of this peculiar relation, the man is called a "fisherman" which is a name derived from "fish". In just the same way, a "quiddity" is said to be "existent", which is a derivation from "existence", by dint of such an accidental relation, not because it has a particular, real "existence" of its own, i.e. "existence" at stage (d). The unique reality of "existence" is never really diversified by various "quiddities" being related thereto.

Thus the doctrine upheld by this group of thinkers is the thesis of the unity of "existence" and multiplicity of "existents". This is a position also taken by some theologians. It was Jalâl al-Dîn al-Dawwânî who recognized therein the influence of mysticism and attributed the position to the "tasting of theosophy".

Sabzawârî, however, thinks that this doctrine does not represent the "tasting of theosophy" in its true form, for it stands on the asumption that both "existence" and "quiddity" are fundamentally real. That is to say, the doctrine recognizes in the domain of actuality two parallel roots or bases. The "tasting of theosophy" in its authentic form, he says, must admit only one single root or basis in the domain of actuality. It must, in other words, stand on the thesis of "existence" alone being fundamentally real and "quiddity" being something mentally posited.

The last position to be considered is that taken by Mullâ Ṣadrâ and Sabzawârî who, together with many others, constitute what is known as the school of Pahlawî philosophers, *fahlawîyûn*. The gist of their contention may be represented by stating that both "existence" and "existent" are "one" and at the same time "many"——a sort of metaphysical *coincidentia oppositorum*——multiplicity being unity, and unity being multiplicity. Both "existence" and "existent", in the view of Sabzawârî, are infinitely manifold and diversified, and yet they are, in their very being-many, one single "reality". This *coincidentia oppositorum* is realized through the above-mentioned "analogical gradation" of "existence".

Like the doctrine attributed to the "tasting of theosophy", the Pahlawî doctrine recognizes that the "existents" are existent through a relation to the absolute reality of "existence". The "relation" is here understood in a very peculiar way, however, for the Pahlawî philosophers consider the three constituent terms of this relation——(1) the object related, (2) the object to which the object (1) is related, and (3) the relation itself——to be one and the same. More concretely, (1) the particular "existences" or all possible things, (2) the absolute reality of "existence" or the Absolute itself and (3) the "unfolded existence", which is the "illuminative" act of the Absolute, are all three one single "existence".

Sabzawârî in his *Commentary* on Mullâ Ṣadrâ's *Kitâb al-Asfâr* explains this peculiar situation by a metaphor.[150] Suppose, he says, that a man is standing in front of many mirrors. In each of the mirrors the same man and the same humanity i.e. the "quiddity" of man, or "being-man", are observable. Both "man" and "humanity" are diversified; there are as many men and humanities as there are mirrors. Yet in their very multiplicity and diversity they are but one single "reality", in so far as they are only reflections having no reality of their own. A reflection of something, taken in itself *qua* reflection, is "nothing". It has a kind of pseudo-reality as a means by which we may observe the real object of which it is a reflection. If the reflection is considered in itself independently of the real object, it does not "reflect" the object; nor does it "imitate" the object. Rather

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150) Cf. Âmulî: *op. cit.*, p. 90.

it acts as a veil obstructing our vision of the object.

All the mirrors reflect one and the same object in varying forms, each according to its shape, size, color, glossiness, etc.. The appearance of the original object in all of them serves as a thread that gathers together all the dispersed reflections into a unity. If attention were paid only to the disparate individual reflections in their very diversity, their real status could never be known.

Similarly, if we view particular "existences" in their relation to the unique reality of "existence" in terms of an "illuminative relation", that is, if we consider them as so many "effluences" (*ishrâqât*) of the Absolute Light which is the reality of "existence", we shall notice that the latter itself appears in the very appearances of these individual lights. If, however, we view particular "existences" as independent and self-subsisting entities without any relation to their source, their real ontological status will inevitably escape our grasp, because "being-related-to", which we have earlier called "need" or "poverty", forms an essential constituent of these "existences".

Thus, particular "existences" are not entirely devoid of reality. They *are* "real". Their reality consists in their being rays of the metaphysical Sun, and in their being "pure relations" (*rawâbiṭ maḥḍah*), not in their being independent entities *having* relations to their source.

This observation about the ontological status of particular "existences" leads immediately to the thesis that "existence" is one single "reality" possessed of varying grades and stages in terms of intensity and weakness, perfection and deficiency, priority and posteriority, etc.. These differences do not compromise the original unity of the reality of "existence", because that by which they differ from one another is precisely that by which they are unified. Here in a concise form is the doctrine of the "analogical gradation" of "existence".

As Sabzawârî remarks, the "analogical gradation" of "existence" is, one of the most basic problems of metaphysics, and it constitutes the foremost distinguishing mark of the Pahlawî school of philosophy.

There are two mutually opposed aspects to "analogical gradation": the aspect of sameness and the aspect of distinction. We have already seen the first of these two aspects in relation to the notion or concept of "existence".

The notion or concept of "existence" is essentially one; it is common to all things in the sense that it is applicable to all without discrimination. A "man", for example, can be said to "exist" in just the same way as a "stone" is said to "exist". The concept of "existence" which our intellect draws from an actually existent man by the process of abstraction is completely identical with the concept of "existence" which it abstracts from an actually existent stone, tree, table, or anything else.

Since the concept of "existence" is one, its extra-mental referent, i.e. the corresponding reality of "existence" must also be one, because it is evident that one single concept is not obtainable from a number of "realities" which are totally different from each other. "Existence" *in concreto* is one single "reality" comprehensive of everything and pervading all things. These latter appear to our eyes as *many* different things, but this ontological multiplicity is, as we have just seen, something of a mirage which deceives our eyes and prevents us from perceiving the objective reality. A man with an eye to see will look through the veil of multiplicity and perceive behind everything one single reality of "existence". He will perceive that the "reality" behind the veil of many different things is "pure existence" (*ṣirf al-wujûd*) having not even a trace of multiplicity, and that the "quiddities" which are the cause of this seeming diversity of things are but different grades and stages of the one single "reality". This will suffice for our discussion of the aspect of sameness.

We began from the observation that the concept of "existence" remains one and the same whatever may be the object to which it is applied. From this premise we have concluded that the corresponding reality of "existence" must also be one single "reality" despite the infinitely various forms in which it appears to our eyes. But is the "oneness" here in question an ordinary straightforward oneness? In other words, is the predicate-concept "existent" predicable of God and a table, for example, in exactly the same sense with no difference at all? Or is a substance (e.g. man) existent in the extra-mental world in exactly the same way as an accident (e.g. the quality "whiteness")? The answer given to this question by the Pahlawî thinkers constitutes their most basic philosophical thesis.

The gist of their answer may be formulated in a very simple way as follows: The "oneness" here in question is not an ordinary straightforward oneness, rather it is an analogical, i.e. graded, oneness. In order that we may understand this answer in a proper way, we must have a clear idea of the technical meaning of "analogicity" or "analogical gradation" (*tashkîk*).

Generally speaking, *tashkîk* is realized whenever one single "universal" is predicable of its "particulars" in varying grades or degrees, or whenever one single reality actualizes itself in a number of things in varying degrees. Looked at from this point of view, the above statement that the concept of "existence" is one and the same in all cases must be modified. The concept of "existence" must rather be said to be "analogically" one, because it is predicable of a "cause" and its effect ("caused") by way of priority-posteriority, and of a "substance" and its "accident" by way of intensity-weakness. Likewise, the reality of "existence" is also of an "analogical" structure. According to the Pahlawî philosophers, the reality of "existence" as it appears in the Absolute is clearly different from its reality as it appears in other "possible" existents. In the former the reality is "more intense" and "prior", while in the latter it is "weaker" and "posterior". In the same way, the reality of "existence" as it appears in a non-material being is "stronger" than the same reality as it appears in a material being.

"Analogicity"151) is technically divided into two kinds: (1) "analogicity" in a specialized sense (*tashkîk khâṣṣî*) and (2) "analogicity" in a popular (i.e. non-specialized) sense (*tashkîk 'âmmî*).

The first kind of "analogicity" is realized when the one single reality, through which all its particular manifestations are identical with each other, happens at the very same time to be the cause of the diversity among its particular manifestations. For example, one and the same concept of "number" is truthfully predicable of both 2 and 2000 with a certain difference. The principle of identity uniting 2 and 2000 is "number", just as the principle of difference between them is also "number". For another example: the light of the sun, of the moon, of a lamp, and of a firefly is one single reality of light; yet, it is actualized in each of them differently. They differ from one another by the very same reality which makes them identical with each other.

The second kind of "analogicity" is actualized when the reality, through which all its particular manifestations are identical with each other, does not act as the principle of diversity among its manifestations. An example is provided by the concept of "being-existent" as it is predicated of Adam, Noah, Moses and Jesus, who in spite of "being-existent" are also in the relation of priority-posteriority. The difference among these prophets in regard to the time of their appearance is not caused by their "being-existent" itself, but by the nature of time which permits of priority and posteriority.

The importance of this distinction between the two kinds of "analogicity" lies in the fact that the "analogicity" of the *concept* of "existence" is of the second kind, while that of the *reality* of "existence" is of the first. This difference is due to the fact that a "concept" can only be a principle of identity and agreement and can never act as the differentiating principle of the objects to which it is applied. Thus the concept of "existence" can and does bring together all the different

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151) The following explanation owes a great deal to a very clear exposition of the problem by Professor Muḥiy al-Dîn Mahdî Qumshi'î in his *Ḥikmat-e Ilâhî*, pp. 10–11.

and disparate things in the world into one class in which they are reduced to a level of ontological indiscrimination. It is incapable, however, of differentiating them from one another.

The reality of "existence", on the contrary, not only acts as the principle of identity and unity of all existent "realities", but it is at the same time the very principle by which they differ from each other in terms of intensity-weakness, perfection-deficiency, and (non-temporal) priority-posteriority. All these differences are nothing other than intrinsic modalities of the same reality, "existence". It must be so, because in the extra-mental world anything other than the reality of "existence" is sheer "non-existence" or "nothing". "Non-existence" or "nothing" can act neither as the principle of unity nor as the principle of multiplicity.

The words of the Pahlawî philosophers must be understood in the sense just explained when they assert that "existence" is one single "reality" possessed of an infinite number of degrees and stages. These degrees or stages have some kind of reality because in the last analysis they are intrinsic modalities of the reality of "existence" itself. When the human intellect works upon them and conceptualizes them into "quiddities", they are transformed into pure "mental aspects" (*i'tibârât*). Since the Pahlawî philosophers, as we shall see, completely identify "existence" with "light",[152] they call multiplicity in terms of intensity-weakness etc. "luminous multiplicity" (*kathrah nûrânîyah*), in contrast to multiplicity in terms of "quiddities" which they call the "multiplicity of darkness" (*kathrah ẓulmânîyah*). This latter kind of multiplicity is associated with darkness, i.e. lack of light, because it arises in a region far removed from the reality of "existence".

This understanding of "multiplicity" makes it possible to draw a clear and sharp line of demarcation between the metaphysical system of the Pahlawî philosophers and another system which is *formally* similar but internally of quite a different structure, as, for instance, the doctrine of Giles of Rome in the West. The basic thesis of Giles of Rome is as follows: "Existence" is one and uniform, and it is diversified by "quiddities". Superficially considered, this thesis seems to be quite the same as the basic thesis of Sabzawârî. Both agree in asserting the fundamental unity of "existence" and in recognizing the principle of diversity in "quiddity". The resemblance is merely superficial, however, for Giles of Rome maintains a *real* distinction between "existence" and "quiddity". *Omne......habet essentiam realiter differentem ab esse, et per aliud est ens et per aliud existens*:[153]

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[152] By the "light" they mean the supra-sensible, metaphysical Light, not the sensible light. The sensible light can only serve as a metaphor suitable for indicating the essential structure of the metaphysical Light as understood in the Suhrawardian sense.

[153] *Theoremata de Esse et Essentia*, XIII (Louvain, Museum Lessianum, 1930) p. 78, quoted by W. Carlo, *op. cit.*, p. 61, n. 7.

that is, everything has "quiddity" really differing from "existence"; everything is *something* by the principle of "quiddity" and *existent* by the principle of "existence". As we have already seen, such a view must regard "quiddities" *qua* recipients of "existence" as self-subsistent, and as existing in some mysterious way before they receive the influx of "existence". The Pahlawî position, on the contrary, does not admit the self-subsistence of "quiddities" as secondary causes. All "quiddities" in this view are devoid of external reality; the reality they manifest to our eyes is only a pseudo-reality. We need not repeat the argument here since this point has already been discussed toward the end of the foregoing chapter.

The position taken by the Pahlawî philosophers is described by Sabzawârî in the following way.[154]

> "Existence" according to the Pahlawî philosophers is a "reality" characterized by "analogical gradation" and comprising various degrees......that vary like the real (i.e. supra-sensible) Light which, in fact, is the same as the reality of "existence" because "light" (in general) is that which is self-manifesting and which brings all else into manifestation. This is precisely the characteristic of the reality of "existence", for it is of the very nature of the latter that it is self-manifesting and that it brings all else into manifestation. The word "others" in this context refers to all "quiddities"......
>
> ("Existence"-Light in this sense) resembles sensible light which is also an analogically graded entity having various degrees as it becomes strong or weak ......The basic characteristic of "light" (whether sensible or metaphysical) is that it is self-manifesting and that it brings all else into manifestation. This characteristic is actualized in every degree of "light" and "shadow", so that weakness does not prevent a weak degree from being a "light"; nor are intensity and moderation essential conditions or constituent factors of a particular degree except in the sense of being something which does not remain outside of "light"; nor do they prevent (it from being a "light"). Thus a strong "light" *is* a "light" just as much as a moderate one is a "light". Likewise, a weak light is yet a light.
>
> The "light" thus has a wide expanse with regard to its various non-composite degrees, and each of these degrees also has an expanse with regard to its relation to its various recipients.
>
> In exactly the same way, the reality of "existence" has various degrees in terms of intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority, etc., in its very reality. Every degree of "existence" is non-composite. It is not the case that a

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[154] *Sharḥ-e Manẓûmeh*, ad. vv. 34–35.

> strong degree of "existence" is a composite formed by its reality plus intensity. Likewise, a weak degree is nothing but "existence", the weakness being of the nature of "non-existence"; (it is) like a weak "light", which is not composed of "light" and "darkness", for the latter is simply non-existent.

Two points in this passage deserve special attention. The first is the statement that the reality of "existence" has a wide expanse. It refers to the universal comprehensiveness (*shumûl*) or all-inclusive nature of "existence". The reality of "existence" is absolutely one, and yet this unitary reality comprises all things without exception. The nature of this "comprehensiveness" is peculiar. It is not (1) the comprehensiveness of a "whole" with regard to its "parts". Nor is it (2) the comprehensiveness of one body with regard to another body, like a cup containing water. Nor, again, is it (3) the comprehensiveness of a "universal" with regard to its "particulars". In the first and the second cases, the two terms of the relation must both be already "existent", and the third case is impossible unless the reality of "existence" be a "natural universal", i.e. a "quiddity".

How, then, are we to understand the real structure of the comprehensiveness of "existence"? It is to be understood, as observed earlier, as a *coincidentia oppositorum*: the reality of "existence" is one and yet many; many and yet one. As such, it requires for its subjective realization a particular kind of "existential" intuition such as has been explained at the outset of this chapter in connection with the Sartrian experience of "existence". Mullâ Ṣadrâ[155] clearly states that the truth about this comprehensiveness is revealed only to "those who are deeply versed in knowledge" (*Qur'ân*, III: 15), i.e. to mystics or gnostics. It is to this aspect of "existence" that the above-mentioned expression: "ever-spreading existence", or "unfolded existence" (*wujûd munbasiṭ*) refers. In the mystical terminology of Ibn 'Arabî, it is also called the "breath of Mercifulness" (*nafas raḥmânî*).[156]

A man "who is deeply versed in knowledge" is said to have two different eyes. With one of his eyes, he sees the reality of "existence" in its absolute purity. In that high spiritual state which is attainable only in deep contemplation, all things, all existents, without a single exception, disappear from his ken. Nothing remains except the dazzling simplicity of the "luminous reality" of pure Existence. There remains no longer any place for even talking about "comprehensiveness", or about the relation between that which comprises and that which is comprised.

With the other eye he sees at the same time the limitless variety of things.

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[155] *Mashâ'ir*, p. 8, § 12.

[156] For a detailed explanation of the place occupied by this concept in Ibn 'Arabî's metaphysical system, see my work: *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Terms in Sufism and Taoism*, vol. I, *Ibn 'Arabî* (Tokyo, Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1966).

The activity of this second eye actualizes the sphere of multiplicity. At this stage, all "existents" in their vital effervescence and luxuriance come into his sight and fill it up. His sight is no longer restricted to pure Existence. An infinite number of various and variegated things are witnessed. None of these things, however, lies outside the "comprehensiveness" of "existence", because nothing can "appear", nothing can be actualized, except by dint of "existence". In this sense all these things are comprised within the one single reality of "existence".

Thus a man "deeply versed in knowledge" witnesses, with his two eyes combined, the metaphysical secret of *coincidentia oppositorum.* He sees the reality at once as one and as many. The philosophical outcome of such an experience is the view that "existence" is one single reality of a nature that it "descends" (*tanazzul*) from the stage of its original purity into various stages of limitation and determination. In this latter aspect, among the mystics it is called the "breath of Mercifulness", i.e. the breath of the existential Mercy of the Absolute. It is called "breath", because it is comparable in its formal structure to human breath.[157] Human breath in the process of producing various phonemes is originally a simple neutral voice having no determined forms in itself. As it passed through the vocal organs, it is variously articulated into particular sounds in such a way that the latter form various words. In a similar way, "existence" in its absoluteness is pure "appearance" with no determinations; it is a pure "light" without any color whatsoever. As it "descends" into various stages, the one single reality is continuously determined in various ways and finally brings to light the world of multiplicity. Since, however, all these stages are but intrinsic limitations of the selfsame reality, the observed multiplicity is ultimately reducible to the original unity.

The second point to be considered is the fact that Sabzawârî in the above-quoted passage identifies "existence" with "light". He evidently owes this conception of "light" as the metaphysical reality to the Master of the Illuminationists, Suhrawardî. Historically, this fact is of prime importance because, as we have seen earlier, Suhrawardî is the greatest representative of those who maintain the *i'tibârî*-ness of "existence".

Suhrawardî's position concerning "existence" is complicated by the fact that, although he categorically denies all objective reality to "existence", he transfers, so to speak, what he denies to "existence" to the metaphysical reality of "light". The nature of metaphysical "light" as "that which is self-manifesting and which brings all else into manifestation"[158] and its "analogical" (*tashkîkî*) structure[159]

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157) Cf. The Persian Commentary on the *Mashâ'ir* by Badî' al-Mulk Mîrzâ, in *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques, op. cit.*, p. 90.

158) *Ḥikmat al-Ishrâq*, ed. Corbin, p. 113, § 116:

ان النور هو الظاهر فى حقيقة نفسه المظهر لغيره بذاته.

159) *Ibid.*, p. 197, pp. 133–134.

effectively erase the line of demarcation between the Suhrawardian "light" and the reality of "existence" as understood by a Pahlawî philosopher. Otherwise expressed, the "real light" (*nûr ḥaqîqî*) in the technical terminology of the Illuminationists[160] is identical with the "reality of existence" (*ḥaqîqatu-l-wujûd*) in the terminology of the Pahlawî philosophers. The only difference between the two positions is due to the two different ways in which the absolute metaphysical reality is experienced. Whether absolute reality is experienced as pure "existence" or pure "light", the experience itself is essentially of a gnostic nature. Those who make "existence" the foundation of their philosophizing belong to the tradition of Ibn 'Arabî, while those who emphasize "light" as the basic category are of the Suhrawardian tradition. Historically, Mullâ Ṣadrâ forms the point of convergence of these two theosophic traditions in Islam. The result of the convergence in the Pahlawî school of philosophy is the idea that "existence" is a "luminous reality" (*ḥaqîqah nûrânîyah*) which manifests itself in various degrees and stages.

The next problem to consider concerning the structure of the reality of "existence" has to do with the position of the Absolute, or God, in the Pahlawî system of metaphysics. Since, in this system, the reality of "existence" is one single reality diversified into multiplicity by its own intrinsic degrees and determinations, the highest degree must necessarily be the place of the Absolute. Even the lowest degree, however, is an intrinsic limitation of the same "reality". Between the highest and the lowest there is an uninterrupted line of continuance. Is there then no essential difference between the Absolute, i.e. the Necessary Existent, and the possible "existents"? In order to give a proper answer to this question from the particular viewpoint of the Pahlawî philosophers, we must first offer a preliminary explanation of three important technical terms: *bi-sharṭ lâ* "negatively-conditioned", *lâ bi-sharṭ* "non-conditioned", and *bi-sharṭ shay'* "conditioned-by-something".

Properly speaking, these concepts belong to the sphere of "quiddity", not to the sphere of "existence". Nevertheless, they are relevant to the latter sphere also in Pahlawî metaphysics, for, as Sabzawârî himself declares, the Pahlawî philosophers apply this triple division to the reality of "existence", in accordance with the tradition of the "tasting of theosophy". We shall first give a brief explanation of this triple division in its own proper field, i.e. on the level of "quiddity".

Every "quiddity" can be considered in three different aspects: (1) as "purified" (*mujarradah*) or "negatively-conditioned", (2) as "absolute" (*muṭlaqah*) or "non-conditioned", and (3) as "mixed" (*makhlûṭah*) or "conditioned-by-something".

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[160] As pointed out before, the adjective "real" serves to distinguish the metaphysical reality of "light" from the ordinary sensible light. The latter can only be a metaphor for the former.

A "quiddity" in the state of the "negatively-conditioned" (*bi-sharṭ lâ*) is a "quiddity" considered in its purity; a state in which everything else, including even the "existence" of the "quiddity", whether external or mental, is eliminated from the consciousness. The "quiddity" *qua* itself, as, for example, the concept of "animal" *qua* "animal", alone is represented in the mind, with nothing else associated with it. If we relate some other concept to a "quiddity" in a pure state, for example, the concept of "rational", the result can only be a combination of two different and independent elements. The original concept cannot then be predicated of the composite. "Animal" plus "rational" is something more than pure "animal", and the latter is not predicable of the former.[161]

In the state of the "non-conditioned" (*lâ bi-sharṭ*), a "quiddity" is represented in an ambiguous or totally indeterminate way. A "quiddity" in this state is free; it may or may not be associated with something else. If we relate some other concept to a "quiddity" in such a state of indetermination, the resulting combination is a perfect unity. The original concept can still be predicated of this unity. "Animal" plus "rational" is "man"; and "animal", of course, is predicable of "man". A "quiddity" at this stage is in itself not yet actualized or specified; it is still indeterminate so that it can be predicated of many different things.

In the state of "conditioned-by-something", a "quiddity" is considered already associated with some other concept; e.g. "animal" plus "rational". "Animal" in this state is considered as already actualized and specified. That is to say, "animal" here is not considered *qua* "animal"; rather it is "animal" in so far as it is associated with "rational", i.e. *qua* "man".

Now we may apply this triple division to "existence". According to the Pahlawî philosophers, as we have repeatedly observed, "existence" is one single "reality" having various degrees and stages which differ from each other in terms of intensity-weakness, perfection-deficiency, etc.. The highest stage, i.e. the Absolute in its transcendental absoluteness, is the reality of "existence" in the state of the "negatively-conditioned". The Absolute, in other words, is pure "existence", i.e. the reality of "existence" in its absolute purity, away from all possible determinations and limitations. It is "existence" in the state of pure and absolute transcendence.

In the next stage, that of the "non-conditioned", "existence" is in a state of free indetermination, ready to modify itself into any determinate form whatsoever. In this state it comprises *in potentia* all possible "existents" within the sphere of its unity. It is here that "existence" is unity and multiplicity at one and the

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161) This and the following paragraphs concerning the triple division are based on Ṭûsî's *Commentary* upon Avicenna's *al-Ishârât wa-al-Tanbîhât*, pp. 229–230, and Quṭb al-Dîn al-Râzî's *Muḥâkamât* found in the Teheran edition of *al-Ishârât*, I, (Haydarî, 1377 A.H.) pp. 75–76.

same time. This is the stage of "unfolded existence" and the "breath of Mercifulness".

At the lowest stage, that of the "conditioned-by-something", "existence" appears as already determined this way and that. This ontological level is that of concrete individual "existents". The reality of "existence" here is at the farthest remove from its original transcendental purity, having become associated with something else, i.e. with "quiddities".

As a result of this discussion we obtain the following hierarchy of the stages of "existence" according to the Pahlawî philosophers:

I "Existence" as "negatively-conditioned" (*al-wujûd bi-sharṭ lâ*)
II "Existence" as "non-conditioned" (*al-wujûd lâ bi-sharṭ*)
III "Existence" as "conditioned-by-something" (*al-wujûd bi-sharṭ shay'*)

Thus the reality of "existence" has a structure of three different strata. The first stratum, which is "existence" itself having absolutely no association at all with anything other than itself, is theologically the very "essence" of God who absolutely transcends, and is absolutely distinguished from, the creature. God is Light itself, and for that very reason He is for the human consciousness utter Darkness. He is the eternally self-concealing God.

The second stratum, as we have seen, is "unfolded existence". It is comparable to a pure luminous radiation from the source of Light. The beam of light is still pure, i.e. simple; it is still a unitary reality. In addition, however, it contains in itself the capacity of overflowing and pouring out in all directions so that it may be channelled in infinitely diverse ways. Theologically this stratum is the self-revealing God.

The third stratum is "particular existence" (*wujûd khâṣṣ*)——more strictly we must use the plural form and say: "particular existences" (*wujûdât khâṣṣah*). These particular "existences" are the actualized stages and degrees of "unfolded existences", the intrinsic modifications of the unitary reality of "existence". Each of these degrees, when considered by the human intellect as a self-subsistent independent entity, transforms itself into a "quiddity". The "quiddities" thus produced, however, are but like shadows if compared with "unfolded existence", which, again, is but a shadow if compared with the absolute reality of "existence". This relation among the three strata of "existence" is described symbolically by Sabzawârî in one of his verses:[162]

Bi-nûr wajhi-hi istanâra kull shay'
Wa-'inda nûr wajhi-hi siwâ-hu fay'

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[162] *Sharḥ-e Manẓûmeh*, v. 3.

> With the light of His Face all things become illumined. But in the presence of the light of His Face everything else is but a shadow.

In this verse God Himself is understood as pure Existence. " His Face " refers to " unfolded existence ". It is His *actus* as " light " which is " self-manifesting and which brings all else into manifestation ". That " all things become illumined by this light " refers to the fact that the " quiddities ", which are in themselves *i'tibârî* and non-existent, become apparent to our eyes as " existents " by dint of the activity of the " light ". Their real status, however, is indicated by the symbol of " shadow ".

Before bringing this chapter to a close, one more important point must be mentioned.[163] Against the view of the Pahlawî philosophers who recognize in " existence as negatively-conditioned " the highest stage of " existence ", i.e. the Absolute or God, many of the leading Sûfîs take a different position in their metaphysical doctrines. " Existence as negatively-conditioned " (*wujûd bi-sharṭ lâ*), they argue, cannot be absolutely absolute, for it is *conditioned*, albeit negatively. It is pure " existence " with the negative condition that there be nothing else associated with it, that it not be determined by any possible determinations. In the eyes of the Sûfîs, " existence " at this stage is, thus, already determined. Instead of being the stage of absolute absoluteness, " existence as negatively-conditioned " is the stage of first determination.

The highest stage of " existence ", in the Sûfîs' view, must be " existence as non-conditioned " (*wujûd lâ bi-sharṭ*), i.e. " existence " having absolutely no condition, not even that of being absolute, and not even that of being " non-conditioned. The highest stage is the reality of " existence " pure and simple. For the human consciousness it is real Darkness. The Absolute at this highest stage has no condition, no qualification. It is the " unknown-unknowable ", the Mystery of mysteries (*ghayb majhûl*), the " hidden treasure "(*kanz makhfî*).

Thus, in the metaphysical system of these Sûfîs, what constitutes the first stage of " existence " in the Pahlawî system is relegated to a subsidiary place, whereas the stage of the " non-conditioned ", the second stage according to the Pahlawî philosophers, is placed at the highest point of the hierarchy. The Sûfî view implies a peculiar understanding of the term " non-conditioned ". They take the term to mean absolutely " non-conditioned " thus denying even the condition of being " non-conditioned ". The concept of " non-conditioned " understood in this way constitutes the very source of the triple division into " negatively-conditioned ", " non-conditioned " ——as understood in the ordinary sense——and " conditioned-by-something ". " Unfolded existence" can, in this view, only be "existence as non-conditioned", understood in the ordinary sense, that is, "existence" as conditioned at least by being "non-conditioned".

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[163] Cf. Âshtiyânî: *op. cit.*, p. 157, 193.

POSTSCRIPT

In the present paper I have tried to outline the basic structure of Sabzawarian metaphysics. In so doing I have confined myself strictly to an analytic and partly historical exposition of the most fundamental of the key-terms in this metaphysical system. It has been my intention also to bring to light the relevance of this kind of philosophy in the contemporary situation of world philosophy. It is not without interest to observe how unexpectedly close is this seemingly "medieval" and now outdated type of Eastern scholasticism to the recently developed doctrines of contemporary existentialist philosophers of the West such as Heidegger and Sartre.

Furthermore, it is my firm conviction that the time has come when the custodians of the philosophical wisdom of the East must begin making a conscious and systematic effort to contribute positively to the growth and development of world philosophy. For the achievement of that purpose, however, Easterners must themselves reflect upon their own philosophical heritage analytically, bring out of the darkness of the past whatever is of contemporary relevance, and present their findings in a way suitable for the present-day intellectual situation. I should be happy if this paper were accepted as a modest contribution toward the hoped-for philosophical convergence of the East and the West.

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Non-English Words & Expressions

(C=Chinese, F=French, G=German, Gr=Greek, J=Japanese, L=Latin
P=Persian, S=Sanscrit. Arabic words are left unmarked.)

actus essendi, L. → existence

'*adam* "non-existence":
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adhyâsa, S. "superimposition"
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90.

'*âqil-ma'qûl-'aql*:
65.

'*araḍ* "accident":
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'*âriḍ* "that which *occurs* from outside":
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dhû al-'aynayn "man of two eyes"
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fard khâṣṣ (pl. *afrâd khâṣṣah*) "particular unit":
132–133.

fard kullî "universal unit":
133 (n. 144).

fard muṭlaq "absolute unit":
133 (n. 144).

farq "separation":
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farq thânî "second separation":
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ḥiṣṣah (pl. *ḥiṣaṣ*) "portion":
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hsüan chih yu hsüan, C. 玄之又玄 → Mystery:
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iḍâfah ishrâqîyah "illuminative relation":
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'ilm "divine knowledge":
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imkân "possibility":
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inbisâṭ al-wujûd "unfolding of existence":
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'irfânî "theosophic":
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8.

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18.

ittiḥâd al-'âlim wa-al-ma'lûm "unification of the knower and the known":
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**dhawu al-'aql wa-al-'ayn* "men of reason and intuition": 15. * their vision of Reality: 17–18.

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