

MULTIPLICITY IN UNITY: THE MYSTICAL UNITY OF EXISTENCE IN MULLA SADRA'S *AL-SHAWAHID AL-RUBUBIYYAH*

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Mystics from all religions have spoken about a unity in existence. They clearly state that there is really only one being that exists in this Universe, i.e. God. At the same time, they have not denied the multiplicity of creatures that appear to us. These two apparently contradictory statements seem to be apparently contradictory to one another. Metaphysics is a discipline that is concerned with existence. For this reason, they take these mystical utterances seriously and often discuss them in their philosophical investigations from various points of view. The mystics have not attempted to prove their claims using rational proofs. Rather, they claim to have directly witnessed the unity of existence in their mystical visions. As a purely rational discipline, philosophy has made attempts to prove this claim of the mystics and to reconcile any apparent contradictions that might exist in their statements. One of the philosophers who made great progress in this area was Mulla Sadra. Mulla Sadra was of the opinion that it is indeed possible to prove that it is only God that truly exists in the Universe with this contradicting the existence of His creatures. He was of the opinion that this unity manifests itself at two levels of being. At a higher level, there is a multiplicity in unity and, at a lower one, there is a unity in multiplicity. Mulla Sadra proves the higher level of unity using a philosophical principle called the Principle of the Simple Reality. He proves the lower level of unity using the idea that the existence of an effect is a copulative being with respect to its cause. At the same time, Mulla Sadra affirms that both of these levels of existence are levels of one individual being. This paper seeks to explain Mulla Sadra's theory of the unity of being at the level of multiplicity in unity as he described it in his famous philosophical treatise, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*.

Keywords: *Mulla Sadra, Unity of Existence, Multiplicity in Unity, Unity in Multiplicity*

Introduction: The Unity and Multiplicity of Existence

Islamic philosophy is a discipline primarily concerned with existence. It seeks to investigate the properties of existence so that they serve as a criterion by means of which that which exists may be distinguished from that which does not exist. One of the properties of existence that the philosophers discuss is the unity and multiplicity of existence. Is the realm of existence composed of a multiplicity of beings or is there really only one being that exists? Is it somehow possible to reconcile the unity of existence with its multiplicity or are these concepts irreconcilable? Before we begin examining the view of Mulla Sadra regarding this subject, it is beneficial to briefly look at some other views regarding this subject (Tabatabai 2001: 17–20).

The View of the Peripatetic Philosophers

The Peripatetic philosophers are of the opinion that the realm of existence is composed of series of beings that are completely distinct from one another. They say that every existence is simple. At the same time, there are numerous beings. This is something attested to by the multiplicity of the effects that emanates from being. At the same time, multiplicity cannot occur without distinction. Hence, the multiplicity of beings should be completely distinct from one another. They cannot share anything in common; otherwise, they would be composed of part. This would contradict their simplicity. So, there is no choice but to say that the concept of existence – which is a simple concept – is a construct of the mind and has no objective reality. This theory is known as the Multiplicity of Existence and the Existent (*Kathrah al-Wujud wa al-Mawjud*). Mulla Sadra rejects this theory based upon the idea that it would necessitate the possibility of the abstraction of a single concept from a multiplicity of instances that share nothing in common, which is epistemologically problematic (Tabatabai 2001: 17–20).

The View of Muhaqqiq Dawwani

According to the famous sage, Muhaqqiq Dawwani, existence is limited to one instance, i.e. God. God's creatures are a series of quiddities that are related to God. This relation is what allows us to predicate the term 'existent' for them. This is because the word 'existent' is a derivative. And, in the predication of a derivative for a subject, it is not necessary for the attribute which is the source of the derivative to actually exist for the subject; rather, any sort of relation between the subject and the source is sufficient in the predication of the derivative (Tabatabai 2001: 17–20).

The View of the Mystics

Contrary to the two previous groups of scholars, the Mystics are of the opinion that there is only one being in the Universe, i.e. God. God's creatures do not really exist; rather, they are only manifestations of His existence. This opinion is generally known as the Unity of Existence and the Existent (*Wahdah al-Wujud wa al-Mawjud*) (Tabatabai 2001: 17–20).

The View of Mulla Sadra

Mulla Sadra rejects the belief of the Peripatetics who say that existence is composed of a multiplicity of beings that do not share anything in common. He also rejects the belief of some of the mystics who say that only God exists and that His creatures do not really enjoy existence. The belief of Muhaqqiq Dawwani – who says that God is existence and His creatures are quiddities related to Him – is also unacceptable for him; rather, Mulla Sadra says that there is only one being in this Universe, i.e. God. At the same time, God's creatures also exist. For Mulla Sadra, God is one being that is a graded reality. It has two principal ontological stations, i.e. the station of multiplicity in unity and the station of unity in multiplicity. Of course, the first ontological station is higher than the second one. Mulla Sadra says that the relation of the world to God is like the relation of the soul to its faculties. In some of his works, Mulla Sadra mentions the two aforementioned stations for the soul. In other words, the faculties of the soul exist at the level of the essence of the soul as multiplicity in unity and the soul exists within the faculties as unity in multiplicity. In other words, the soul is a graded reality that possesses two fundamental levels. At a higher level, the multiplicity of the faculties exists in a simple manner. At a lower level, the unity of the essence of the soul unites the apparent distinct faculties. Mulla Sadra uses the example of the soul to explain the relation between God and His creatures. He is of the opinion that the famous Prophetic tradition: “He who knows himself, knows his Lord”, is a reference to what he is speaking about. Mulla Sadra's theory is known as Unity in Multiplicity and Multiplicity in Unity (*al-Wahdah fi Ayn al-Kathrah wa al-Kathrah fi Ayn al-Wahdah*) (Tabatabai 2001: 17–20).

The Mystical Unity of Existence in al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah

As we have mentioned previously, Mulla Sadra envisions the unity of existence at two ontological stations, i.e. the station of multiplicity in unity and the station of unity in multiplicity. Hereunder, we will examine each of these stations separately. However, it is necessary to remember that, for Mulla Sadra, these two ontological stations are actually stations of one being, i.e. God.

The Station of Multiplicity in Unity

In a chapter entitled: *Regarding the idea that He – may His name be glorified – is all of Existence*, Mulla Sadra explains the station of multiplicity in unity. He does this based upon his famous philosophical principle: *The Principle of the Simple Reality*. In brief, this principle states that the simpler a reality is the more ontological perfection it contains. Of course, this ontological comprehensiveness does not contradict its simplicity; rather, it contains a multiplicity of ontological perfection in a simple manner.

In her commentary on the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Marziyyah Akhlaqi says that Mulla Sadra understands the Principle of the Simple Reality to be one of the most difficult of problems of the divine sciences, the understanding of which is not easy but for those who with the help of God find their way to the source of all knowledge and wisdom (Mulla Sadra 2009: VI/110). According to Mulla Hadi Sabziwari, Mulla Sadra considers this principle to be his own philosophical innovation that no one discovered before him. Of course, Aristotle made some brief indications to this. What is more, there are references in the works of the mystics to the gist of this principle. These mystics referred to it in various ways, such as, 'the mystical witnessing of multiplicity in unity', 'the observation of the elaborate in the concise', and 'the principle of the act of granting'. Also, they made references to it in their poems and prose in different ways when discussing unity and multiplicity. Nevertheless, it was Mulla Sadra who rationally demonstrated this principle and analyzed it logically and philosophically. Moreover, he used this principle as a universal premise in various discussions of philosophy. It is for this reason that in his footnotes to the *al-Asfar*, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari says: "The affirmation of this matter and the delineation of its limits in the best way possible were accomplished by the author" (Mulla Hadi Sabziwari 2009: VI/111). After Mulla Sadra, sages such as Faydh Kashani, Mulla Ali Nuri, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari and others also spoke about this principle at length (Akhlaqi 2017: II/192–193).

In his footnotes to the *al-Asfar* and the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari says that one of the beautiful aspects of this problem is that, in it, one of the two things that are completely contrary to one another serves as the proof for the other. This is because the extremity of simplicity and unity here is used to prove that they are all things, which is the extremity of multiplicity, above which there cannot be any other multiplicity. This is similar to cases where an objection serves as the reason for its answer. For example, in the objection of the dualists, Aristotle used something that they mentioned to prove dualism to demonstrate the divine unity. This is as some of the great mystics say: "I recognized God by means of His combi-

nation of opposites”. This problem is also one of these types of problems. Another amazing aspect of this principle is that it simultaneously affirms and negates everything from God, which of course refers to the idea that the limitations and imperfections of things are negated from Him (Sabziwari 2009: II/301). Sabziwari also says that for the person with wisdom there is nothing amazing in these matters as there is no real opposition between them (Sabziwari 2010: 512).

Also, in his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, in his explanation of the divine name, ‘the Comprehensive’ (*al-Jami*’), Sabziwari says that since God is a simple reality, He includes every perfection and goodness. He also adds that the spirit and number of this divine name is 114, which is equal to the number of the word, ‘existence’ (*al-wujud*), if the letters of this word are calculated separately. This is also similar to the comprehensive Book of God, the written Qur’an, which possesses 114 chapters. Also, the equality of the numbers of the words ‘existence’ and ‘comprehensive’ indicates that existence includes knowledge, power, life and other perfections. Another subtle point here is that the number of the words ‘non-existence’ (*al-adam*), which is the negation of existence and its contrary, and the ‘clause’ (*al-qayd*), which is the boundary between existence and non-existence that is quiddity, is also 114. This implies that, since quiddities are unreal, they do not possess any ruling in and of themselves; rather, their ruling is the same as the ruling of existence. Sabziwari adds that when the number of two words is the same, it indicates that the two are identical and united. Therefore, since ‘existence’ and the ‘clause’ (i.e. quiddity) share the same number, they are united together. Their composition is not like the composition of two things that are placed side by side with one another. This is because nothing independently parallels quiddity in the external world. Therefore, quiddity is identical to existence. Also, non-existence is sheer vacuity. It has no instance in the external world. Rather, the existences that are prior to a being are what depict the non-existence of that thing in the mind. So, like quiddity, non-existence is abstracted from existence. Therefore, existence is principle and it is like the spirit or reality of things. Other things are nothing and annihilated in it. Non-existence is abstracted from existence. This is because every existence is the non-existence of some other existence and this is what non-existence means. Sabziwari adds that the idea that quiddity and non-existence share the same number indicates that non-existence parallels quiddity and that it is necessary for quiddity to be annihilated. It is quiddity that accepts non-existence. This is because existence shuns non-existence. So, when an existent accepts non-existence, quiddity qua quiddity accepts it. However, from the point of view of its unity with existence and the idea that its existence is the knowledge of God, His light and His face, quiddity

does not accept non-existence. It is also necessary for quiddity to be annihilated in the sense that in order to realize the mystical unity of existence it is necessary to relinquish it, as the mystics say: "The [realization of the] divine unity is the elimination of the relations [of existence to quiddities]". Sabziwari adds that the 'numeric form' of this number, i.e. 114, is 6 ($1+1=2$; $2+4=6$). And, when 6 is subtracted from 114, 108 is left, which is the number of the divine name, 'the Truth' (*al-Haqq*). This indicates that when the forms of quiddities are eliminated nothing remains in the realm of existence but the Truth. Sabziwari then says that the numeric form of the number 108 is 9 ($1+0+8=9$). And, the number 9 is related to Adam (a). This is because Adam's (a) number is 45 ($4+5=9$). This indicates that the representative must be similar to the thing it represents. Sabziwari adds that the number of Adam (a) is the number of the area of a triangle and the number of Eve (a) is the number of its side (Sabziwari 2007: 198–199).

It should also be noted that the principle of the Simple Reality has been objected to in many ways. For example, in his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that one of the objections of the illiterate people is that this axiom means that everything is God; however, this is an incorrect assumption and great accusation. This is because the subject of this philosophical principle is the simple and single being. This is why, according to this objection, no unity or simplicity remains. This is because the word 'everything' may refer to 'every individual being' or 'the collection of beings'. However, these two are not compatible with unity and simplicity. This is while we wish to say that the simple and single being includes within itself all existence without the negation of its simplicity and unity. Sabziwari says that in this principle, the predicate is more general than the subject. And, the converse of a universal proposition is not another universal proposition. For example, while it is true that every human is an animal, it is not true that every animal is a human; rather, the second proposition is untrue. Similarly, while it is true that every simple reality is all things, it is not true that all things are simple reality. If the person making the aforementioned objection possessed true knowledge, he would have known this. Sabziwari says that if this person observes the All-Pervasive Existence that spreads out over all things and takes its unity and essential sacredness into consideration and says that his statement, i.e. that all things are God, refers to this station, then his statement is still fallacious. This is because – while it is true that this All-Pervasive Existence is the manifestation of the Simple Reality and it possesses a unity by means of the unity of the Simple Reality, a subsistence by means of its subsistence, a comprehensiveness by means of its comprehensiveness and that it does not have independent ruling, as it is similar to a copulative meaning in comparison to Him – what this person

would be referring to would be the station of unity in multiplicity. Whereas, the station we are referring to in this philosophical principle, i.e. that the simple reality is all things, is the station of multiplicity in unity. Thus, what this person would be saying would be drastically different from what we are speaking about. This would be even more so if the person was referring to each of the individual beings or the collection of individual beings, as these are attributes of the places of manifestation, not the actual manifestation of the Simple Reality. Sabziwari says that it is for this reason that the author calls the station that this principle refers to ‘the knowledge that is necessary, perfection for the essence of God and is before creation’. This is why he calls the All-Pervasive Existence that we mentioned ‘the knowledge that is with creation’ (Sabziwari 2010: 512, 513).

Something should also be said regarding the predication of ‘all things’ for the ‘Simple Reality’. In his *Nihayah al-Hikmah*, Allamah Tabatabai calls this type of predication *haml al-haqiqah wa al-raqiqah* (Tabatabai 2005: IV/454). In his footnotes to the *Nihayah al-Hikmah*, Ghulam Rida Fayyadi explains this as follows: A cause possesses the existence of its effect and its perfection in a higher and nobler manner. This is because the cause possesses all that its effect has and more. And its effect is the sign of the existence of its cause. In order to convey this idea each one of them is predicated for the other. So, this is a special type of predication. This is because here the subject and the predicate are not united essentially and conceptually, as is the case in primary essential predication. They are also not united in the instance of existence and reality, as is the case in common technical predication. Rather, when a cause is predicated for its effect or vice versa, this wants to convey that the cause possesses the perfection of the effect in a higher and nobler manner, that they are united in existence itself and perfection, that the effect is the manifestation of the cause and the cause is the reality of the existence of the effect. So, the things that the subject and the predicate are united in are existence itself and perfection. And, the thing that they are different in is the instance of existence. Each of them is a separate instance of existence and perfection. One of the instances of this perfection and existence is the reality of that perfection and the other instance is its manifestation (Fayyadi 2005: II/546). It is also possible to say that they are united in perfection and existence and different in the intensity of that existence (Fayyadi 2005: II/547).

Finally, one might wonder why this unity between all things and the Simple Reality is limited to the existence of the former with the latter. In his footnotes to the *al-Asfar*, Sabziwari says that since quiddities are a mirage, a limit and imperfection, they fall outside of the Reality of realities and are not found within It. Of course, they are negated from that Being with a simple

ordinary negation due to the absence of a subject with the capacity for it (Sabziwari 2010: II/301).

In any case, Mulla Sadra states his claim as follows:

Briefly speaking, if a reality is simple in all respects then it will be all things without this contradicting its unity (Mulla Sadra 2010: 169).

He argues for this general principle in the following manner:

Otherwise, its essence would be sustained by the existence of something and the non-existence of something else even if this were in the intellect (Mulla Sadra 2010: 169).

Before going further, a few important points should be taken note of here.

First of all, in the *al-Asfar*, the author says that limitation is something that arises from something being an effect. It is not a necessary property of existence qua existence. In other words, since an effect cannot be at the level of its cause, it becomes limited, i.e. it lacks the perfection of its cause. Existence becomes limited due to its being accompanied by the possibility of non-existence or quiddity, which are things other than existence qua existence. Existence is essentially necessary (Sabziwari 2009: VI/17). Existence may also become limited due to its being accompanied by potentiality. However, potentiality is not something essential to existence. Existence is pure actuality. It may also become limited when it is accompanied by multiplicity, i.e. when it has a second. However, existence is essentially one. Multiplicity is something that accidentally accompanies it. It is different from existence. Thus, if there was a being that was not an effect or was not accompanied by quiddity, the possibility of non-existence, potentiality or multiplicity then it would necessarily be unlimited (Mulla Sadra 2009: VI/16, 17).

Secondly, in his famous treatise on the law of 'the Simple Reality', after explaining the proof for this law, Mulla Ali Nuri mentions an interesting question that might come to mind here: Does the Necessary Being not have negative attributes, such as the lack of ignorance, weakness, multiplicity and the likes? If the law of 'the Simple Reality' was correct and it was impossible for the Necessary Being to be free of a composition of privation and possession, then it would be necessary for Him to lack such negative attributes. What is more, if He is all things, then why are such things negated from Him? This sage answers this question by saying that these negative attributes are, in effect, the negation of the imperfections and limitations of these things. And, the negation of a negation is equal to the affirmation of a positive and

the negation of imperfection is equal to perfection. So, this does not lead to a composition in His being from privation and possession. Also, since they are negative, these are not ‘things’. Thus, their being negated from Him does not contradict the fact that He is all things. In other words, the affirmation of multiplicity in the true unity is from one point of view and its negation is from another point of view (Nuri 2004: IV/620).

Thirdly, in his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that this means that in this case it would be composed of existence and non-existence. In other words, it would be composed of possession and privation. Sabziwari says that it is possible for someone to raise the following objection here: Non-existence and the likes of non-existence (such as privation) are nothing. Nothing corresponds to negation and non-existence. So, how could this lead to real composition? Sadra’s commentator says that this objection is apparently justified. However, if we ponder over the matter we will realize that it is not really valid. This is because, first of all, it is contradicted by the argument usually mentioned for the negation of quiddity from the Necessary Being, in which it is said that if the Necessary Being possessed a quiddity besides His existence, then He would be composed of two things, which is impossible. If the aforementioned objection were valid, it would be possible to object to this argument by saying that quiddity – like non-existence – is nothing, i.e. it does not possess the ‘thing-ness’ of existence. This is why this argument is usually considered to be valid. It is possible for someone to turn around and say that while it is true that quiddity does not possess the ‘thing-ness’ of existence, it possesses the thing-ness of quiddity, which has been established to be a form of thing-ness. The answer to this response is that non-existence is also the same as quiddity in this respect. Sabziwari says that if quiddity was absolutely nothing, then the possible being would not be a composition of two things, there would be nothing to receive and nothing to be received, there would be nothing to hear the divine call ‘Be!’, there would be nothing to protect the Truth from imperfection, there would be no possibility – which is the negation of the necessity of existence and non-existence or the equality of the relation of quiddity to the two or the possibility of the two – and there would be no acceptance of non-existence. In brief, many of the mystical and philosophical principles would have to be negated. Similarly, if non-existence were absolutely nothing, then possibility, for example, would have to be negated. This is because in this case, there would be nothing equal to existence in the possible or there would be nothing whose necessity could be negated in the specific or general possible being. Sabziwari says that the sayings of the sages in this regard are sufficient proof for our claims. For example, they divide the ‘thing’ into the Necessary Being, the possible being and the impossible being. Also, they divide the ‘thing’ into existence, non-existence and quiddity.

What is more, they divide non-existence into mental non-existence and external non-existence. Of course, this only means that the external world is the vessel for its self, just as it serves as the vessel for relations and other *itibari* things. It does not mean that the external world is a vessel for its existence. So, no contradiction would arise. Finally, some say that non-existence is the source of certain things. Aristotle even made it one of the three principles of the material beings. In brief, if thing-ness is negated from non-existence or quiddity, then this is the negation of a specific type of thing-ness from them, which does not necessitate the negation of thing-ness in general from them. This is because the negation of the thing-ness of existence from something does not negate the affirmation of the thing-ness of non-existence or quiddity for them. This is because in everything thing-ness is in proportion to it. Thus, in the untrue, thing-ness is untruth. Hence, in Zayd, there is a composition of three things: existence, quiddity and non-existence. This is because he does not possess the existence that is specific to Amr. And, in beings other than the Necessary Being, there is a composition of existence and non-existence. This is because every subsequent being lacks the existence that it follows. Of course, it is true that it is not composed of existence and a quiddity that sustains it. Secondly, the worse type of composition is the composition of existence and non-existence and affirmation and negation – of course, if the negation is the negation of actuality and perfection, not the negation of negation, which goes back to affirmation. Rather, if truth be told, there is no real composition besides this composition. This is because a composition needs two parts, each of which possesses its own nature. This is because if one of the two parts of a composition possesses that which parallels it by means of the thing-ness of existence, then each of the parts would not possess its own nature; rather, they would have the same nature. This is because in existence the thing that makes one being different from another is the same as that which makes it similar to it. In this case, there would not really be a composition. It is for this reason that the composition by existence and quiddity also goes back to the composition by existence and non-existence, if it really is a true composition (Sabziwari 2010: 513, 514).

Fourthly, in the *al-Asfar*, the author mentions another proof for this axiom of the Transcendent Theosophy: “And, that unconditional existence is all things, in a simple manner. This is because He is the agent of every conditioned existent. And, the source of every [ontological virtue] is more deserving of that virtue than the thing it is a source of. Therefore, the Source of all things and their Bestower [i.e. of their beings] must be all things [albeit] in a loftier and higher manner” (Mulla Sadra 2007: VI/116).

Fifthly, something should be mentioned regarding the composition by existence and non-existence. In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububi-*

yyah, Sabziwari says that this is similar to the analysis of the possible being into quiddity and existence and the analysis of the simple species into genus and differentia. Sabziwari says that an analytical composition is also a great problem. This is because the intellect rules that it is not possible for the essentially necessary being to be composed of two things. So, how could it say that it is permissible for Him to be analyzed into something and nothing, as is the possible being? (Sabziwari 2010: 514)

In any case, Mulla Sadra first seeks to establish the idea that the negation of something from some subject is not the same as the affirmation of something for him. He says:

To explain, when we say, ‘the horse or being the horse is negated from man’, he is the non-existence of a horse from the point of view that he is a man (Mulla Sadra 2010: 169).

In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that *the horse or being the horse* respectively refer to the horse from the point of view of its existence and the concept of the horse from the point of view that it is a concept, not from the point of view of its existence. The same is true of man. So, it includes the quiddity of man from the point of view of its existence and the quiddity of man from the point of view of its conception (Sabziwari 2010: 514, 515).

He argues for this idea by means of their separation from one another in the mind:

Otherwise, it would entail that when we conceive of him we would conceive of that simple negation; rather, the negation of a specific type of existence (Mulla Sadra 2010: 169).

In his explanation of this passage in his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari says that it is possible to expound all of the possibilities here in the following manner: The dimension of negation, the thing that is related by the negation or the thing that allows for the predication of the negation for this subject – or whatever you wish to call it – is either the same as the dimension of affirmation, in which case the intellection of one of them would necessitate the intellection of the other, or it is something different from it, in which case the subject would be a composition, which is permissible in the possible being, not the simple and single essentially Necessary Being. There is also a third possibility here, i.e. that there is no dimension that corresponds to the negation at all, not as a part of

the subject that is different from the affirmation, nor as a dimension of the subject that is united with the affirmation. This is because negation does not need a subject at all. It is for this reason that it is often true when there is no subject, such as when we say: 'the father of Jesus (a) was not a doctor.' Now, this is not possible in the case at hand, since we are talking about a subject that exists due to the fact that we have previously proven the existence of the essentially Necessary Being. And, the simple negation is equal to the positive proposition in which the predicate has been modified and is negative or has been negated. The author points to this when he says, *the non-existence of the horse (literally, the non-horse)*. He also explicitly states this when he says: *so, every instance for the affirmation of the negation of a predicate from it...* (Sabziwari 2010: 515).

From this, Mulla Sadra draws the conclusion that if some predicate is negated from a subject, the latter must be composite:

So, everything that is the instance of the affirmation of the negation of a predicate is composite (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

Mulla Sadra also adds that it is possible to negate the predicate that is negated from a subject from the predicate that is affirmed for it:

For verily, it is possible for you to conjure up its form in your mind and the form of that predicate, regardless of whether it is in the form of a non-derivative or a derivative, and to compare them with one another. Then, you can negate one of them from the other. Thus, the thing by means of which something is what it is different from that by means of which it is true of it 'that it is not it' (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

Sabziwari says that it is possible for someone to raise the following objection here: We were speaking about man not being a horse, for example, not man not being man. So, why does not author say that *the thing by means of which something is what it is...*? Sabziwari says that this is because here what is intended is the negation of something as a reality and as an existence and an existent – especially in the subject we are discussing – from a subject. It is for this reason that the author expresses himself in the aforementioned manner. This is because the existence of man and the existence of the horse are one. There is no personal distinction between them – meaning, between the two existences – what to say of a distinction in natures, as was mentioned before. Sabziwari says that in the subject we are discussing this is even truer. This is because we are speaking about whether or not it is possible to negate an existence qua existence from the

sheer existence. If something as an existence is negated from Him, then He would not be a sheer existence. This is because the reality of everything and its purity comprehends and possesses all of that which is of its nature. Of course, it is not the instance of any of its individuals; otherwise, it would not be the nature of that thing, which contradicts the assumption that it is. Thus, if the conditioned is negated from something the absolute will also be negated from it, as the conditioned is not separate from the absolute and the tainted is not separate from the pure. Thus, this negation necessitates that one thing be itself and not be itself at once. Sabziwari says that the author mentions the answer to this objection in his book, *Asrar al-Ayat*, where he says: “And it is impossible for that which is understood by negation to be the same as that which is understood by affirmation, even if each one of them is related to something [different]. This is because the meaning of the thing that something is related to is outside of the thing it is related to it and the relation. Thus, the specification that is made by it is the specification by means of something external. And the specification by means of something external does not change the reality of something in and of itself. Thus, if the meaning of the affirmation of ‘a’ was the same as the meaning of the negation of ‘b’, then the nature of affirmation would be the same as the nature of negation. Hence, something would not be itself, which is impossible” (Sabziwari 2010: 515–516). While these answers are profound, there seems to be a simpler answer here: according to some manuscripts, the text reads as follows: “So, the thing by means of which something is what it is, is different from the thing by means of which it is true of it that ‘it is not a writer’”. Sabziwari says that it is also possible for someone to raise the following objection here: if the negation of something from a subject leads to its composition, then non-existence would be part of Zayd, for example. Otherwise, it would be incorrect to negate anything from him. However, it is impossible for non-existence to be part of existence. Sabziwari answers this objection by saying that we do not intend to say that non-existence becomes part of the existence of Zayd, which we admit is impossible; rather, the existence of Zayd and the non-existence which allows for negation parallel one another and stand besides one another. Rather, what we intend is that non-existence would be part of the meaning of the word, ‘Zayd’. In other words, the word, ‘Zayd’, would be a word for a specific being, faculties and powers as well as the non-existences that accompany them. Sabziwari mentions a final objection here: the attributes of God are predicated for Him but do not lead to any composition in Him. Could the things that are negated from Him also be of this nature? Meaning, could the dimension of His existence be the instance of these negations just as it is the instance of His attributes? Sabziwari answers this question in the following manner: if

there is no contrariety between concepts, then it is possible for them to be abstracted from one thing. However, this is not possible if there is contrariety between them, such as is the case with concepts such as the cause and the effect, the mover and the moved, etc. Now, the subject we are discussing is of this nature. This is because there is a contrariety between affirmation and negation (Sabziwari 2010: 516).

In any case, in continuation, Mulla Sadra says:

So, the form of Zayd, from the point of view that it is the form of Zayd, is not 'the negation of being a writer' (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

Sadra also states that if these two dimensions were the same, then something existential would be non-existential:

Otherwise, Zayd, from the point of view that he is Zayd would be simple non-existence. (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

Subsequently, Mulla Sadra explains the nature of the dimension from which the negative predicate is abstracted by the mind:

Rather, it is necessary that the subject of this proposition be composed of the form of Zayd and something else by means of which writing is negated from him. That is *potentiality*. For verily, absolute actuality is not the same things as the non-existence of something from the point of view that it is actual unless there is in it a composition of actuality and potentiality even if this be in the mind and by means of an analysis into quiddity and existence and possibility and necessity (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

After establishing this philosophical principle, He applies it to the existence of the essentially Necessary Being, i.e. God:

Since the Necessary Being is only existence, which stands on its own, without the trace of multiplicity in any way whatsoever, so nothing is negated from Him (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

From this, he draws the following conclusion:

Hence, He is the completion of everything and its perfection (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

A few beneficial points regarding this passage might be mentioned here:

First of all, in his explanation of the divine name: “Oh He who comes between a man and his heart”, in his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Sabziwari says that this divine name points to the perfection of proximity of God to things. This is because the heart of a man is nothing but his rational soul. And, the rational soul is the source of his differentia and it is his form, which is his quiddity, by means of which he is what he is. At the same time, nothing that is foreign to something can come between it and itself. Also, if something is separate from something in extension, it cannot come between something and itself. So, if God enters the boundaries of a place where nothing foreign can enter, then we can conclude that He is the most proximate of things to man and that it is not possible for anything else to be as close to man as God is to him (Sabziwari 2007: 624).

Secondly, in his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that in being the completion of everything and its perfection, His perfect sign is the human being that is actually perfect. This is because the final species – that is the noblest of species – is all of the species. No species is left out of it. This is because the simple elements and the species born of them, i.e. the mineral, the animal and the human being, are all contained within it. And, the angels of action and the angel of knowledge are contained within it by means of its theoretical and practical intellects. What is more, the attributes of God are also found within it. Sabziwari says that things can be understood by means of their contraries. So, in order to understand the comprehensive being, we should observe the plant. It contains the perfections that are expected from it, such as the faculties of digestion, growth, reproduction, depiction, and their sub-faculties. It also contains the perfections of the minerals and the elements. However, it lacks the perfections of the animal, such as the faculties of sensation and voluntary movement. One may also observe the animal. This is because it contains the perfections that are expected of it and the perfections of the species that are lower than it. However, it lacks the station of the angels and other beings. This is why the Perfect Man contains everything and does not lack anything. However, this is not simply because it contains the example and symbol of everything. So, we do not simply wish to say that, for example, the vaporous spirit that exists in it is similar to the celestial sphere in its transcendence and its being the seat of life and the seven principal faculties of knowledge and action, which are similar to the seven stars. Also, we do not simply wish to state that the movement of the arteries by the heart is similar to the circular movement of the celestial sphere. Nor do we simply wish to state that the liver is similar to a sea and that the veins are similar to rivers. The sages have also mentioned other ways in which the microcosm is similar to the macrocosm. However, we do not wish to similar state that there is a similar-

ity between the Perfect Man and these beings; rather, these things actually exist within it. This is based upon the idea that the essences of things occur in the rational soul as they themselves, not their similitude. Hence, there are celestial spheres, astronomical bodies, elements and elemental beings within his faculties of knowledge. This is especially true of his highest faculty of knowledge, i.e. the intellect, which journeys in the sea of universals and investigates the concepts that are proportional to realities. So one time, fire, for example, exists in his faculty of common sense and another time it exists in his faculty of imagination. One time it exists in his faculty of elaborate intellection and another time it exists in his faculty of simple and concise intellection. This is in line with the function of the sage, whose being parallels nature, as they have defined wisdom as man's becoming an intellectual world that parallels the external world. And, the intellectual fire is more deserving of being called 'fire' than the sensible fire. This is because it is eternal, everlasting, meta-spatial and meta-temporal. This is why matter is unable to bear such a transcendent form of fire. The Perfect Man, however, bears it. This is overlooking the fact that it also exists in it by means of that which is similar to it, i.e. the bile. The same is also true of other elements. Other things also exist in these four stations of knowledge and that which exists within them is really that thing. This is especially true of its intellectual existence, with both of its categories. It is for this reason that in the aforementioned definition it has been stated that wisdom is man's becoming 'an intellectual world'. Consequently, in a higher manner, the actual human being is all of the species. However, he is one instance that contains all of them. And, this is the sign of the station of multiplicity in unity. Thus, you should realize that when we say that 'man is all of the species', we do not mean that all of species, separated from one another or joined to one another, is man. This is because this is nothing but the multiplicity that does not call to unity. In this case, man would not be one natural species. Yes, this is man's station of unity in multiplicity, which parallels a similar station of God, i.e. the station where He manifests Himself in the places of manifestations, in each in proportion to its level of being. "He sent down rain from the sky. So, rivers flowed in proportion to their capacity" (Qur'an 13: 17; Sabziwari 2010: 516, 517).

It is possible for someone to ask the following question here: if nothing can be negated from God, then it would mean that God possesses the imperfections of His creatures. Mulla Sadra answers this by saying that it is not possible to negate the perfection of things from the existence of the Necessary Being; rather, it is only possible to negate their deficiencies from Him. He argues for this in the following manner:

So, the thing that is negated from Him is nothing but the deficiencies (*qusurat*) of things. This is because He is the completion of everything and that which is the completion of something is more deserving of it than it is itself (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that this is an answer to an objection that might come to mind here: if nothing is negated from the Necessary Being, then how are the negative attributes predicated for Him? The answer to this question is that when we say that nothing is negated from Him, we mean that no existence qua existence is negated from Him or that no actuality qua actuality is negated from Him. In reality, however, His negative attributes are the negation of non-existence, not the negation of existence. So, when you say that He is not a substance, then you are not negating the existence of the substance from Him or the fact that He is essentially independent. This is because He is the real being and the Truth that stands on its own and sustains everything else. Rather, what you are negating from Him is the limitation, imperfection and dependency of substance. In fact, when you say that He is not an accident, then you are not negating the existence of the accident from Him; rather, its imperfection, limitation and dependency. However, all of these things are non-existential. So, they go back to the non-existence of non-existence. The same thing is true of negation (Sabziwari 2010: 518).

After explaining and proving the unity of existence at the station of multiplicity in unity, Mulla Sadra refers to certain verses of the Holy Qur'an that in his opinion point to this philosophical truth. For example, he says:

This is what has been indicated to in His words: “And you did not throw, when you threw; rather, it was God who threw...” (Qur'an 8: 17) (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

In his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Sabziwari mentions something interesting regarding this verse. He says that the Asharis also believe that “there is no compulsion or relinquishing; rather, there is something between the two”. They say there is no compulsion because the servant has a power that allows him to “acquire”. On the other hand, there is no relinquishing because God really has the power to affect. So, with respect to the aforementioned verse, the Asharis say that ‘the Prophet (s) did not really throw, when he acquired the throw; rather, it was God who really threw’. Sabziwari also says that the theory of ‘acquisition’ means that God has the habit of creation an action after the intention of the servant to perform the action. Only, God knows that if He did not act according to His habit and

did not create the action after the intention of the servant and if the servant had the power to do so, then he would perform the action (Sabziwari 2007: 338, 339).

...and also in His words, “There is no conspiracy of three individuals except that He is the fourth of them nor any conspiracy of five except that He is the fifth of them” (Qur’an 59: 8). Therefore, He is the fourth of three and the fifth of four and the sixth of five (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

In his explanation of the phrase “He is the fourth of the three...”, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari says that this is similar to the existence of every number. So, the existence of the number three is the fourth of three. It is not the third of three or the fourth of four. Otherwise, existence would be part of quiddity. This is because the third of three is part of its essence. This is why in every quiddity, existence is subsequent to the completion of that quiddity. If the existence of the number three were the third of three, then the quiddity that is the recipient of that existence would be two, not three. And, this contradicts the assumption. Now, the existence of three is the fourth of the number of three. This is because it is of a nature that is different from the nature of the quiddity of the number three, as its existence does not accept non-existence while it does accept existence and non-existence. Hence, it is something aside from it and therefore is the fourth of the number three. The same is the case with the existence of the quiddities of all infinite number of numbers. If you have understood this example, then you may understand the Being that it is an example of. This is because He is the reality of existence, which is the dimension of reality that repels non-existence. And, He is another type of reality, i.e. essential necessity. This is why quiddities are a type of reality whose nature is distinct from His type of reality, i.e. essential possibility. Also, He is light and they are instances of darkness. Hence, He is the fourth of three quiddities, regardless of whether those quiddities belong to one species – such as Zayd, Amr and Bakr – or they belong to different species – such as Zayd, his horse and his clothes (Sabziwari 2010: 518).

Now Mulla Sadra explains how it is possible for God to be fourth of three but not the fourth of four:

This is because He is, by means of His unity, everything and yet He is not any of them. This is because his unity is not numerical and the type of unity that the beings have such that its repetition might create numbers. Rather, it is a real unity and there is nothing like it in existence (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170).

Mulla Sadra adds that there are other verses that also describe this station of unity:

It is for this reason that, “They have disbelieved, those who say, ‘Verily God is the third of three’” (Qur’an 5: 78). And if they had said “He is the third of two”, they would not have disbelieved.

One of the clear testimonies to this claim is His saying “He is with you wherever you are” (Qur’an 57: 4).

Mulla Sadra emphasizes that this unity between God and His creatures is not equal to some of the incorrect interpretations of the unity of existence that some pseudo-Sufis adhere to:

So, this simultaneity is not a mixing or integration or an incarnation or unification or an accompaniment in station or in the level of existence or in time or in position. He transcends all of these things with a great transcendence! (Mulla Sadra 2010: 170)

In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that if the ‘simultaneity’ mentioned here refers to two things that accompany one another but exist on one level of being, then there is no simultaneity between the Necessary and the possible. However, if His ‘simultaneity’ with His creatures refers to His sustaining them, then this is acceptable. It is also acceptable if it refers to the simultaneity between that which essentially exists and that which exists by means of the existence of that which essentially exists (Sabziwari 2010: 518).

It should also be mentioned that there is a difference between the word *martabah* and the word *darajah*. The first refers to the case where two beings form a hierarchy and are at the same time cause and effect. The second is more general and includes beings that form a hierarchy but not a series of causes and effects. There is a difference in *darajah* between a man and a stone since man is ontologically higher than the stone. However, neither is the cause for the other. Thus, they do not have a difference in *martabah*.

Sadra finishes his discussion regarding this station of ontological unity by mentioning the famous verse of the Holy Qur’an that is often quoted by the Sufis:

So, He is the First and the Last and the Apparent and the Hidden (Qur’an 57: 3; Mulla Sadra 2010: 171).

Some points should be mentioned here that are not without benefit.

First of all, in his footnotes to the *al-Asfar*, Sabziwari mentions a valid point: The verse: “and you did not throw when you threw; rather, it was God who threw” and the verse: “and His is with you wherever you go” are more suitable for the station of unity in multiplicity. This is why the subject of discussion is the Principle of the Simple Reality, which is concerned with the station of multiplicity in unity. Yes, the verse: “He is the first and the last, the apparent and the hidden” is more suitable for the station of multiplicity in unity (Sabziwari 2009: II/304). Also, in his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Sabziwari says that the *Muhammadian Word* exists as an inheritance in the person who combines the vision of the station of multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity, rectifies his theoretical and practical intellects, believes in compulsion while adhering to freedom and believes in freedom while adhering to compulsion and has faith in transcendence in immanence and immanence in transcendence. This is because the orientation of the prayer of the Prophet (s) was between the East and the West and his nation is the ‘middle nation’ that practices moderation. This is because he (s) was given the ‘comprehensive words’. This is in contrast to the person who has been overcome by immateriality, unity and spirituality. This is because such a person possesses the *Isawian Word*. Since, Isa (a) ascended to the heavens. On the contrary, if the rectification of the practical intellect and the adoption of good etiquettes and manners hold sway over the person, then he possesses the *Musawiyyan Word* (Sabziwari 2007: 254).

Secondly, in his commentary on the *Surah al-Hadid*, Mulla Sadra says the following regarding this Qur’anic verse: the three ‘waws’ mentioned in this verse are meant to combine. However, the first ‘waw’ implies that God is the combination of the attributes of priority and posteriority. This is why the third ‘waw’ implies that He is the combination of the attributes of manifestation and secrecy. And the middle ‘waw’ means that He is the combination of these two combinations, i.e. the combination of priority and posteriority and the combination of manifestation and secrecy. Sadra says that it has been related that Abd al-Aziz said that it is as if the ‘waws’ in this verse have not been mentioned. So, the verse means that He is the First that is the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden. This is because those amongst us that are first are not last. And, those amongst us that are apparent are not hidden. This view is in line with the view that His priority is identical to His posteriority and His appearance is identical to His secrecy. It has also been related from Ibn Abbas that He is the First that is before everything, without having any beginning. Also, He is the Last that is after everything, without having any end. So, He is the eternally ‘First’ and the everlasting ‘Last’. And, the Apparent is He who overcomes and is higher than everything. So, everything is lower than Him. And, the Hidden is He who knows everything. So, nothing is

more knowledgeable than Him. Sadra says that the explanation of this tradition – although it goes against the apparent meaning of the word – is that it is taken from the root, *batana al-shay*, which means: ‘it understood its hidden nature’. Perhaps it is for this reason that following this, the verse says: “And He is aware of all things”. This is because something that knows the hidden essence of something will know everything else besides that hidden essence. It has also been related from al-Dahhaq that He is the one that made the firsts, first and the one that made the lasts, last. He made the apparent, apparent and made the hidden, hidden. Balkhi said that this verse is similar to the statement: ‘So and so the beginning, end, manifestation and secret of this affair’, which means that the affair revolves around that person and is completed by him. It has also been said that the verse means that His existence subsists in all times, regardless of whether they are in the past or the future. He is manifested at all times by means of proofs and signs. Also, He is hidden from the senses and the apparent faculties of knowledge. Based upon this interpretation, this verse would be a proof against those who believe in the possibility of seeing God by means of these faculties of sensation in the Hereafter. Sadra relates that it has also been said that priority and posteriority are essentially properties of time. This is why manifestation and hidden-ness are essentially properties of space. Now, the Truth comprehends space, both that which is manifest and that which is hidden. He also comprehends time, both that which is prior and that which is posterior. At the same time, He is independent of space and time. This is because He exists at a level of existence in which there is no space and time. Mulla Sadra says that sometimes, the word ‘the first’ is used to refer to something being an efficient cause, while the word ‘the last’ is used to refer to something being a final cause that comes after the existence of an action in the external world, even though the goal may precede the action in the realm of knowledge. So, God is the First of everything, in the sense that the existence of everything stems from Him. He is also the First of everything in the sense that the goal of the existence of everything is His knowledge of the expediency of that thing and in the sense that He is complete in His benevolence and mercy and graces things without any recompense. He is the Last of things in the sense that He is the goal that things naturally pursue and voluntarily desire. Now, the divine mystics say that the light of His love and the desire for Him permeates all creatures, each according to its degree of existence. Thus, the generated beings of the lower world, like the eternal beings of the higher realm, have taken a small portion of this great ocean and have testified to the unity of the Truth, the Knower. “Everything possesses a direction towards which it turns” (Qur’an 2: 156). Consequently, He is the Truth, the First from which the beginning of the world commences. And, He is the Last to which the existenc-

es of things are driven, especially human beings. This is because existence emanated from Him and reality occurred because of Him. Sadra says that He is also the Last from another point of view, i.e. the spiritual journey of those who travel towards Him. This is because they are constantly moving upwards, and ascending from one station to another until they return to the divine presence by annihilating their essences identities from themselves and destroying the mountains of their existences and beings. Hence, He is the First in existence and the Last in witnessing. And, God said the following when He told us about the goal of the existence of the world: "And I did not create the human beings and the jinns except that they worship Me [i.e. that they know Me]" (Qur'an 51: 56). He also said the following, as has been related in a sacred tradition: "I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known. So, I created the creation so that I could be known." This indicates that the knowledge of Him is the ultimate goal of the existence of the world, just as His existence is the efficient cause of the world. It also indicates that there are also many necessary intermediary goals, as it says: "If it were not for you, I would not have created the celestial spheres." Thus, the source and the goal of the existence of the world and the meeting of the Hereafter is God. And, it is for that reason that He made the world and designed the system. Some divine sages have said that if one of the creatures understood the perfection that is the ultimate good and then designed the things that stemmed from Him in the way that they have actually stemmed from Him and similar to it – to the extent that things be perfectly systematic and complete – then in reality, his goal would be the Essence of the Creator. Thus, He is the First and the Last in this sense as well. Sadra adds that keeping with the nature that God created them with, higher beings are oriented towards true goals and correct purposes; rather, the goal of all of them is one thing, i.e. the highest good. Only, there are imaginary goals that have been beautified for a group of the religiously responsible persons. Thus, they journey towards them in blindness and without any vision or awareness. Hence, these groups have turned away from the Sovereign of existence and the Source of mercy. In reality, their followers are not the servants of God and He is not their true master. This is because the thing that they make their master will be their master. And, this is nothing but one of the devils. Now, the act of the devil is nothing but the insinuation and misguidance and man does not follow him except by means of his faculty of conjecture, which is one of the soldiers of Satan. For this reason, it is possible to say that these individuals are servants of passion just as it is possible to say that they are servants of the devils. In fact, both of these epithets have been mentioned for these people in the Qur'an. So, God will be the master of the person who takes God as His master, loves the meeting with God and moves in the direction that the system

of creation moves in. “Then they returned to God, their real master” (Qur’an 6: 62). “My guardian is indeed God who sent down the Book and He takes care of the righteous” (Qur’an 7: 196). If someone is for God, then God is for Him. “And if someone anticipates the meeting with God, then the time of [the meeting with] God is near” (Qur’an 25: 5). However, if someone transgresses these limits, revolts, inclines towards the devils and follows the passions, then he will orient himself towards his own personal object of worship and face it – this is because every desire has a devil specific to it. This is in line with the Qur’anic verse: “Have you not seen the one who took his passion as his object of worship?” (Qur’an 45: 23) Sadra also says that the systems that the faculty of conjecture creates and the particular goals are subject to decay and they do not remain. Now, the Devil stems from the substance of this world, which is the realm of deception and the place of falsehood. Therefore, the more this world is destroyed, the more annihilated with the Devil it becomes. So, for the person who has made his passion the object of his worship and who has been made a slave by the Devil, the more the world and the Devil are destroyed, the more will this person be ruined and descend into the pits of wretchedness until he finally falls into the abode of total destruction. Mulla Sadra prays that God protects him and his brothers in certainty from subjugation to the passions and the trust in the world that He makes us all His righteous servants whose affairs He will oversee on the Day of Reckoning. Sadra says that God is the Apparent because He is the light of the heavens and the earth. The reality of light is manifestation and appearance. This is because the thing whose reality is not light is made apparent and manifest by means of light. However, light is essentially apparent and manifest. He is the Inner, i.e. the Secret, because of the intensity of His appearance and the extremity of His clarity. It is for this reason that He becomes hidden for the faculties of vision and the souls and is veiled for the intellects and the powers of seeing. Hence, He is essentially manifested for things; nevertheless, He becomes hidden from them due to the fact that some essences are incapable of accepting His manifestation. So, in reality, there is no veil except within the things veiled from Him. And, the veil is nothing but the imperfection, weakness and incapacity of a thing. Now, His manifestation is nothing but the reality of His essence. This is because there is no meaning for Him other than His pure essence; meaning, His attributes are not additional to His essence, as the divine sages have mentioned. Mulla Sadra gives an example to help explain this: The Sun is the most intense of sensible lights and the strongest of lights capable of being seen; nevertheless, the intensity of its appearance makes it hidden to the faculty of vision. This is true to the extent that due to its weakness, the faculty of vision becomes incapable of seeing it unless it is from behind a veil, such as in a mirror, in

water or from behind a thin cloud. The Truth is similar. Even though the intellect and the mind are incapable of grasping His reality and vision and insight do not understand His essence, there is not veil over His face other than His luminosity. And, His essence does not have a covering other than His appearance. So, after hearts are purified from the impurities of the passions, there is nothing preventing them from being illuminated [by the knowledge of the Truth] other than the intensity of its clarity and the weakness of their eyes. Thus, glory be to He whose light has been hidden from the eyes of creation and whose manifestation has been veiled from their intellects due to the intensity of its clarity. This is why He has knowledge of everything. This is because all things become manifested to Him by means of the light of His essence. This is because the knowledge of a thing is nothing but its appearance before something and its manifesting before it. And, God is the Creator of all things. Thus, nothing in the heavens or in the earth is hidden from Him, as He holds the spiritual dimensions of everything in His hand and the reality of revelation stems from Him (Mulla Sadra 2001: VIII/174–180).

Thirdly, in connection with the hidden and apparent nature of the Truth, the 6th Imam (a) is reported to have said: “He is one and is needed by all things. He does not have any quality other than His eternity and His being the refuge of every need. He does not have a shadow that might hold unto Him. He holds unto all things by their shadows (these ‘shadows’ are possibly the quiddities of things and the boundaries and limitations of their existence) and holds them under His control [in this way]. He knows every unknown thing. He is known by every ignorant being. He is not in His creation (such that He might inhere in them or unite with them) nor is His creation in Him.” In his explanation of this tradition, Allamah Tabatabai says that in this passage, a few of the important principles of the Divine Unity have been expressed. All of them are based upon the very true unity of the Truth. First of all, His existence does not have a limit (i.e. a quiddity) that might overcome Him and make Him fall under a law. Rather, He holds unto all things by means of their limitations. The reason for this is that He is absolute and unlimited while the existences of things are limited. Secondly, He knows every unknown thing and is known by every ignorant being. This is because the existence of every unknown thing relies on His existence and is uncovered for Him – without in any way being hidden from Him. He is present, known and apparent for everything, due to His absoluteness and essential encompassment. Thirdly, due to His absoluteness, He is separate from His creatures and does not need them. Something to this effect has been related from the Holy Prophet (s): “Monotheism, its apparent nature lies in its hidden nature and its hidden nature lies in its apparent nature (i.e.

they go back to one another). Its apparent meaning is that the Truth is a subject of attribution that is invisible. And, its hidden meaning is that He is a being that cannot be hidden. He is sought out everywhere and no place is devoid of Him even for a moment. He is someone present who is unlimited and someone hidden that has never been lost.” The meaning of this tradition is that the unity of God has an apparent and hidden meaning based upon the differences in understanding of people. However, in reality, both levels go back to one another. At the apparent level, i.e. the level of sensation, estimation and intellection, God is a subject of attribution that is invisible and hidden. However, in reality, He is a being that – due to the comprehensiveness of its essence – cannot be hidden. Therefore, He is present; however, that does not mean He is limited. He is absent from the comprehension of the senses, the power of estimation and the intellect. However, this does not mean that He is lost, as is the case with most things that are absent (Tabatabai 2006: 139–140).

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