

## **UNITY IN MULTIPLICITY: 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. the Absolute. At the same time, they have not denied the multiplicity of creatures that appear to us. These two statements seem to be apparently contradictory to one another. Ontology 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 usually not attempted to prove their claims using rational proofs. Rather, they primarily 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 contention 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 without 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 a lower level 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 affirms 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 the second dimension of Mulla Sadra's theory of the unity of being (i.e. the station of unity in multiplicity) as he described it in his famous philosophical treatise, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*.

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

### *The Station of Unity in Multiplicity*

In a chapter entitled: *Regarding the Fact that Existence is the One, Necessary Being who is the Truth and that everything other than Him is False, except His Noble Face*, Mulla Sadra explains the unity of existence at the station of unity and multiplicity. However, before we begin explaining what he states there, something deserves to be said regarding the title of the chapter we are referring to here. It is possible for someone to ask: Does not Mulla Sadra believe in the principality of existence? And, does not principality imply that something is real? So how could everything besides *His noble Face* be false? The answer to this question is that existence has two faces or 'sides.' Each of these two sides possesses a different ruling. In his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Sabziwari says that it is clear that quiddities are mirages. Also, the side of existence that faces quiddity is also a mirage. This is because the relation to something that is a mirage is also a mirage. This is because the ruling of a relation is like the ruling of the thing it is related to. However, the side of existence that is facing God is luminous and real, by means of the light and truth of the Light of lights and Truth of truths. So, *everything* other than Him is "like a mirage that the thirsty thinks is water..." (Sabziwari 2007: 358).

In any case, in his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that this section is concerned with the station of unity in multiplicity, which is a necessary concomitant of the station of multiplicity in unity, which was the subject of the previous section. It is for this reason that this section was mentioned after the previous one. Sabziwari also says that the word: *face*, refers to the reality of existence [i.e. its dimension that faces the Absolute], which is the dimension of reality that repels non-existence. This dimension is identical to that reality and it is one nature and a single light. And, the phrase: *everything other than Him*, refers to quiddities [as well as the dimension of existence that faces quiddity], the essences of which are void and which do not reject non-existence. Sabziwari says that the purpose of this section is to explain the specific divine unity in a manner that is harmonious with the principles of the Islamic nation. The author wishes to show that the intention of those who adhered to such a belief is nothing but the affirmation of the essential dependency of beings upon the essentially Necessary Being and that their essences, attributes and actions are reliant on Him, as God says: "Oh people! You are those who are dependent upon God! And He is the self-sufficient!" (Sabziwari 2010: 519)

Before we begin examining this section of Mulla Sadra, something should be stated regarding the relation of the principality of existence and the mystical unity of existence. It is ironic that some have adhered to the unreality of existence and the principality of quiddity because in their opinion it leads to the mystical unity of existence. These people say that if existence were principle, then it would mean that in the external world there would be nothing but existence. The principality of existence implies that existence is existent in the external world and that nothing but existence is existent. Therefore, the thing that is in the external world is nothing but one meaning, i.e. existence. If there were nothing in the external world but existence, then the mystical unity of existence would be true. If the thing that is real in the external world were nothing but existence, then there would only be one thing in the external world, i.e. existence. This is what the mystical unity of existence means. However, the mystical unity of existence is wrong. The idea that there is only one existence in the external world and that there is no multiplicity in external reality is something that is contrary to reason. In conclusion, existence is principle (Mazandarani 2005: II/353–354). Sadra's modern commentator, Ghulam Ridha Fayyadhi, says that it is possible to answer this argument in three ways. First of all, 'principality' does not refer to being existent; rather, it refers to being essentially existent. So, the principality of existence means that existence is essentially existent. However, this does not mean that quiddity is not existent at all, even by means of existence. So, it is possible for existence to be existent in things as well as their quiddities and the multiplicity of existents to manifest itself in this way. So, while it is true that the mystical unity of existence necessitates the principality of existence, the converse of this is not true. Secondly, even if we say that quiddities are completely non-existent and unreal and that the principality of existence implies that quiddities do not exist even by means of existence, this would still not necessitate the mystical unity of existence. This is because it is still possible for the multiplicity of existents to arise by means of essential properties and attributes of existence, such as stability, change, potentiality, actuality, necessity, possibility and the likes. This is because these things are not unreal; rather, they are identical and united with existence. So, they partake of its reality. So, existence really acquires a multiplicity by means of these attributes. Thirdly, even if we overlook the first two answers, it is still possible to say that the principality of existence does not lead to the mystical unity of existence. This is because it is possible to say that existence acquires a multiplicity by means of various limitations that occur for it – like a rock that becomes a multiplicity of smaller rocks by means of its being broken apart (Fayyadhi 2003: 225–227).

Now that some preliminary matters regarding this subject have been addressed, we may start our investigation of this section of the *al-Shawahid*.

Mulla Sadra begins by investigating the nature of the existence of a cause and its effect. It might be possible to sum up what Mulla Sadra wishes to say here in the following manner: the dependency of the effect upon its cause is the quality of the existence of the effect. This quality cannot be an attribute extraneous to the existence of the effect. Otherwise, it would be unreal – since only existence is real. Also, if it were an unnecessary extraneous attribute, it would mean that an effect could exist without depending on its cause. This is impossible. It could not be a necessary extraneous attribute since this would mean that the effect's essence would not need its cause – since every extraneous attribute comes after its subject of attribution. This quality cannot be part of the existence of the effect since existence is a simple reality. Thus, the existence of the effect cannot be anything but this dependency and relation to its cause. Thus, it would lack a quiddity. This is because quiddities are independent concepts capable of being placed as subjects or predicates of propositions. However, relations are copulas that cannot be places in such a position. It is interesting to note that some sages take this argument a step further and say that such things [i.e. the creatures] could not be placed as the subject of any proposition. Therefore, nothing, including existence, could be predicated for them.

To explain this argument in detail, it is possible to say that, first of all, Mulla Sadra establishes that being a cause and being an effect are essentially the properties of existence. This problem is known as the *principality of existence in causation*, which in turn is based upon the principality of existence and the unreality of quiddity. What is more, the properties of being an effect or being a cause are not additional to the existence of the cause and the effect; rather, they are united with them. Mulla Sadra says:

Being a cause and being an effect do not exist except by means of existence itself because of something that you will come to learn later on, i.e. that quiddity does not possess principality in existence wherever indication is made to it. And, the complete creator is a creator by means of its very existence and the thing created is only the existence of something. It is not an attribute from amongst its attributes. Otherwise, it would not need the cause in its essence. So, causation is the invention of the identity of the thing and its essence that is the specific type of its existence, the demonstrations of which you will soon come to learn (Mulla Sadra 2010: 171).

Mulla Sadra concludes that the dependency of an effect upon its cause is something internal to the existence of that effect. From this, he concludes that its relation to its cause is also internal to its existence. He says:

So, now that these premises have been explained [for you], we say: Everything that is the effect of an agent is dependent and related in its essence to it. So, it is necessary that its essence, from the point of view that it is its essence, be the very meaning of dependence and relation to it [i.e. its cause] (Mulla Sadra 2010: 171).

Something deserves to be mentioned regarding the word *essence*, which Mulla Sadra employs here. In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that what Mulla Sadra is saying here implies that the essence of an effect is not *an essence that possesses a relation and a connection*. Hence, here the word *essence* is not part of the derivative – i.e. ‘the related’ and ‘the connected’. In brief, if the word, ‘connection’ or ‘relation’ is used in philosophy for specific beings, then it is used in a technical sense, even though it may be used in language to refer to the meaning of an infinite noun (Sabziwari 2010: 519).

Mulla Sadra argues for the copulative existence of the effect in the following manner:

Otherwise, if it had a reality other than the dependence and relation to something else and its dependence on its creator was an extraneous attribute for it – and the existence of every attribute that is extraneous to its essence comes after the existence of the essence, as the affirmation of everything for everything is subsequent to the affirmation of the thing for which we attribute it – then the thing that we have assumed had been created would not really be created. Rather, something else [has been created]. Hence, that other thing would be related to it and the thing that we took under consideration would be an independent reality whose identity is free from the cause that is its agent. This goes against the assumption (Mulla Sadra 2010: 171).

It is possible for the following question to come to mind here: how could the copulative nature of the effect not have been realized by the sages prior to Mulla Sadra when, as Mulla Sadra himself states, this is something that can be gathered from the apparent meanings of the Qur’anic verses? The answer to this question is that it indeed did come to their minds and many of them attempted to prove it but were unsuccessful. Sadra’s modern commentator, Abd al-Rasul Ubudiyat, says that before Mulla Sadra, many other sages had attempted to prove that the effect is copulative in nature. For example, Mulla Sadra’s teacher, Mir Damad had attempted to prove this. Mir Damad was, however, an adherent of the principality of quiddity. It was therefore necessary for him to answer the following question: How can external realities,

which are types of quiddities, be the instance of the concept, 'existent'? He answers this question in the following manner: The source of abstraction of the concept 'existence' is nothing but the external quiddity. Meaning, when a quiddity becomes real in a certain place, not assumed, then the concept 'existence' is abstracted from such a quiddity. When the concept 'existence' is abstracted from quiddity, the concept of 'existent' is capable of being predicated for it. However, this gives rise to another objection: Quiddities are essentially distinct from one another. Some are even completely distinct from one another. How could it be possible for one concept, i.e. the concept 'existence', to be abstracted from essentially distinct realities? He answers this question by saying that there is a difference between something being the source of abstraction of a concept and being the reason for its abstraction and the thing to which the abstraction corresponds. The abstraction of one concept from multiple realities necessitates that there be one reason for its abstraction; however, this does not necessitate that it have one source of abstraction. This is why the numerous quiddities are the source of the abstraction of the single concept of existence, not the reason and cause for its abstraction. Therefore, their essential distinction does not negate the unity of the concept of existence or the existent, which is the derivative derived from the concept 'existence'. Naturally, it is possible to ask then what exactly the reason and cause for the abstraction of this concept is. Mir Damad says that this is nothing but their property of stemming from [i.e. emanating from] the essentially Necessary Being and their relation to Him. In other words, from the point of view of its relation to the Necessary Being, the essence of the possible is the source of the abstraction of the concept 'existence'. This is why the essence of the Necessary Being qua essence of the Necessary Being is the source of abstraction of this concept. Therefore, in the essentially Necessary Being and the possible things, the concept of existence and the existent is the same, even though the existence of the quiddity is its relation to the Necessary Being, which is identical to the quiddity in the external world (Mir Damad 1999: I/132). As we can see, for Mir Damad, the existence of the effect is nothing but its relation to the Necessary. This is an affirmation of the copulative being of the effect to some extent. For this reason, Mir Damad uses this premise to affirm a type of mystical unity of existence. He says: "So, what has happened is that the source of the abstraction of the nature of existence and the thing from which the meaning of the infinite verb the 'existent' is abstracted and which is what it really corresponds to is categorically only the essentially Necessary Being..." (Ibid). Mulla Sadra does not mention this theory in his works, which implies that he is not satisfied with it as a proper interpretation of the copulative nature of the effect. Perhaps, this is because, first of all, it is based upon the principality of quiddity. Secondly, it is difficult

to explain the copulative nature of the effect in this manner based upon the principality of quiddity (Ubudiyat 1998: II/217–218).

In continuation, Mulla Sadra says:

So therefore, it has been proven that every cause, from the point of view that it is a cause, is a cause by means of its essence and every effect, from the point of view that it is an effect, is an effect by means of its essence (Mulla Sadra 2010: 171).

In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that the phrase "...is a cause by means of its essence..." means that it has been proven that the existence of the cause essentially sustains the existence of the effect and that the existence of the effect is essentially sustained by the existence of the cause. However, these properties, i.e. the property of being sustained and sustaining, are existential in nature. This is similar to how the quiddity of 'the animal' and the quiddity of 'the thing with reason', essentially sustain the quiddity of 'the human being', which is essentially sustained by them. In the second case, however, the properties of sustaining and being sustained belong to concepts and quiddities. Nevertheless, there is a similarity between the two cases in the sense that if the two aforementioned quiddities are taken away from the quiddity of man, then the thingness of the quiddity of man will not remain, just as the specific beings that are essentially related to the Necessary Being will not remain in theory if His existence is overlooked (Sabziwari 2010: 519).

Mulla Sadra then says:

Also, it has been proven that the essence of the cause that is the creator is its very existence and the essence of the effect is its very existence. This is because quiddities are unreal things that are abstracted from the types of existences (*anha al-wujudat*) by means of the intellect. Hence, it has been discovered that that the thing that is termed 'the effect' is not an identity that is separate from the identity of its cause that has emanated it (Mulla Sadra 2010: 171).

In order to properly understand this passage, something should be said regarding the term *types of existence*, which has been mentioned here. Sadra's modern commentator, Ghulam Ridha Fayyadhi says that the term *nahw al-wujud* (literally, 'the manner of existence') is a reference to the nature, quality and distinction of existence. If quiddity and existence are identical in the external world and are united together there then quiddity will be the attribute and real manner of existence. What better attribute than the one



that is united with its subject of attribution? Such an attribute really belongs to its subject, i.e. existence, and will be the distinction of one existence from another. For example, the manner of one existence is 'man' and the manner of another existence is 'stone'. However, if quiddity is simply something that is abstracted from the limits of existence, then it is not really the manner of existence; rather, it is the manner of the limits of existence. To explain, existence is of two categories. The first is the existence that is limited and the other is the existence that is not limited. Existence being limited is really the attribute of the limited existence. However, quiddity is not existence being limited; rather, it is the distinction of the limit of existence. For example, being rich is an attribute of Zayd. However, riches are not an attribute of Zayd. So, based upon this interpretation of quiddity, quiddity is the manner of the limit of existence, not the manner of existence. Unless we speak metaphorically, it is wrong to call quiddity the distinction of existence. For this reason, based upon this interpretation, the multiplicity that is attributed to existence through quiddity will not really belong to existence. Based upon the third interpretation of quiddity, i.e. the one in which quiddity is simply a reflection of existence in the mind, quiddity is not the distinction of existence or the distinction of the limits of existence; rather, it is the distinction of the image of existence (Fayyadhi 2003: 66–67). The sentence in the text could be interpreted in anyone of the abovementioned ways. And, God knows best. It should also be noted that sometimes, instead of the phrase *nahw al-wujud*, Sadra uses *huwiyyah al-wujud* to refer to quiddity (Mulla Sadra 2009: I/55). Basically, this means the same thing, i.e. the distinction of existence.

It should be noted that many principles were instrumental in the arrival at the aforementioned conclusion. It is for this reason that in his explanation of the abovementioned passages, Sabziwari says that the special divine unity has been proven by means of the first principle, i.e. that sustaining and being sustained are essential to both sides (i.e. the sustained and the one that sustains), the second principle, i.e. that the Creator and the created are existences and the idea that existence is one reality in which that which makes distinct is identical to that which makes similar (Sabziwari 2010: 519–520).

In continuation, Mulla Sadra states:

And, it is not possible for the intellect to point to something whose identity is separate from the identity of its cause such that there might be two independent identities that are capable of being intellectually pointed to, one of which is the thing emanating and the other of which is the thing being emanated, meaning the thing that is attributed with this attribute. Otherwise, its essence, from the point of view that it is its



essence, has not emanated from it. Thus, the thing that we had made a principle, i.e. the idea that the thing emanating emanates by means of its essence and the thing being emanated emanates by mean of its essence, has been negated. This goes against the assumption. Hence, there is no principle reality for the effect that has been created with a simple existential creation other than the fact that it is related to its cause by means of its self. It has no meaning separate from its cause other than its being dependent on it or its coming after it or following it and things of this nature in the same way that the idea that the cause is the thing followed or the thing that emanates [the effect] is its very essence (Mulla Sadra 2010: 171–172).

In continuation, Mulla Sadra says:

So, when the series of beings that is composed of causes and effects terminates at one reality it becomes apparent that there is for all of the beings one principle whose essence is the thing from which the beings have emanated. By means of its reality, it has made all truths true. It is by means of the rising of His light that the heavens and the earth have become illuminated (Mulla Sadra 2010: 172).

In his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Sabziwari asks the question: If He is not absent from anything and is the “Witness that is not absent”, then why do they call Him ‘the Secret of secrets’, ‘the Protected Secret’, ‘the Hidden Secret’ and the likes of these names? The answer to this question is that, first of all, this secrecy stems from the intensity of His ap-parency, as has been mentioned: “Oh He who became hidden due to the in-tensity of His manifestation”. Thus, His secrecy and hiddenness refers to the extremity of His manifestation and appearance. Secondly, there is a differ-ence between something being present *in* something and it being present *for* something. Thus, there is no contradiction in God being present within all of the stations of reality and His not being present for us, due to the fact that our faculties of comprehension are incapable of grasping Him. Of course, He is present for us in a sense by the presence of ourselves for ourselves and the presence of the forms of things for us (Sabziwari 2007: 466).

In continuation, Mulla Sadra says:

So, He is the Reality and the rest are His facets and He is the Essence and all things other than Him are His names and Attributes and He is the principle and all other things are His degrees and branches (Mulla Sadra 2010: 172).

It is because all things other than Him are names and attributes that, in the words of the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, He is *that from which there is no escape except to Him*. So, one should flee to Him. In his commentary on this passage, Sabziwari someone once mentioned the following saying of Plato in the presence of Imam Ali (a): "The world is a sphere, the earth is a point, the celestial spheres are bows, the phenomena [that take place in it] are arrows, the human being is the target and God is the archer. So where can one flee?" Upon hearing this, the Imam (a) said: "Flee to God!" (Sabziwari 2007: 415)

It is interesting to note that in some prayers narrated from the Family of the Prophet (a) God has been said to possess 'stations'. For example, in his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Sabziwari relates the following prayer: "...by Your stations (*maqamat*), which no place is empty of. He who knows You, knows You by them. So, by them You have filled Your sky and Your earth till it became clear that there is no god but You" (Sabziwari 2007: 623). Also, according to some sages, this ontological permeation is the real meaning of the 'anger' that has been ascribed to God in religion.

After establishing the unity of existence at the station of unity in multiplicity, Mulla Sadra mentions a few verses of the Qur'an that he believes refer to this theosophical principle:

Everything is perishing other than His face (Qur'an 28: 88).

In his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Sabziwari says that there is no contradiction between this verse and the phrase: "Oh He who remains while everything [else] perishes", which occurs in the aforementioned prayer. This is because the 'face' is within the divine world. So, it resembles the copulative meaning, which does not have any independent ruling. Hence, it subsists by means of His subsistence, not independently of it (Sabziwari 2007: 253).

To whom does the kingdom belong today? [It belongs] to God, the  
One, the All-Powerful! (Qur'an 40: 16)

In his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Sabziwari says that in the Hereafter, God will take the souls of all things, even the angels Gabriel, Michael, Israfael and Azrael. There will be nothing left besides Him. So, He will be the one who asks and the one who responds when He says: "To whom does the kingdom belong today? [It belongs] to God, the One, the All-Powerful!" (Qur'an 40: 16) This verse parallels another verse regarding the beginning. Before God creates anything, "God existed and nothing was

with Him”. Thus, He was the one who asked as well as the one who responded when He said: “Am I not your Lord? They said: ‘Yes’” (Qur’an 7: 172) (Sabziwari 2007: 240–241).

In continuation, Mulla Sadra says:

And, one of the names of God is “Oh He! Oh He who is! Oh He other than whom there is no ‘he!’” (Mulla Sadra 2010: 172)

Before going any further, it is necessary to mention that not all those who adhere to the Transcendent Wisdom of Mulla Sadra accept this argument. Some contemporary sages, such as Ghulam Ridha Fayyadhi disagree with its conclusiveness. To explain, Ghulam Ridha Fayyadhi explains this argument for the unity of existence in the following manner: All beings other than God are His effects. Every effect needs its cause. However, it is the existence of the effect that needs its cause. This need is something that resides within the very essence of the effect, i.e. within its existence; otherwise, if it was outside of the existence of the effect, then the effect would not be something that needed its cause and as a result it would be independent of its cause. However, its being independent goes against the assumption. So, this need resides within the very existence of the effect. Since need and dependency is the relation between the effect and the cause and the existence of the effect is one with this need, the existence of the effect is a relation or a copula. Since a relation or a copula follows that which it is related to, the existence of the effect follows and is secondary to its cause, which it is related to. If something follows something else and is secondary to it, then it will not be separate from it. So, there is nothing other than God that is separate from Him. Since there is nothing other than God that is separate from Him, it is only God whose existence is real and everything other than Him is simply a manifestation of Him. This is because a manifestation is nothing but something that is united with some other meaning – as the Essence of God is united with His attributes. So, God’s existence is real and everything else is simply a manifestation and name of God. It is also possible to call these beings mirrors or signs of the Truth since a mirror is united with that which it shows and a sign is united with that which it is a sign for. Fayyadhi says that this argument is objectionable at many levels. First of all, it seems that the argument confuses ‘being something that needs a cause’ or ‘being something that is related to a cause’ with ‘need’ and ‘relation’. There is a difference between the two. The first is a category and an independent being. The second is a relation and a copulative being. However, since the word ‘relation’ is often used for both, a fallacy has occurred in this argument. To explain, when two things are related to one another, a relation that is a type

of copula exists between them. This relation gives rise to two qualities that are independent in nature. Each one of the two sides possesses one of the two qualities. For example, the relation and copula between a cause and its effect give rise to two qualities, i.e. 'being a cause' and 'being an effect'. It is clear that these two qualities are independent in nature, not copulative. So, if we say that these two qualities are one with their subject of attribution, it does not lead to that subject becoming copulative in nature. The same can be said of the copula that exists between something that needs something else and the thing it needs. This copula gives rise to two qualities, i.e. 'being in need of something' and 'being that which is needed'. These are independent qualities and can even be placed as the subject or predicate of a proposition. So, if we say that the thing that needs is one with its quality of 'being something that needs', it does not make its subject copulative in nature. At the beginning of this argument, it has been stated that if the existence of the effect were not one with the copula that is need, then it would be independent. Based upon what we have just mentioned we can say that there is no necessary connection between the antecedent and the consequent of this premise. This is because if something was not the copula that was need, it could still be 'something that needed' and in this case it would not be 'something that is independent' as these two qualities do not combine. Truth be told, if this argument were valid, it would mean that the existence of God would also be copulative in nature. This is because there is no difference between it and the existence of the possible being from the point of view that there is also a copula between it and the possible being, i.e. the copula or relation of being needed. If we can confuse the copula and the quality that gives rise to it in the possible being, we can equally do the same for the two in the Necessary Being. Secondly, we might ask what the word 'separation' implied in the sentence, "If something follows something else and is secondary to it, then it will not be separate from it", means. If it means absolute separation, then this proposition is true but it does not lead to God's being present at the level of the copulative being. However, if it means the separation that is opposite to unity, then we might call the aforementioned premise into question. Third, just because the independent being exists at the level of the copula, this does not necessarily imply that the copula lacks real existence. It seems that the person making the argument wants to derive this conclusion from this unity. If this was true, then we could equally negate real existence from the Attributes of God. Finally, we may ask, what are these effects? Are they instances of existence, of quiddity or of non-existence? They could not be instances of quiddity; otherwise, the Necessary Being would possess a quiddity. What is more, quiddity is unreal. How could it unite with the Necessary Being? They cannot be non-exis-

tence for the same reason. So, we have no choice but to say that these effects really exist (Fayyadhi 2019: I/319–324).

In the end, one might ask what the benefits of such a mystical belief are. Of course, this is a matter that must be investigated independently; nevertheless, it is possible to list a few of the innumerable ones as follows: An analysis of the ‘copulative nature’ of the effect leads to many important philosophical and epistemological conclusions. First of all, it can serve as a proper interpretation of the mystical unity of existence. Secondly, it would be a rejection of the popular notion that God creates things outside of Himself and that there is a separation between Him and His creation. To the contrary, the separation between God and His creature would lead to its destruction. At the same time, there is a total difference between the two. This is because based upon the copulative nature of the effect existence would be limited to God. A particularly important epistemological conclusion of this notion is that the comprehension of the reality of the effect is impossible without the comprehension of the agent that grants it existence. What is more, this idea would lead to the belief in the absolute presence and manifestation of God.

It should also be noted that this way of envisioning God’s proximity also helps us gain a deeper understanding of some of God’s beautiful names. For example, regarding the divine name, ‘He who is proximate, not distant’, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari says the following in his commentary on the prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*: This is a name that belongs particularly to God. This is because everything that is close to something is also distant from it from another point of view. This is because it does not exist at the level of its essence; rather, its proximity is either from the point of view of place or from the point of view of time or from the point of view of nobility or from the point of view of essence (such as the case where there is an essential simultaneity between two things). It is also possible for two things to be proximate to each other from other points of view. So, two things that are proximate to one another from the point of view of place, by way of example, are distant from one another from the point of view that neither of their existences is present within the existence of the other. It is also possible for them to be distant from the point of view of nobility. However, the beings are dependent in their essences upon the Truth and in their existences they rely upon His sustainment. Moreover, their appearance is subsumed within His appearance. Rather, they are impoverishment and His appearance. For this reason, his proximity to them is the highest form of proximity, which is not tainted with any type of distance (Sabziwari 2007: 467).

It is also necessary to note here that this is not the only argument that might be proposed for the mystical unity of existence based upon the principles of Mulla Sadra’s philosophy. For example, in his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid*

*al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari presents another explanation for the mystical unity of existence that he claims not to have come across in the works of others. According to Sabziwari, this explanation is more eloquent than Mulla Sadra's. He begins his explanation for this mystical verity by stating that a multiplicity of individuals for one reality occurs when something else besides that reality mixes with it. For example, for there to be a multiplicity of in the reality of 'the lamp', something else besides the reality of 'the lamp' would have to mix with it. However, if we assume that everything is 'the lamp' and that nothing exists besides 'the lamp' – to the extent that the thing that makes one lamp distinct from another is also a lamp and that thing that points, the thing pointed to and the act of pointing are all lamps – then everything would be one thing, i.e. the lamp. To put it in other terms, when multiplicity passes its limit, it manifests itself in the form of its opposite, i.e. unity. The same is true of the real light of existence, whose comprehensiveness and inclusiveness is not the assumption of anyone; rather, it is a truth. Sabziwari then explains his argument for the unity of existence in a way that, according to him, is capable of being used in any form of syllogism: Everything that is multiplied is something that is mixed with something else – as we explained above. The converse by contradiction of this proposition is that everything that is not mixed with anything else will be incapable of being multiplied. This last proposition may be placed as a major premise in an argument the minor premise of which is follows: The real light of existence is something that is not mixed with anything else. This leads to the conclusion that the real light of existence is something that is incapable of being multiplied. Hence, the multiplicity that is apparently seen in it really belongs to quiddities and the Subsistent Entities. However, the multiplicity of stations of existence only emphasizes it, for the reason mentioned in the example of the lamp. It is for this reason that it is called 'the luminous multiplicity' (Sabziwari 2010: 520).

### ***Clarifications of Some Misgivings regarding the Unity of Existence***

#### *The Difference between the Unity of Existence and other Similar Notions*

In the section subsequent to the previous one we have related, some of the incorrect interpretations of the unity of existence of the mystics have been mentioned. Some say that the mystical unity of existence implies that the existence of God inheres in the existence of the world or vice versa – like color would inhere in a body. This obviously cannot be a justifiable interpretation of the mystics' sayings as it implies that the world exists like God – something that they categorically deny. Others say that the mystics say that there is a unity between the existence of God and that of the world. This is

also untrue for the same reason. Some say that they mystics seem to imply that the world is the sum total of the existence of the possible beings, i.e. pantheism. This also rests upon the notion that these beings actually exist. After explaining the unity of existence at the station of multiplicity in unity and the station of unity in multiplicity, in a chapter entitled: *The Removal of a Misgiving*, Mulla Sadra seeks to make a distinction between them and other notions that certain pseudo-Sufis believe in – such as incarnation, etc. He says:

Be careful! Do not let your feet quiver when you hear these words! Do not think that the relation of the possible beings to the Self-Sustained – may His name be grand – is one of incarnation, unity or the likes of these two. Never! Verily, these things entail the duality of existence whereas, here, multiplicity has disintegrated and the mistakes of conjecture have been removed. ‘Now the truth has been revealed!’ and the light of His face has shined and penetrated into the temples of the quiddities! ‘The truth has been thrown at falsehood to destroy it! So, it is destroyed!’ So, the dualists deserve punishment for that which they have attributed to God. This is because the matter has been clarified and the sun of the truth has risen and it has been revealed that everything for which the word ‘existence’ is predicated is nothing other than a facet of the One, Self-Sustained Being that sustains all things. It is nothing other than a glimmer from amongst the glimmers of the Light of Lights. So, the thing that we initially conceived, according to the consensus [of the majority of philosophers] and the technical terminology [of those sages], and with an observation that was respectable [in the beginning of our philosophical investigations], i.e. the idea that there is in existence a cause and an effect, led us, in the end, due to our scientific wayfaring, to say that the thing that is called the ‘cause’ is the principle and ‘the effect’ is a dimension from amongst its dimensions.

In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that the phrase *led us in the end*, that the matter that was initially explained in a concise manner was subsequently explained more in detail by adding details to it that were initially left out. In other words, it was subsequently explained that ‘causation’ is nothing but manifestation. However, this does not mean that what was initially stated was negated by the author. Sabziwari says that there are many examples of this methodology in the philosophy of the author. For example, the religious people affirm temporal generation for the entirety of the natural world and the author agrees with them in this from the beginning until the end of his philosophy. Nevertheless, the author interferes in the explanation of ‘temporal



generation.' In other words, he says that it refers to the essential renewal of essence of material beings and the flow and movement of their substances. However, it is not true to say that he agrees with them in the beginning of his philosophical investigations but ends up disagreeing with them in the end. In a similar manner, religious people say that this very philosophical body will be resurrected. The author also agrees with them in this, from the beginning of his philosophical investigations until the end. Nevertheless, he explains that there is a difference between the worldly body and the other-worldly body, even though the identity of the first body is preserved in second body by means of explaining that identity and individuation are by means of existence. This is how this statement should be understood (Sabziwari 2010: 520).

In continuation, Mulla Sadra says:

Causation and affection has returned to the manifestation of the cause in its essence and its appearance with appearances. It is not the separation of something whose identity is separate from the cause. So, remain firm in this station, in which the feet shake and spend the capital of your life and the substance of your spirit in its acquisition. It may be that you may acquire a glimmer of what you desire, if you are deserving of it (Mulla Sadra 2010: 172).

In a chapter entitled *An Indicative Announcement*, Mulla Sadra seeks to make a distinction between his interpretation of the mystical unity of existence and that of Muhaqqiq al-Dawwani. The latter's is an incorrect interpretation of the mystical unity of existence. According to this interpretation, existence is limited to God. Dawwani says that if we use the word 'being' or 'existent' for the creatures of God then it is similar to when we use the word 'date seller' for someone who sells dates. In other words, the derivative here does not imply that the subject actually possesses the source of derivation. Rather, it only has a relation to it. So, in the possible beings of the Universe, quiddity is principle. However, since these quiddities are related to the existence of God, we can abstract a derivative from existence, i.e. 'existent', and predicate it for them. This erroneous interpretation is wrong on many levels. First of all, it is based upon the principality of quiddity in the possible being. Secondly, it implies that quiddity can stem from sheer existence. Both of these assumptions are incorrect. It is for this reason that Mulla Sadra says:

The thing that some of the great scholars have mentioned, and which they have termed 'the Tasting of the Divine Sages' (*Dhawq al-Mutallihin*),

which is that the property of being ‘existent’ of quiddities is by their being related to the existence of the Truth, is not the special meaning of unity at all and there is nothing in it of the tasting of the divine sages (Mulla Sadra 2010: 173).

In order to understand this passage, a few things are necessary to take note of. First of all, Muhammad Taqi Amuli says that a great number of scholars have inclined towards this view, such as Muhaqqiq Dawwani and Mir Damad. In fact, even Mulla Sadra adhered to this view for a period of time (Amuli 1995: 88–89). However, Hasan Zadah Amuli is of the opinion that the view of Mir Damad is a bit different from the view of Muhaqqiq Dawwani (Hasan Zadah Amuli 1997: 18).

Secondly, something should be mentioned regarding the term, ‘tasting’ (*dhawq*), which is used by Dawwani as a proof to corroborate his claim. In his footnotes to the *Sharh al-Manzumah*, Muhammad Taqi Amuli says that the word *dhawq* is an infinitive noun (*masdar*) that means ‘to taste’. In the parlance of the science of expression (*ilm al-bayan*) it refers to a faculty by means of which man is able to grasp the subtlety of speech and its secret beautiful dimensions. However, in the parlance of the mystics, it refers to the first stage of the witnessing of the Truth. They also refer to the intermediary stage of this witnessing by the word *shurb* (drinking), such as when Ibn Farid says, “We continuously drank to the remembrance of the beloved”. And, they refer to the final stage of this witnessing as, ‘the quenching of thirst’ (Amuli 1995: 85).

Thirdly, in order to gain a better understanding of the nature of what Muhaqqiq Dawwani is stating, it is necessary to mention other possible views regarding the multiplicity and unity of existence and the existent that might be contrasted with his. In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that it is possible for a person who believes in the divine unity to say that there is a multiplicity in both existence and the existent but at the same time the person may be considered a monotheist because he expresses the affirmation of the divine unity that the common people do. It is also possible for this person to believe in the unity of existence and the multiplicity of the existent, in the sense of ‘that which is related to existence’. For this person, the reality of existence does not possess species, individuals, degrees or intellectual or external parts. He also says that it does not exist or occur for quiddity. Rather, for him, it is a single, simple reality that exists independently. Quiddities are only things related to that station. Multiplicity belongs to the quiddities that are related to existence. This is the view that is related to ‘the Mystical Tasting of the Divine Sages’. It is also the specific monotheism. However, the converse of this – i.e. the multiplicity of

existence and the unity of the existent – is not something that anyone has believed in nor is it something essentially possible. It is also possible for the monotheist to believe in the unity of existence and the existent. This is the view of the Sufis, who say that in reality there is only one existence and one existent. However, this single existent is qualified by unreal qualifications from which an imaginary multiplicity appears. This belief is considered to be the monotheism of the elite by them; rather, they call it the most specific monotheism. However, this is incorrect; rather, the most specific monotheism is something that will be mentioned later, even though the aforementioned Sufi creed may be said to be referring to it. It is also possible for the monotheist to believe in the unity of existence and the existent and the multiplicity of the two. The unity of existence is because there are no species or individuals under it, as was mentioned before. Its multiplicity stems from the fact that it has stations and degrees that are different in terms of perfection and imperfection, priority and posteriority, etc. Also, the simultaneous unity and multiplicity of the existent can be explained by saying that, since existence is principle, it is the real existent. Thus, the unity of existence is the unity of the real existent and the multiplicity of the stations of existence is the multiplicity of the stations of the real existent. This is the most specific monotheism (Sabziwari 2010: 521).

Fourthly, according to some scholars the *tasting* being referred to here is meant to serve as a proof for the claim. This implies that the proponent of the claim is not interested in affirming it by means of philosophical argumentation. Sadra's modern commentator, Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, says that this term implies that the source of this theory is the *tasting of the divine sages* (Misbah Yazdi 1993a: I/384).

Fifthly, something deserves to be stated regarding the nature of the derivative here – since it is a cornerstone of Dawwani's theory. The Peripatetic sages say that when derivatives, the sources of derivation of which are accidents, are predicated for substance, they also mean something that is related to the source of derivation – as Dawwani affirms for the derivative the 'existent'. In other words, in these cases, the derivatives indicate the unity between the subject, in this case – substance, and the relation to the source of derivation, not the unity between the subject and the source of derivation, i.e. the accident. Sadra's modern commentator, Ghulam Ridha Fayyadhi says the following in this regard: Predication, which is *it is it-ness* or *this is that-ness*, necessitates the unity between the subject and the predicate as well as the difference between the two. This is because if there is no dimension of unity, then it would be impossible to relate the predicate to the subject and it would be incorrect to say: 'This is that'. However, if there were no dimension of distinction, then, first of all, it would be impossible to consider

them a 'subject' and an 'accident'. In other words, it would be impossible to separate the 'subject' from the 'predicate'. Secondly, predication would not have any benefit. Having said this, we may now turn to the relation between the accident and the substance that is its subject: In the predication of an accident for its subject – such as when we say: 'This physical body is white' – the distinction between the subject and the predicate lies in the essence and quiddity of the two. Meaning, these two are conceptually distinct from one another. What are they united in? It has been said that they are united in existence. This means that they are united in their instance and extension in the external world. However, the Peripatetic philosophers are of the opinion that substance and accident are separate from one another in existence and say that substance and accident are two things. It was for this reason that they attempted to find a resolution to this problem of predication. The summary of their answer to this problem is that when we say that whiteness is predicated for the physical body – and in general the accident is predicated for the substance that is its subject – this does not mean that there is one thing that is both a substance and an accident; otherwise, it would mean that one thing was both in a subject and not in a subject at once, which is a contradiction. So, the unity of substance and accident is in existence. However, this does not mean that there is one existence that is the existence of both the subject and the accident. This is because it is impossible for one existence to possess two quiddities. Rather, this means that the subject is united with the predicate from the point of view that the predicate possesses an 'existence for something else', not from the point of view that it possesses an 'existence in itself'. In other words, the physical body is united with the whiteness' dimension of 'being for something else', not its dimension of 'being in itself'. Consequently, the physical body is never united with the whiteness. However, the whiteness possesses a dimension of 'being in itself' and a dimension of 'being for something else'. It is not united with the physical body with its first dimension; rather, from this point of view, it is something besides the physical body. Nevertheless, it is united with the physical body from the point of view of its 'being for something else', which is an attributive and relative existence. This is because the attributive and relative being has two faces. It faces the physical body with one of these and faces the whiteness with the other. It is for this reason that these sages say that the substance that is the physical body is united with the attributive and relative existence of the predicate, not the independent existence of the predicate. To be precise, the subject, i.e. the physical body, is united with 'having whiteness', not with 'whiteness'. For this reason, the sentence: 'This body is white', is similar to the sentence: 'This person is wealthy'. The second sentence does not mean that the person is united with his wealth – even though wealthy people would

want nothing more than for this to happen; rather, wealth is something separate from the person. The person is only united with the relation with his wealth. In other words, the person is united with the attributive existence of the wealth. In a similar manner, the physical body is not united with the whiteness; rather, it is united with the relative and attributive existence of the whiteness. This is the way that the Peripatetic philosophers attempted to resolve the problem of predication with respect to predicates that are additional to their subjects. Therefore, it is possible to say that according to the Peripatetic philosophers, all of these types of predicates are grammatically derivatives that indicate the relation of their subject with the source of derivation. So, derivatives such as the 'knower' or the 'white' indicate the relation between the essence of the subject with the source of derivation, not the unity between the subject and the source of derivation. From this point of view, all derivatives are similar to the derivative, a 'milkman'. However, according to the philosophical principles of the Transcendent Wisdom, which considers the accident to be one of the stations of the existence of the subject and that the accident exists with the very existence of the substance, there is no need to go to such trouble to rectify predication. This is because, according to the Transcendent Wisdom, one being may possess a multiplicity of dimensions in the observation of the mind – such as being a physical body, whiteness and being square. So, the physical body and whiteness – which are united in the external world – separate from one another in the analysis of the mind. So, the unity between substance and accident is sufficient for the predication of one for the other (Fayyadhi 2003: 30).

In any case, Mulla Sadra rejects this as a proper interpretation of the mystical unity of existence for the following reason:

This is because the foundation of this idea is that the thing that stems from the creator is quiddity, not existence and that quiddity exists without its existence, which he has surmised is nothing but an intellectual construct from amongst the secondary intelligibles. And, you have found out that this is wrong (Mulla Sadra 2010: 173).

It is interesting to note an objection that Mulla Sadra directs towards this theory in the *al-Asfar*. In the *al-Asfar*, he says that there are some beings that are not different from one another from the point of view of their quiddities. This is why some of them are prior to others from the point of view of their existence. However, this would be impossible if we said that, in all of them, existence was one individual that was related to all of them. Mulla Sadra then objects to this argument in the following manner: It is possible for someone to say that while it is true that the existence of all of these

quiddities is the same, it is possible for them to differ from one another in terms of priority and posteriority by means of the difference in the relation to this single existence. In other words, it is possible for the relation of some of them to this existence to be prior to the relation of others to this existence. Mulla Sadra answers this objection by saying that relation qua relation is something mental and it does not vary in and of itself; rather, if it varies then it is so because of the variation in the things that it relates. Thus, if one side of the relation is the essence of God and the other side is quiddity – and quiddity qua quiddity does not essentially vary as it is essentially unreal – then it would be impossible for the relation of some instances of a quiddity to God to be different from the relation of other instances of that quiddity to God (Mulla Sadra 2009: I/94).

Some of Mulla Sadra's followers have also added to the number of objections to this theory. For example, Sadra's modern commentator, Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi mentions a few other objections here: First of all, it is possible to say that in all cases, the derivative means something for which the source of derivation occurs. For example, in the case of the 'milkman' or the 'tanner' it may mean 'someone for whom the trade of selling milk occurs' and 'someone for whom being tanned by the sun occurs'. Secondly, this view necessitates that the word, 'existent' be a homonym. This is impossible however. Just as the word 'existence' possesses one meaning, the word 'existent' also possesses one meaning (Misbah Yazdi 1993a: I/385).

However, as Mulla Sadra mentions here, the main objection to this theory is the philosophical foundation upon which it has been built, i.e. the principality of quiddity. In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that this is the principle way in which this theory can be rejected. To explain, these sages believe in the principality of quiddity in occurrence and creation. However, existence should also be something real; otherwise, it could not be the Necessary Being. On the other hand, these individuals do not believe in the stations for existence. So, they are forced to believe in the principality of quiddity in the possible so that contrary properties – such as possibility and necessity, unity and multiplicity, cause and effect, etc. – do not combine in one instance. Thus, they divide reality into two principal realities. Consequently, they fall into a hidden form of polytheism. Sabziwari adds that this is actually the same thing that the dualists who believe in the division of reality into light and darkness say. However, this is not the case with the path that the author traverses, which states that existence is a reality that is one, but nevertheless essentially possesses a multiplicity of degrees that are hierarchical. This is because the thing related, the thing it is related to and the luminous relation are all existence. Thus, nothing besides existence takes a step into the realm of reality besides existence. At the same time, contrary

properties do not combine in a single subject because of the existence of a multiplicity of degrees in existence. So, necessity is a property of the station that is above all stations and possibility – in the sense of impoverishment and dependency – is a property of the stations that are below it. The same thing is true of the properties of cause and effect as well as the other properties of being. Quiddity, however, is something that is essentially a pure mirage and sheer consideration of the mind (Sabziwari 2010: 521–522).

Mulla Sadra also rejects this as a proper interpretation of the mystical unity of existence for the following reason:

If this were the unity of existence, as he has surmised, then everyone who thinks that the specific existence of the possible being is something abstract and not real and that the thing that has occurred in the external world is only quiddity would be a monotheist in the same manner as the divine mystics.

Indeed, if the belief of Muhaqqiq Dawwani were true, then it would mean that anyone who believed that existence was an abstract concept would be a mystic. This would imply that individuals such as Kant and Suhrawardi could be grouped with the mystics, which is obviously something that the foremost of the *urafa* would not attest to.

Then it would be possible for him to claim the same thing that this great sage has claimed. There is no difference between them except in naming this abstract thing as ‘the relation to the creator’ (Mulla Sadra 2010: 173).

However, not all defenders of Mulla Sadra's philosophy agree with him on this point. It is interesting to note that in his footnotes to the *al-Asfar*, Hasan Zadah Amuli writes the following: “In our other works, such as our treatise on creation, we have explained that the tasting of the divine sages is testament to the fact that the Necessary Being is the reality of existence, which does not have any individuals, any degrees or any species. And He is that which each quiddity is related to. Also, they [i.e. quiddities] do not have any share in existence except the relation to existence” (Hasan Zadah Amuli 2015: I/111). In his *Risalah fi al-Ja'al*, Hasan Zadah Amuli writes the following: “And, there is another group that also believes that the essentially Necessary Creator is sheer existence, just like the first group [i.e. Mir Damad]; only, they do not say that existence is additional to quiddity and that it is taken into consideration and abstracted by the mind from them, as the first group does. Rather, they [i.e. Dawwani and his followers] say that the predication of ‘existent’ for quiddities refers to the fact that they are related to their Creator. So, ‘existent’ is a word made to express a relation, like you



would say, ‘a milkman’, ‘a date-seller’ and the likes of these. Hence, according to them, this is the theory of the Tasting of the Divine Sages. I [Hasan Zadah Amuli] say: The property of quiddity being related to its Creator is the relation of an effect to its cause. And, the cause stands above its effect. Thus, this relation is not the unreal relation such as [the relation that is conveyed by] your expression: ‘this wealth belongs to Zayd’. Rather, this is a luminous and real relation and an illuminating connection, as God says: “To Him belong that which is in the heavens and that which is in the earth” (Qur’an 4: 172). And, without a doubt this relation is [what] the Tasting of the Divine Sages [refers to]. However, the matter that is found in the popular [philosophical] works regarding the interpretation of the ‘relation’ mentioned in the words of those sages who possessed mystical ‘tasting’, i.e. that it is the separation of the agent from its act and that the relation of the act to its agent is like [the relation of] the milkman and the date-seller [to their products] is far from the truth. How could these great scholars, such as Dawwani and the likes of him, believe in this type of monotheism and this meaning of creation in the Creator and the created?! I am not satisfied with this interpretation and I do not think it is correct to interpret their great ideas regarding monotheism in this incorrect manner. So, with the light of faith, the ‘tasting of the divine wisdom’, sees the unity of the Truth, may He be glorified, and expresses the relation of the created quiddities with such examples, in order to make the intellectual journey to that which they journeyed to easier [for us], i.e. that existence is not created and that creation is related to quiddities in a manner that is taken into consideration in the appearances of existence, its dimensions and its manifestation in the manifestations of His signs. So, think about this. Do you not see the words of those who believe in the Comprehensive Monotheism (*al-tawhid al-samadi*) when they say: “The truth is that there is no existence in reality for the forms. This is because they are forms of the non-existential relations. And, the meaning of their being ‘existent’ is the relation of existence to them. Thus, there is no existence except for the simple essence [of God] and the rest are relations to Him and His states” (Qunawi 1998: 247; Hasan Zadah Amuli 1997: 18–19).

Mulla Sadra also adds that this interpretation of the mystical unity of existence would lead to another grave problem:

This is true to the extent that the existence of Zayd would mean the ‘god’ of Zayd. This is not a great matter. Aside from this, there is an objection in this usage (Mulla Sadra 2010: 173).

It is interesting to note, that in his *Risalah fi Ittisaf al-Mahiyyah bi al-Wujud*, the author mentions another objection to this view. We could ask the

same question regarding the attribution of quiddity with that relation, which this sage says is the cause for quiddity becoming existent. The occurrence of this relation for quiddity – as it is the relation between it and the Necessary existence – is subordinate to the existence of quiddity before this relation or attribution. However, the assumption is that for quiddity to be existent it is necessary for it to have a relation to the existence of God. So, there would have to be another relation before the first assumed relation. Hence, an infinite number of relations would occur, some of which depend upon others, which is impossible (Mulla Sadra 2018: 113). Sadra's modern commentator, Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, says that perhaps it is better to object to the theory of Muhaqqiq Dawwani in the following manner: If by this 'relation' what is intended is the relation that is one of the categories, then it must be stated that such a relation occurs between two things that are simultaneous. In this case, if one imagines quiddity as being something real that occurs at the station of the knowledge of God, then this relation would occur between it and the essence of God at that lofty station; nevertheless, this relation does not lead to the existence of this quiddity in the external world. However, if one imagines quiddity to be something that exists in the external world and says that its relation to God is the cause of its existence in the external world, then this leads to a vicious circle. This is because the assumption is that it exists because of this relation. This is why this relation can only occur by the existence of both sides of the relation. Aside from this, this relation is something unreal. How could it lead to quiddity becoming real? However, if the luminous relation is intended, then this is identical to the quiddity that is one of the sides of the relation. In this case, this means that the effect is a copula in relation to the Necessary Being. So, existence would be subject to gradation. On one hand, there would be the copulative being and the other the independent being. This is exactly what we are claiming (Misbah Yazdi 1993b: 32).

Before going further, it is beneficial to relate something that sage Sabziwari mentioned in his footnotes to the *al-Asfar* regarding this topic. In his footnotes to the *al-Asfar*, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari has quite a lengthy explanation of this theory. Relating it here is not without benefit. Sabziwari says that the people who believe in monotheism can be divided into various categories. The first is the group of people who believe in the multiplicity of existence and the existent, which expresses the belief in monotheism with his tongue and has a vague belief in it. Most people are at this station of monotheism. The second is the group of people that believe in the unity of existence and the existent. This is the belief of some of the Sufis. The third is the group of people who say that existence is one but the existent is multiple. This is the theory ascribed to the 'Tasting of the Divine Sages.' The converse of this, i.e. the idea that existence is multiple but the existent is single is clear-

ly wrong and no one adheres to it. The fourth is the group of people who believe in the simultaneous unity and multiplicity of existence and the existent. This is the belief of the author and the great mystics. The first is the general monotheism. The third is the specific monotheism. The second is the more specific monotheism. The fourth is the most specific monotheism. So, there are four levels of monotheism. These four levels also exist in each of the four levels of monotheism in another division, i.e. the unity of God's effects, the unity of His acts, the unity of His attributes and the unity of His essence. Sabziwari says that the difference between the belief of the author and that of Muhaqqiq Dawwani could be explained in this manner: The author says that existence and the existent are both multiple. At the same time, he affirms unity in multiplicity. Sabziwari gives a tangible example of this: Suppose that a person is standing in front of a number of mirrors. So, there are multiple 'humans' and multiple 'humanities.' However, in the multiplicity of these two things, both of them are also one, from the point of view of their property of being reflections and not principle. This is because the reflection of something, from the point of view that it is a reflection, is not something besides that thing; rather, it is simply something by means of which that thing might be observed. And if it is essentially observed, then it would not be the reflection of that thing and would not relate; rather, it would be a veil for that thing. Thus, when your view is directed towards the person casting the reflections, it makes the reflections signs for him and tools for his observation. Hence, just as a relation may be established vertically, it may also be established horizontally, even if the beings that are horizontally aligned with one another are extremely distant from each other. These beings are similar to an image that is reflected from a person in the membrane of an eye and which is extremely small, a second image that is reflected from that person in murky water and which is blurry and a third image that is reflected from him into a mirror that reflects him as he really is. Thus, the manifestation of the person is like a thread that connects these various reflections. However, his is in contrast to the case where you are veiled from the person casting the image and your vision first falls upon the various images from the point of view of their reflection. Hence, if you observe the beings of this world from the point of view that they are related to the Truth by means of a luminous relation, i.e. from the point of view that they are rays of His light, their appearance is not devoid of His appearance. However, if you observe them as independent, then you are ignorant of their reality. This is because impoverishment is essential to them. Thus, for the author, existence is one reality that possesses various degrees that differ from one another by means of intensity and weakness and the likes of these. However, this multiplicity does not negate unity. This is because the point of difference is identical

to the point of similarity. Rather, this multiplicity emphasizes unity where the more a being is affirmed, the more comprehensive it is and the less things will be negated from it. It is for this reason that this type of multiplicity is called 'the luminous multiplicity' while the multiplicity of quiddities is called 'the dark multiplicity'. So, the specific possible beings have a reality; however, they are the rays of the light of the Sun of the Truth and are copulas with respect to Him. They are not things that possess an accidental relation to Him. In the *al-Asfar*, the author also explicitly states that the existences of things are copulative beings, not beings that possess a copula that connects them to God. So, the person with vision should possess two 'eyes' and should not overlook the apparent and the hidden. This was an explanation of the view of the author regarding the unity and multiplicity of existence and the existent. However, the view of Muhaqqiq Dawwani is that existence is really one thing and there is no multiplicity in it at all. However, the existents are multiple and they are quiddities. The property of being existent is by the relation of these quiddities to the real existent. It is not by means of specific and possible existences that are essentially impoverished. Thus, for this person, the derivative is general and includes the case where the source of derivation exists in the subject and the case where the source of derivation is related to the subject as well as the source of derivation itself. The adherents of this theory say that truths cannot be understood by linguistic discussions. So, there is no problem if quiddity being 'existent' refers to the fact that it is related to existence. Aside from this, language also supports us here. For example, the words *labin* (i.e. a milkman) and *tamir* (i.e. a date seller) refer to someone who is related to milk or dates. Also, for this person, quiddities are real. Otherwise, if they were abstract concepts, then they would have to be abstracted from the existence of the Necessary Being, as there is no other being besides Him for this person. However, this is impossible. Sabziwari then relates the three objections that the author mentions in the *al-Asfar*. He explains the first objection in the following manner: If this theory were true, then it would mean that one existence would simultaneously be independent of a subject and within that subject. This is because 'substance' is something that does not exist in a subject, while 'accident' is something that exists within a subject. So, the distinction between the two is in their existence. However, the assumption is that the existence of all things is one person. So, one individual existence would have to possess two contradictory properties. Also, if the quiddity of two things were the same, then they could not be different in terms of priority and posteriority. This is because there is no distinction in their quiddity and there is no gradation in quiddity. So, their distinction would have to be in their existence. So, one individual being would have to be both prior and posterior, which is impossible. Sabziwari

explains the second objection in this way: This ‘relation’ that he speaks of is not the luminous relation; otherwise, there would have to be an existence besides the being that the creature is related to. However, he does not believe in such a thing. Therefore, this is the relation that is one of the categories. Now, this relation is something besides the two sides it relates and is subordinate to their existence, which would lead to an infinite regress. The reason why this relation is something besides the two sides it relates is that quiddity cannot be this relation. This is because we may comprehend quiddity but not comprehend this relation. Of course, this possibility does not arise for the author, as the reality of existence cannot be conceived of. Sabziwari also makes an interesting point here: The author analyzes the possibility of quiddities being related to the existence of the Necessary Being with a relation of unity; however, there is no real need to do so. This is because for these people quiddity is principal in the possible being. And, a unity can only be established between something principal and something that is not principal. It cannot be established between two things that are principal. In any case, in his commentary on the *al-Asfar*, Jawadi Amuli says that if the relation between quiddities and the necessary existence were a relation of unity, then aside from the problem of multiple quiddities existing with one existence, two other objections might arise. The first is that the necessary existence would have not just one, but multiple quiddities. This is why the necessary existence is completely free from quiddity. The second objection is that the quiddities that are united with the necessary existence would be necessary beings. This is why the every quiddity is a possible being (Jawadi Amuli 2017: I/486). Sabziwari explains the third objection in the following manner: ‘Existence’ is nothing but the cause for being existent. Thus, in this theory, the multiplicity of relations is a multiplicity of existences. So, this theory is not a special type of monotheism or a mystical unity of existence; rather, it is a general type of monotheism and a belief in the multiplicity of existence and the existent. However, this is in contrast to the theory of the author. Also, they believe in the principality of quiddity in the creature. And, quiddity is distinct from existence from the point of view of its essence. So, they believe in two principle realities, i.e. two existences. Hence, they believe in a hidden type of polytheism. The author however, makes existence the thing related and the thing it is related to. So, there is nothing but existence. Sabziwari also mentions an objection that might come to mind here: There seems to be a contradiction between the first and the third answer. This is because the first answer is founded upon the idea that the necessary existence is the existence of things. This is why the third answer is founded upon the idea that the existence of things is something unreal. Sabziwari says that it is possible to resolve this contradiction by saying that this goes back to the different ways

in which adherents of this theory have explained it. So, sometimes they say that the cause for things being existent is their relation to the necessary existence. Other times, however, they say that the existence of Zayd is the God of Zayd. Hence, it is possible to say that the first objection is directed towards the second expression while the third objection is directed to the first (Sabziwari 2009: I/92–93).

In a subsequent passage, which Mulla Sadra entitled *A Misgiving and a Resolution*, Mulla Sadra addresses an objection to the idea that the property of being a cause is united with the existence of the cause and the property of being an effect is united with the existence of the effect. He says:

Or, it is possible that you might say: Based upon what you have said, it is necessary for the reality of the Necessary Being to fall under the genus of relation (*al-idhafah*) and the same goes for the reality of every cause. This is due to what you have stated, i.e. the idea that the thing that is essentially a cause is a cause due to its reality (Mulla Sadra 2010: 173).

In his explanation of this passage, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari says that what was previously mentioned also necessitates that the existence of every effect fall under the category of relation, as it is identical to dependency and relation. However, the author did not mention this because the criterion for the objection and its answer in both cases is the same. Sabziwari also mentions two other ways that these objections might be answered. First of all, the concepts of cause and effect belong to the category of relation, not the reality of cause and effect. This is why it is the reality of cause and effect that is identical to the existence of the cause and the existence of the effect, not their concepts. This is in line with what we said earlier, i.e. that in this discussion, we are using words such as ‘relation’, ‘connection’, ‘cause’, ‘effect’ and the likes of these – which apparently refer to relations – in a technical meaning different from the popular meaning that these words apparently refer to. In this discussion we are using them to refer to existences, which are above being substances, what to say of accidents, what to say of relations. And, this is especially true of the existence of the cause of causes, i.e. the Necessary Being. Sabziwari says that this is something that has been indicated in the words of Ibn Sina, who said: “The First Being has no relation with things. Things only return to Him.” The meaning of this statement is that in eternity nothing besides God existed. “God existed and there was nothing with Him.” So, how could a relation exist between God and something else? In post eternity, however, things exist; nevertheless, they are pure relations and sheer connections to God. This is because He is their ‘unavoidable necessity’. Sabziwari also mentions a second answer, which is capable of answering the objection

mentioned in this discussion as well as other similar objections – such as the objection leveled against the idea that the accident is essentially related to its subject, that the form essentially inheres in matter, that the Hyle is essentially a recipient and the likes of these: there is a difference between the case where relation is found within the existence of something and the case where it is found within the quiddity of something. And it is the second case that leads to something falling under the category of relation, not the first. Sabziwari says that further down, the author mentions something that could perhaps be interpreted as indicating this second answer, as he says: “And, if you have understood that the fact that an objective entity is such that its individual essence...” (Sabziwari 2010: 522).

In the aforementioned passage related from Mulla Sadra, he mentions two objections to the idea that causation is essential to the existence of the cause.

It is possible to formulate the first objection in the following manner: If causation were essential to the existence of the cause, then the reality of the Necessary Being would fall under the genus of relation. This is because the property of ‘being a cause’ is a type of relation. The reason for this is that it occurs together with the property of ‘being an effect’ in the mind and the external world and in potentiality and actuality. And, any two concepts that occur together in the mind and the external world and in potentiality and actuality are types of relation. So, the property of being a cause (i.e. causation) is a type of relation. So, if causation were essential to the existence of the cause, then a type of relation would be essential to the existence of the cause. And, if a type of relation were essential to the existence of something, then that thing would fall under the genus of relation. This is because when we say something falls under some genus, it simply means that the genus is essential to the existence of that thing. So, if causation were essential to the existence of the cause, then the existence of the cause would fall under the genus of relation. At the same time, the cause of the world is the reality of the Necessary Being. So, if causation were essential to the existence of the cause, then the reality of the Necessary Being would fall under the genus of relation. However, the reality of the Necessary Being does not fall under the genus of relation. This is because if the reality of the Necessary Being fell under the genus of relation, then the reality of the Necessary Being would be a quiddity, as the genus of relation is a quiddity. This is because the genus of relation is a category. And, every category is a quiddity. So, the genus of relation is a quiddity. Thus, if the reality of the Necessary Being fell under the genus of relation, then the reality of the Necessary Being would be a quiddity. However, every quiddity is a possible being. So, if the reality of the Necessary Being fell under the genus of relation, then it would be a possible



being. However, no Necessary Being can be a possible being. This is because the Necessary Being and the possible being contradict one another. Hence, the reality of the Necessary Being cannot fall under the genus of relation. In conclusion, causation cannot be essential to the existence of the cause.

It is interesting to note that in the *al-Asfar*, Mulla Sadra explains this objection a bit more elaborately:

It is possible to say: Based upon what you say, it is necessary for the reality of the Necessary Being to fall under the genus of relation and the same is true of every effect. This is because you have claimed that the thing that is essentially a cause, its reality is that it is a cause. In the same way, that which is an effect, its reality is that it is an effect. Otherwise, none of them would essentially be a cause or essentially be an effect. And, if causation is identical to the essence of the cause and causation falls under relation – due to the fact that it is impossible to conceive of it without conceiving of that which is relative to it, i.e. being an effect. And, it will soon be mentioned that relation is one of the higher genera. And, genus does not subsist without a differentia that makes it a species. Hence, it would be necessary for the Necessary Being to be composed of a genus and a differentia. This is why the impossibility of such a thing has been clarified (Mulla Sadra 2009: II/245).

In his footnotes to the *al-Asfar*, Sabziwari notes that this is if one presents the objection as entailing that the Necessary Being falls under the genus of relation. However, it is also possible to present it as entailing that He is the genus of relation. This is because His essence is His causation. This is why apparently the author has presented the objecting as entailing His causation as being a part of His essence. In any case, if we present the objection in this way, it would entail that the Necessary Being is an effect, not that He is composed of parts. This is because the higher genera are all simple. Yes, this does lead to His composition by means of existence and quiddity and the likes of these, not genus and differentia (Sabziwari 2009: II/245).

In any case, Mulla Sadra answers the objection mentioned in the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah* as follows:

So [if you want to answer this objection you should] know that relation and the other principle genera are types of quiddities and they are additional to existences. And, the Necessary Being, may He be exalted, does not have a quiddity that is capable of occurring in the mind and capable of being conceived, what to say of its being conceived of with something else. And He is sheer external existence and simple luminous

being. So, the thing that affirms His unity and His sustaining [of the creatures] is not the intellect or the faculty of *wahm*. Rather, it is a type of demonstration that comes into the heart from Him and a kind of shining light from Him. These two say that the Source of the series of beings is really one and is gracious by means of its essence (Mulla Sadra 2010: 173).

A few points should be taken note of regarding this passage:

First of all, in his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, Sabziwari says that it is possible for someone to raise the following objection here: Apparently, this answer reinforces the objection, but it does not resolve the problem; rather, it increases it. This is because everything that the author is mentioning here is accepted by the person making the objection. In reality, the person wants to say that relation is a type of quiddity and the Necessary Being does not have a quiddity; rather, He is sheer existence and pure light. So, how could He essentially be a cause when causation is a type of relation? Sabziwari answers this objection by saying that it is necessary to interpret the author's answer to mean that God's causation does not belong to the category of relation; rather, it is a luminous relation. This is nothing but the manifest All-Pervasive Being. Also, according to the mystics, causation is manifestation (Sabziwari 2010: 523).

Secondly, in the *al-Asfar*, Mulla Sadra says that it is because relation and the other higher genera are quiddities that 'quiddity' is contained in their definitions. For example, it is said that the category of substance, for example, is 'a quiddity, the property of which is so and so', and that the category of quality is 'a quiddity, the property of which is so and so'. The same is the case with the category of relation. In brief, they say that relation 'is any intellectual concept which is incapable of being conceived of without the conception of another concept' (Mulla Sadra 2009: II/246).

Thirdly, in this passage, Mulla Sadra rejects the idea that the Necessary Being is a type of relation. In the *al-Asfar*, Mulla Sadra says that the Necessary Being is not a 'concept' (Mulla Sadra 2009: II/246). However, in his footnotes to the *al-Asfar*, Sabziwari raises an interesting objection here. It is possible for someone to say that what the author is saying here reinforces the objection as it leads to a contradiction. This is because if the Necessary Being is essentially a cause and the cause qua cause is a type of relation, then it is to no benefit for us to say that the Necessary Being is the reality of existence. This is because the reality of existence is also not a relation. However, this would necessitate from it being essentially the cause. So, the Necessary Being would be a relation. And, He is the reality of existence. So, this would also

be a relation. However, neither of them are relations. So, two contradictions arise. Sabziwari answers this question as follows: The purpose of the author is to negate the necessitation of the consequent, i.e. that He would fall under the category of relation, from the very beginning, by stating that He is the reality of existence. This is because while it is true that He is essentially a cause and therefore causation is one with His essence, however, since His essence is the reality of existence, the causation that is one with His essence is the reality of causation, not the concept of causation. And, the reality of causation is not a relation. Rather, it is the concept of causation that is a relation. For example, He possesses the Really True Causation (*illiyyah haqqqah haqiqiyyah*) – just like He possesses the really true unity (*wahdah haqqqah haqiqiyyah*) – in relation to the All-Pervasive Being. He also possesses the Shadowy Real Causation at the level of the All-Pervasive Being with respect to the particular beings. However, none of these belongs to the category of relation. These are real and objective properties, not concepts. Yes, the concept of causation, which is a subjective construct used to convey these real properties, is a type of relation; however, no one says that His essence is one with this type of causation. In a similar manner, sometimes the divine Illuminationist sage calls the All-Pervasive Being, which is the manifestation of God and His light in the heavens and the earth, a ‘relation’. However, he conditions this ‘relation’ as being ‘luminous’. So, there is a difference between the relation that we are speaking about and the relation that is a quiddity and one of the higher genera. On a side note, Sabziwari says that the reason why the All-Pervasive Being is called a ‘relation’ is that it falls between two things – just like the relation that is a quiddity does – in the sense that it falls between God, who is a ‘thing’ in the real sense of the term, and quiddities, which are reflections of things (Sabziwari 2009: II/246).

Fourthly, in the abovementioned passage, Mulla Sadra rejects the idea that the intellect can attain the affirmation of His act of sustaining of His creatures. In his footnote to the *al-Asfar*, Sabziwari mentions the following objection here: Demonstration – like the demonstration mentioned here – is also the judgment of the intellect. So, how can you claim that the thing that affirms His unity and His essential causation is not the intellect? Sabziwari answers that the intent here is that the intellect qua intellect does not affirm this matter; rather, the intellect whose eyes have been beautified by the light of God affirms this. Sabziwari says that the demonstration has power and authority over us and forces the intellect to accept its conclusion because it is the light of God. However, the truth of the matter is that meaning of the conclusion that we are speaking of negates the station of the intellect. This is similar to the case where the intellect affirms that God has really true unity. However, as long as ‘you are you’, you have not really affirmed this unity.

Thus, it is only by means of a light from God that shines upon the intellect that it can understand Him and His attributes. It is for this reason that in the traditions it has been mentioned that ‘you should know God by God’. Also, in a prayer, the following has been mentioned: “Oh He who indicates His Essence by means of His essence.” Again, in a sacred tradition it has been related that “By means of Me will he hear and by means of Me will he see.” Sheikh Abdullah Ansari also said: “His affirming His unity is the affirmation of His unity.” And, a mystic was asked: “How did you recognize your Lord?” He responded by saying: “By means of things that came to me from Him.” (Sabziwari 2009: II/246–247)

Fifthly, in this passage, Mulla Sadra ascribes a type of *demonstration* to the heart, without explanation its nature. However, in the *al-Asfar*, Mulla Sadra explains this *demonstration* as follows: After many intellectual struggles, the intellect affirms, with a great amazement, that the causation of the simple essence is by means of its very sacred essence and sustaining and radiant existence, not by means of a dimension other than the substance of His essence. Otherwise, it would lead to the negation of His essential unity and composition in His necessary reality (Mulla Sadra 2009: II/246).

Sixthly, something should also be mentioned here regarding the reason why the intellect qua intellect cannot understand God. In his footnotes to the *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Sabziwari says that the passage related from Mulla Sadra above means that the *demonstration* of the heart forces you to believe in His existence. However, everything that you conceive of with your intellect is different from Him. This is because He does not have a quiddity that is preserved in both places, i.e. the mind and the external world, and He is something that transcends concepts. Nevertheless, concepts are tools for the observation of reality. They are not essentially the things observed by them. However, this is not the case with the possible beings. This is because they are grasped by the mind due to the existence of a quiddity that is common to both states of the possible being. And, the possible being occurs in the mind with its very quiddity. Also, He is understood by means of His light and by means of something that stems from Him. So, nothing understands Him but Himself. In other words, our intellects qua intellects do not understand Him. “His affirmation of His unity is the affirmation of His unity. And the description of the one who describes Him is that he is astray.” (Sabziwari 2010: 523)

Finally, it is good to mention here Mulla Hadi Sabziwari’s explanation of Mulla Sadra’s answer to the aforementioned objection. In his footnotes to the *al-Asfar*, Sabziwari says that we may summarize the resolution to this objection in the following manner: Every relation that is a category is a connected reality. However, every connected reality is not a relation that is a

category. This is because the converse of a universal positive proposition is not a universal positive proposition; rather, a particular positive proposition. So, this is an instance of the fallacy of the invalid conversion (*mughalatah iham inikas*). It could also be explained by saying that the person making the objection has confused quiddity and existence with one another. So, it is necessary to make a distinction between the case where relation is taken into consideration in the existence of something and the case where it is taken into consideration in the quiddity of something. So, relation is considered in the existence of the accidents – other than the accident that is relation itself. In fact, in some accidents, such as quality, the relation that is a quiddity is negated from it, even though the ontological relation is affirmed for it (Sabziwari 2009: II/248).

In continuation, Mulla Sadra says:

And, if you have understood that the fact that an objective entity is such that its individual essence necessitates the relation to something does not necessarily lead to its falling under the quiddity of relation, then the other objections that are leveled in similar situations will be resolved – such as the idea that the Creator is, by means of its essence, the Knower, the Powerful, the Intender, the Hearer and the Seer and the fact that the Hyle is, by means of its essence, capable and the idea that the form is, by means of its essence, the thing that sustains it and the fact that the accident, is by means of its essence, dependent on its locus and that the soul regulates and interferes in the body by means of its essence and that the nature is essentially the source of movement and stillness. This is why none of them falls under the genus of the real relation even though the concept of relation accidentally occurs for them when their quiddities are conceived and in this way they become popular relations (Mulla Sadra 2010: 173–174).

In the *al-Asfar*, Mulla Sadra adds that “there is no problem in this as relation occurs accidentally for everything, especially for the Being that is the Source of all things” (Mulla Sadra 2009: II/247). However, Allamah Tabatabai mentions an interesting objection here. While it is true that this answer resolves the objection mentioned, another fundamental problem arises. It is obvious that the relation that the author is speaking about is not the ontological relation, i.e. the copulative being. This is because it does not accidentally occur for the existence of the Necessary Being. Thus, the relation that is one of the categories is intended here. However, this is generally understood to be a quiddity. For this reason, it cannot occur for the pure and unlimited

Existence, i.e. the Necessary Being, even if it is not one with His essence. Tabatabai answers this objection by saying that the truth is that relation is not really a quiddity; rather, it is a mental construct that the mind makes with a certain deliberation. The mind takes the relation that occurs between two things into consideration independently of them. Then, it relates it to both of them. So, in the context of this consideration, ‘relation’ occurs for the two sides of the relation by means of the relation (Tabatabai 2009: II/247). This makes perfect sense considering that Allamah Tabatabai is of the opinion that quiddity is abstracted from the limitations of existence.

### *Conclusion*

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 statements seem to be apparently contradictory to one another. Metaphysics is a discipline that is concerned with existence. In other words, it discusses the properties of existence qua existence. For this reason, they take these mystical utterances regarding existence seriously and often discuss them in their philosophical investigations from various points of view. The mystics have not usually 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 attempted to prove this claim of the mystics and to reconcile any apparent contradictions that might exist in their statements. Generally, however, philosophers conclude that this idea is something that the power of reason cannot understand. This did not discourage philosophers from attempting to prove the mystical unity of existence. 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. Mulla Sadra said that God was a graded reality – like the human soul. He said that the best example for the relation between God and the world is the relation between the soul and its faculties. The soul is a being that has various ontological levels. It is one being. However, at one level the multiplicity of the faculties exists in a simple manner in the essence of the soul. At a lower level, the soul is present in its faculties. The same is true of God and the world. God is united with the world. Mulla Sadra 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 a lower level 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. This principle says that the simpler a reality is the more ontological perfections it contains – otherwise, if it did not contain them, it would be composed of privation and possession, which contradicts its simplicity. This inclusiveness does not contradict its simplicity however. It is this inclusiveness that allows us to predicate creatures for God. Mulla Sadra named this type of predication: ‘The Predication of Truth and its Manifestation’. 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. Meaning, the property of being an effect is united with the very existence of the effect. This property is the dependency and therefore the relation between the cause and its effect. So, the very existence of the effect is a copula with respect to its cause. At the same time, a copula cannot be considered without the independent being that it is connected to. This implies that God is present at the level of His creatures. So, God is united with his creatures at two levels of existence. At the same time, Mulla Sadra affirms that both of these levels of existence are levels of one individual being. Mulla Sadra says that there are many verses of the Qur’an that indicate this unity. However, this unity is something different from the unity that some of the pseudo-Sufis speak about or false religions adhere to.

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