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Rational Pantheism of Hindu and Muslim Thinkers

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The most famous form of pantheism, in Hindu system known as advaita vedānta and in Muslim thought as waḥdat al-wujūd, is a mystical and pure one of the thesis of unity of Being. The exponent of the first is Śaṅkara and of the second is Ibn’Arabī. In these two systems of Hindu and Muslim thought, there are opinions that are not purely mystical and which try to give a rational analysis of pantheism. In other words, there are some Hindu and Muslim thinkers who want to analyze pantheism with a rational attitude in order to come to a rational pantheism. The aim of this paper is to explain this kind of pantheism with a comparative attitude.

I. Rational Pantheism of Hindu Thinkers

The Hindu Vedānta system is the most important school from the pantheistic view in Indian thought and ontology. The pantheistic vedānta itself has two main schools: advaita vedānta, and viśiṣṭādvaita vedānta. The exponent of the former which is the bare pantheism of Indian philosophy and mysticism, is Śaṅkara.

The exponent of the second which is the qualified and rationalized pantheism of Indian philosophy and mysticism, is Rāmānuja. Because of that, from the point of view of Indian pantheism, a discussion of Rāmānuja’s school (viśiṣṭādvaita) is necessary.

Rāmānuja ‘s theory is advaitic, but with a qualification (višeṣa), viz. that it admits plurality, since the Supreme Reality subsists in a plurality of forms as souls and matter. It is therefore called viśiṣṭādvaita or qualified non-dualism. This philosophical system is a system of identity in difference. Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja are two great thinkers of vedānta. Rāmānuja has criticized Śaṅkara’s system, and because of that now we bring out some of his views.

Rāmānuja was born in Śrīperembadūr, which is not far from the city of Madras, in the year 1027 A.D., or 1017 A.D., and died in the year 1137 A.D. He had his education in scriptures first under Yādavaprakāśa in Kāncheepuram. Afterwards he migrated to Srīrangam, and for the whole of his long life (110 or 120 years), he remained there, except when he went on short periods of propaganda tours to different parts of India. Rāmānuja has written commentaries on the three foundational texts of vedānta: the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gīta¹.

¹ See: Rāmānuja, Gītā Bhāṣya, Introduction by Adidevananda.
Rāmānuja concentrates his attention on the relation of the world to God, and argues that God is indeed real and independent, and the souls of the world are real also, though their reality is utterly dependent on that God. Then the world of matter and the individual souls have a real existence of their own.

Rāmānuja says that God is the Sole Supreme Reality by qualities, He is the eternal and unchangeable, He is not limited by time and space. The most important qualities of God are knowledge, power and love. According to Rāmānuja the pluralistic universe is real in the same sense as God is real, and the universe, however, depends on God. God is a person, and not a mere totality of other persons, and so He cannot be confused with the thinking individuals and the objects of their thought.

Śaṅkara does not deny the world, but he says that the world is only appearance and māyā. He says that the phenomenal world has not real existence apart from Brahman, and this is the hypothesis on non-difference, which is advocated by advaita. But Rāmānuja says: “Those who maintain the non-difference of an effect from its cause, on the ground that the effect is unreal, cannot establish the non-difference they seek to make out, for there can be no identity between what is true and what is false. If it were as they maintain, either Brahman would be unreal or the world would be real.”

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Śaṅkara says that the distinction between subject and object is a relative one, since the Reality is the One. Rāmānuja disputes this opinion, and holds that the nature of consciousness affirms the existence of a permanent thinking subject, as well as objects distinct from the self.

Śaṅkara’s opinion is that the statement: Tat Tvam Asi (तत् त्वम् असि) or TatTvaMasi, “That art thou” (Chāndogya Upaniṣad, VI. 8-16), is intended to bring out the metaphysical identity between Brahman and the individual soul, when their special characteristics are ignored. He believes that this bare identity cannot be understood by thought. He says that when we say: “That art thou”, there is the apparent difference between the two, and the judgment asserts the real identity between them. But Rāmānuja asserts that while the judgment affirms the identity of the subject with the predicate, there is another important factor, that the subject and the predicate are different. He says that identity is a relation, and every relation needs two terms. If the terms are not distinct, they cannot be related. The negation of all difference makes the relation impossible. All identity is an identity in and through difference, and every judgment is an illustration of it. In “the sky is blue”, “the sky” and “blue” are not identical; nor are they completely different. The sky and blueness subsist together, though the two have different significations.

Rāmānuja says that when Brahman and the individual soul are placed in the relation of subject and predicate, it follows that there is a difference between the

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3 Rāmānuja, Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, II. 1.15.
5 Ibid., pp. 677-689
two. The subject and the predicate are distinct meanings referred to the same substance. If the two meanings cannot be considered in the same substance, the judgment fails. So the text: “That art thou”, brings out the complex nature of the Ultimate Reality, which has individual souls inhering in it. Brahman and Jiva are related as substance and attribute, or soul and body. If there were not a difference between the two, we could not say that the one is other. There are statements of mystics quoted that the mystic soul identifies itself with the Supreme. Indra’s statement: “Meditate on me”, and Vāmadeva’s declaration: “I am Manu, I am Surya”, are interpreted by Rāmānuja as affirming the view that Brahman is the inner self of all\(^6\). Distinctions are real, and identity is also real. Distinctions are attributes or modes of identity. They are inseparable from, and not contradictory to each other. They are not therefore unreal appearances. According to Rāmānuja all objects are known by experience and all experience is either of the existent or non-existent. There is no experience of anything which is neither existent nor non-existent.

Rāmānuja recognizes as real the three factors of matter (acit), soul (cit) and God (Iśvara). The first two are absolutely dependent upon the last, the dependence being conceived as that of the body upon the soul. Whatever is, is the body of God, and He is the soul of inorganic nature and the soul of souls\(^7\). The body is defined by Rāmānuja as that which a soul controls, supports for its own ends. Matter and souls, being the body of God, are regarded as directed and sustained by Him and as existing entirely for Him. The inseparable unity of matter, souls and God, is Brahman or the Absolute of Rāmānuja\(^8\).

We can explain the concept of unity by an example “blue lotus”. The blueness is different from lotus, because the first is a quality, and the second is a substance. But at the same time the blueness is not independent, for every quality for its being needs a substance (the lotus). On the other hand, the complex whole of the flower which has the blueness, is considered as unity and one thing\(^9\). Rāmānuja recognizes a real distinction between the quality of blueness and the substance of lotus. Hence his view differs from advaita for which all distinctions are alike only apparently.

According to Rāmānuja the central point of the teaching of the Upaniṣads is the unity of Brahman, and things that are forms and modes of God, are His names. So that, every word becomes a symbol of God and finally points to Him.

Brahman in Rāmānuja’s system is the highest reality, omnipotent, omniscient as in Śaṃkara’s system, but this Brahman is at the same time full of compassion and love. And this is a very important feature in Rāmānuja’s Brahman. According to Rāmānuja, Brahman is not Nirguna, without qualities; such qualities as intelligence, power, and mercy are ascribed to it, while according to Śaṃkara even intelligence is not a quality of Brahman, but Brahman is itself intelligence,

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\(^6\) Ibid., p. 688.
\(^7\) M. Hāriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, p. 398.
\(^8\) Ibid., 399.
\(^9\) Ibid., 400.
pure thought, and pure being. Rāmānuja’s Brahman is always one and the same, and his Brahman is able to perform the work of creation without any help from māyā, and he rejects the doctrine of māyā, as Śaṅkara understood it. “For Śaṅkara māyā is the marvelous power of God, manifested in the whole order of creation…. For Rāmānuja māyā is revealed especially in that which transcends the reach of our understanding. Thus it is through this marvelous power that God can at once dwell in the world and remain free from its limitations and defect. In human experience, the Divine power is manifested particularly in the interaction of body and soul.”

According to Rāmānuja the spirit of man is an attribute or mode of the universal substance. It is possible for man to attain, by mystic intuition, the knowledge of their oneness with Brahman and knowledge of Brahman. Such knowledge will deliver man from the rebirth, and it will bring man the bliss that belongs to his essential being. Yet this form of salvation and bliss is on lower level than that which comes from the love of God. The higher vision and bliss can only be reached by the kindling of the fire of love.

Rāmānuja says that man without higher vision and union in earthly life is alienated from God. About this subject, he tells a legend which illustrates his view as follows: A young prince once strayed from his royal home. He was taken care of by a brāhman who knew nothing of his life, and taught him the Vedas. When he was twenty six, a man knew him, and informed his royal family. When the ruler heard that his son is alive, became glad greatly, and ordered that his son be brought back home; and so at last the two were reunited. This story symbolizes the divine nature of soul, its alienation from God in earthly life, its discovery of the Truth, the joy of its return to God and its final union with Him. And this is the real self of man that it is immutable, eternal and blissful. It is an attribute or mode of Brahman. In our normal being we are blind to our real nature, we fall into sin, and then we are involved in suffering. But by the grace of God our eyes may be opened to the Truth, and we submit ourselves to Him, and share His love and His joy.

God is for Rāmānuja a God of grace that He seeks to unite man with Himself. “He is a great boundless ocean of compassion and He assumed various forms without putting away His essential godlike nature, and time after time incarnated Himself in the several worlds.”

II. Rational Pantheism of Muslim Thinkers

The unity of each concrete existent does not negate the plurality of the collection of them. But another unity for the whole of the world may be proposed
which negates its plurality and multiplicity, and considers the world as a “unit”. This opinion can be interpreted in several ways\textsuperscript{13} as follows:

The first one is the view that the unity of the world is the continuous unity of the natural world, as it has been proposed in the discussion of natural philosophy under the title of “the impossibility of a vacuum”, and with the various explanations they have tried to prove that between two natural existents, a pure vacuum is impossible. And in the places where it is imagined that there is no existent, in fact, there exist subtle bodies which are not sensible.

On this basis it has been argued that if two or several natural worlds are supposed, it is impossible in any way. If they were connected to another, they would have a continuous unity, and they would compose a single world. If among them a true vacuum were supposed, such that it would completely separate them form one another, and this would be incompatible with the proofs of negation of vacuum.

The second interpretation is the view that the natural world has a unity of a system. It means that natural existents are always effecting and being effected by one another, acting and reacting. Therefore, the entire natural world is ruled by these relations of material cause and effect, and hence, it can be considered to have a single system. But it is clear that this unity is, in fact, all attribute of the system which does not have a concrete existence independent of the existents of the world. On this basis, one cannot prove the real unity of the natural world.

The third interpretation is the view that unity of the world is in the shadow of the unity of a form such that all of the parts of the world are united under its umbrella, just as the parts of a plant or an animal are united under the shadow of the unity of their own substantial forms. The single form which can be supposed for the whole world so that it includes living existents such as man and animal, by necessity will have another spirit which can be called the universal soul (al-nafs al-kulliyyah) or the spirit of the world. Some philosophers have gone even further to include non-material beings and all but God, and in this way they have regarded the first intellect (al-'aql al-awwal) or the most perfect possible existent as a form for all that is below it. Likewise, many of 'urfā (Muslim mystics) have called the world, “cosmic man” (al-insān al-kabīr).

We know that the individual unity of every concrete existent is not incompatible to the real multiplicity of the collection of all existents. Likewise, the continuous unity of the material world is not incompatible to the multiplicity of the material existents. However the subject of unity in the three mentioned suppositions includes the natural world, or at most, the world of possible existents. Now we want to know if there is a unity that can contain all existents, including God also, or not? In this regard, four positions\textsuperscript{14} may be indicated:

First one is the opinion of ṣūfism. It considers real existence to be limited to the Divine being, and all other beings to have a metaphorical existence. This doctrine is known “unity of existence and existent” (waḥdat al-wujūd wa al-mawjūd).

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\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp. 384-387.
Second one is the opinion that considers unity to be demanded by the “divine temperament” (dhawq al-ta’ālūh) which is known as “unity of existence and multiplicity of existents” (waḥdat al-wujūd wa kathrāt al-mawjūd). According to this doctrine, “real existence” is specific to God, while the “real existent” also includes creatures, but in the sense of “dependent real existents”.

The third opinion which is related to the mashshā‘īn, is “multiplicity of existence and of existent” (kathrāt al-wujūd wa al-mawjūd). According to this doctrine, the plurality and multiplicity of existence is undeniable, and necessarily each of them will have its own specific existence, and since existence is a simple reality, so every existence will be “completely distinct” (al-mutāba‘īn bi tamām al-dhāt) from every other existence.

The fourth opinion is one which Mullā Şadrā (1571-1640 A.D.) has accepted, and has tried to explain and establish. It has become known as “unity in multiplicity itself” (al-waḥdat fi‘ān al-kathrāh). According to this view, concrete realities of the world have both unity and multiplicity at the same time, commonness and distinctions with each other. But common aspect and distinct aspect of them does not cause composition in the concrete existence, and does not analyze it into genus and differentia. Their differences result from weakness and intensity of their existence, like the difference between intense light and weak light, whether the weakness and intensity here is nothing other than the light.

Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī is known as Mullā Şadrā, or Şadr al-Muta‘allīhīn (the foremost among the theosophists). This figure is one of the major expositors of Islamic intellectual doctrines, and he has remained until now almost unknown outside Iran, even in the other Muslim countries.  

Mullā Şadrā was born in Shīrāz of Iran in about 979 A.H. /1571 A.D. Then Mullā Şadrā did not feel satisfied simply with formal learning; he left worldly life in general and retired to a small village by the name of Kahak near Qum, where he spent fifteen years in asceticism and spiritual purification. He claims in his introduction to al-Asfār, that, in this period, he became endowed with the direct vision of the intelligible world. And He was seeing through illumination (ishrāq), what he had previously learnt theoretically from books. Then he returned to Shiraz, and remained there until the end of his life. He made the pilgrimage to Mecca seven times on foot, a very long distance, and he died in Baṣrah in 1050 A.H /1640 A.D., during his seventh journey to Mecca.

Mullā Şadrā was often molested by some of the exoteric ‘ulamā’ who could not accept his mystic interpretation of the doctrines of the faith and who denounced him publicly sometimes.

All Mullā Şadrā’s writings (dozen of books) concern either religious sciences or metaphysics and philosophy. Mullā Şadrā has several quatrains in Persian. They deal mostly with the Sufi doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd, which may be considered to be the central theme of Mullā Şadrā’s doctrinal formulations. For example, in one of the quatrains, he says:

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“The Truth is the spirit of the universe and the body;  
And the orders of the angels are the senses of this body;  
The heavens, elements and compounds are its organs;  
Lo! unity is this, and the rest nothing but rhetoric.”

Without doubt the most important work of Mullâ Şadrâ and His most famous metaphysical and intellectual work is *al-Asfâr al-Arba’âh* (The Four Journeys). It is comparable in dimension and scope to *al-Shifâ* and *al-Futuâhât al-Makkiyyah*, and it is midway between the philosophy of Ibn Sinâ, and the mysticism of Ibn’Arabî.

The title of *al-Asfâr* itself has been the cause of much difficulty to the few orientalists who are familiar with the book. The word *asfâr* is the broken plural for *safar* meaning “journey” as well as *sifr* meaning “book” from the Hebrew *sefer*. That is why sometime it has been considered to be a series of books on travel, and sometime it has been believed that the title meant simply “the four books”. But both views are mistaken. In fact, *asfâr* means journeys but not as travel in the ordinary sense of the word: Mullâ Şadrâ himself mentions in his introduction to the book that *al-Asfâr* consists of the following four stages or journeys of inner realization (sulûk): (i) the journey from the creation (khalq) towards the Truth (Haqq), (ii) the journey in the Truth with the Truth, (iii) the journey from the Truth to the creation with the Truth, and (iv) the journey with the Truth in the creation. This work is, therefore, an account of the stages of the journey of a mystic in a systematized form. A new edition of *al-Asfâr al-Arba’âh* is planned in nine volumes.

Mullâ Şadrâ for the first time firmly established a self-subsistent theosophical system truly representative of what is known as exalted philosophy (al-hikmat al-muta’âliyah), a perfect unity of mysticism and philosophy. Mullâ Şadrâ was convinced of the reciprocal relationship between mystic experience and logical thinking. He said that all philosophizing which does not lead to the highest spiritual realization is but a vain, and just as all mystic experience which is not backed by philosophical proofs is but a way to illusions. Such was the conviction he had obtained through his own personal experience. The meeting point, in this experience, of mysticism and philosophy was furnished by a sudden illuminative realization of the ultimate oneness of the subject (‘aql), the object (ma’qûl) and the intellect (‘aql) itself. For in such a spiritual state alone, he believed, the metaphysical reality of things can be intuited as it really is, as opposed to the way it ordinarily looks. It is to be mentioned that this illuminative experience was taken by Mullâ Şadrâ himself to be a sudden revelation of the Pure Existence. And it directly led him to the most important doctrine in his metaphysics, namely the doctrine of asâlât al-wujûd (fundamentality of existence or existentialism), which he established as the central principle of metaphysics in

opposition to the doctrine of asālat al-māhiyyah (fundamentality of quiddity or essentialism), that had been advocated by his master. 18

The basic principles of Mullā Šadrā’s system are four topics, which are as follows:

(1) The unity of Being and its various polarization,

(2) The substantial motion (al-harākat al-jawhariyyah) or the becoming and change of the substance of the world,

(3) The knowledge and the relation between the knower and the known (ittiḥād al-‘āqīl wa al-ma‘qūl).

(4) The soul, its faculties, generation, perfection, and final resurrection 19.

The most important doctrine of Mullā Šadrā is the existentialism, and the “graduated unity of Being”. His doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd is known as “graduated unity of Being” (waḥdat al-wujūd al-mushakkak) or “unity in plurality itself” (al-waḥdat fī‘āin al-kathrah).

According to this view, the Being is the same reality in all realms of existence; it is a single reality but with gradations and degrees of intensity. Just as we say the light of the sun, the light of a candle or the light of a lamp, and mean the same subject (light), but with different predicates, under different conditions of manifestation. Of course, the analogy between levels of existence and levels of light is only to make it easier for the mind to understand easily, otherwise light is not a pure (basīt) reality. On the other hand, existence has a special sort of gradeness, contrary to the gradeness of light which is a more general sort of gradeness. Thus it is the intensity of the Being which determines the level of existence of each creature. If the light of Being shines upon the form or quiddity of a man with a greater intensity than now, he will become the man of the intermediate world (barzakh), and if the intensity is greater still he will become the celestial man identified with his heavenly archetype (al-‘āin al-thābit). Therefore, in the case of the Being, the being of God, of man, of a tree, or of a book are all same but in various degrees of intensity. Moreover, the Being, no matter where it manifests itself, appears always with its attributes such as knowledge, will, power etc. A stone because it exists, is a manifestation of the Being, and therefore, has knowledge, will, power and intelligence like man or angel. However, since at the level of a stone the manifestation of the Being is very weak, these attributes are hidden and not perceptible 20.

It can be mentioned that, it may be said that, the doctrine of unity and gradation of Being in Mullā Šadrā is not new; it was expressed clearly five centuries before him by Ibn ʿArabī. Mullā Šadrā however was the first person to give it a logical dress and introduce it as a principle of ḥikmah as distinct from pure

gnosis which does not concern itself with various logical distinctions. But it seems that the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabî is basically different and barer than the doctrine of Mullâ Şadrâ.

According to Mullâ Şadrâ, the Absolute Being itself, which is the proper subject for metaphysics, is above all limitations, and therefore, above all forms and quiddities and above all substances and accidents. It is the form of forms, and has two kinds of manifestation, longitudinally (tüli) and latitudinal ('ardi). By first one, it brings into being the various orders of creations from the archangels to terrestrial. And by he second one, it brings to being the various members of each earlier orders of creation. So that the knowledge of anything is the knowledge of its being, and the Being is the reality of all things, therefore the knowledge of anything is ultimately the knowledge of the Being itself. Likewise the archetypes (al-'ain al-thâbitah) are brought to being through God’s knowledge of them; therefore, their being is in fact, the very knowledge of God. According to the doctrine of “the Being is unity in multiplicity, and multiplicity in unity”, if there are logical distinctions and divisions, at the same time the Being remains in essence indivisible and above polarization21.

According to Mullâ Şadrâ, the archetypes (al-a'yân al-thâbitah) are in essence one with their particulars in the external world, but differ from them in characteristics which arise from the substance or matter of the particulars. The archetypes appear differently in each stage of manifestation while in the realm of reality it is one and the same truth. The beings of the world are the reflections and shadows of the archetypes so that they are like them and at the same time are different from them in being less real and farther removed from the source of the Being.

However, the doctrine of the “unity in multiplicity, and multiplicity in unity” may be interpreted in two ways. First, there is difference in the levels of existence between one existent and another existent, obtained among individuals of one essence or several essences of the same horizontal level. Second, there is difference in the levels which obtained exclusively between real causes and their effects. Since all existents are directly or indirectly the effect of God. It follows that the Being embraces an absolute independent existent, and innumerable dependent relative existents, of which each cause is relatively independent in relation to its effect, and in this respect possesses a higher level of existence. It seems that the first interpretation is far-fetched, though it is apparently indicated sometimes by Mullâ Şadrâ and his followers22.

For the “gradation of existence”, two sorts of arguments can be given. One corresponds to the first interpretation, and the other corresponds to the second interpretation, that was mentioned above. The first argument, in fact, is about the establishment of that which is concretely in common among objective realities.

This may be explained as meaning that the doctrine of “gradation of Being” of Mullā Ṣadrā may be divided into two cases: first, multiplicity, is attributed to objective existences, and these existences have “distinctions among them”; second, whatever distinguishes among them is not incompatible with that which is in common among them. And all of them, in their very multiplicity, are in possession of that which they have in common.

This argument is that, from all concrete realities, a single concept, which is that very concept of existence, may be abstracted. The abstraction of this single concept from multiple realities is reason that there is a concrete reality in common among them which is the source of the abstraction of a single concept. If there were not any unitary aspect among objective existence such a single concept would not be abstracted.

In this way it is to be concluded that concrete existences possess something objective in common. Then another premise is added, that concrete existence is pure, and has a single concrete aspect. It cannot be considered to be composed of two distinct aspects. So, the distinctive aspect of concrete existences will not be incompatible with the common aspect of unity among them. In other words, the difference among the existences will be graduated, and it indicates the different levels of a single reality.

According to this argument it seems that the unity of such concepts merely shows the unity of the viewpoint which the intellect has in abstracting them, not the unity of the concrete aspects in common among them.

The second argument is composed of premises. The first premise is that there is a cause and effect relation among existents, and there is no existent which falls outside of the chain of causes and effects. Of course, only “causality” is misattributed to the existent at the head of the chain, and only “being an effect” (ma’lūliyyah) is attributed to the existent at the end of the chain. In any case, there is no existent that lacks both the relation of being a cause and of being an effect to any other existent, such that it is neither a cause nor effect of something. The second premise is that the concrete existence of an effect is not independent of the existence of its creating cause. It is not true that each of them possesses an independent existence, and that they are joined by means of an external relation to their existences; rather, the existence of an effect has no sort of independence whatsoever from its creating cause. In other words, it is the very relation and dependence on its cause, not something independent which has a relation with its cause, as is observed in the relation between an act of will and soul.

From these two premises the conclusion is obtained that the existence of all effects in relation to their creating cause, and ultimately to the Divine being, which is the source of emanation of all existents other than itself, is that very dependence. All creatures are in reality manifestations of the Divine being. In accordance with their own levels they possess intensity and weakness, priority

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and posteriority, and some of them are relatively intendant of others, but absolute independence is reserved for the Divine being.

Thus, the whole of Being is composed of a chain of concrete existences, in which the “strength” (qiwwām) of each link, with regard to its level of existence in relation to it, is more limited and weaker than that of the link above. The same weakness and limitation is the criterion for being an effect. The chain continues upward until it reaches the source of the Being which is of unlimited intensity of existence, and which includes all the levels of contingency, and sustains the existence of all them. There is no existent which is independent and without need of it in any aspect, but rather they are all poor, needy and dependent on it.

By this existential relation is meant a special sort of unity which negates the independence of every existent except the Divine being. When one considers independent existence, it will have no other instance than the Divine being. Because of this, the independent existence must be considered “unique”, which is not capable to multiplicity. For this reason it is called “true unity” (al-waḥdat al-ḥaqqqah). When one pays attention to the levels of existence and its manifestations, multiplicity is attributed to them, however, at the same time a kind of unity must be admitted among them. Even though the effect is not the cause, it cannot be considered a second to it, even it must be considered as being sustained by the cause, and an aspect of the cause, and a manifestation of it. And this is the meaning of the unity.

According to Mullâ Şadra: “All things in the universe have a cause and an effect, and since every thing is a manifestation of the Being, every effect is but an aspect of its cause, and cannot in essence differ from it. That is why the well-known principle “from unity only unity can issue forth”, must be true. From the Divine essence which is simple and one, only a simple being can issue forth. Mullâ Şadra, calls this first manifestation of the Divine essence, extended being (al-wujūd al-munbasî), the first intellect (al-ʿaql al-awwal), the sacred effusion (al-faiḍ al-muqaddas) or the truth of truth (ḥaqiqat al-ḥaqāyiq), which he considers to be one in essence but partaking of degrees and stages of manifestation.”

Mullâ Şadra divides reality into three categories: the Divine essence (the Absolute Being), which it identifies with the “extended being” (al-wujūd al-munbasî); and the “relative being” (al-wujūd al-rābitī), which is that of the creatures. The cause of all things therefore, is the “extended being”, which is the first manifestation of the Divine essence. Thus, God is the cause of causes and, the ultimate source of all effects to be seen in the universe, because all causes and effects arise from the being of things, and all beings are in reality, the stages of the One Being.

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