

STUDIES IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Editor : Shinji Maejima
Professor of Oriental History
and Director, Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies

VOLUME XIII

First published 1971
by the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies
Keio University, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan
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Printed by Kokusai Printing Co. Ltd., Tokyo

veloped and flourished in Persia as a combination of mysticism and rational thinking. It has, moreover, been my intention to establish this kind of philosophy as representing one of the archetypal patterns of philosophizing which is to be found almost everywhere in the intellectual cultures of the East, and thus to start preparing a ground for truly fruitful and methodical explorations in the field of comparative philosophy.

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

Toshihiko Izutsu
20 Feb., 1971, Montreal, Canada

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

different picture from what is naturally suggested by the propositional form of the expression.

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

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

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

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

Such a vision of reality, however, is not accessible to human consciousness as long as it remains at the level of ordinary everyday experience. In order to have access to it, according to the philosophers of this school, the mind must experience a total transformation of itself. The consciousness must transcend the dimension of ordinary cognition where the world of being is experienced as consisting of solid, self-subsistent things, each having as its ontological core what

Ḥaydar Âmulî,³⁾ one of the for
says: When man attempts to ap
(*'aql ḡa'îf*) and feeble thinking (*af*
go on but increasing.

The common people who have
Reality are compared to a blind m
a stick in his hand. The stick gi
the rational faculty of the mind.
upon which the blind man relies
Only when Moses threw down
removed from his sight. Only t
phenomenal forms, the splendid be

Maḥmûd Shabastarî, an outsta
14th centuries, says in his celebra

Throw away reason; be alway
For the eye of the bat has no

Reason trying to see the abso
just like the eye trying to gaze at
effulgence of the sun blinds the e
to higher stages of Reality, gradu
Absolute, the darkness becomes eve
As man comes close to the vicinit
the brilliant light issuing forth fr
its ultimate extremity becomes co
to say—to use a less metaphor
purity is to the eyes of an ordina
comes about that the majority o
true reality. Like the men sitting
they remain satisfied with looking
faint reflections of the light on t
convinced that these reflections ar

3) Cf. his *Risâlah Nadq al-Nuqûd*
1969, p. 625.

4) Muḥammad Lâhijî: *Sharḥ-e G*

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

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

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

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

Thus it is certain that there is a human aspect to the experience of *fanâ'* inasmuch as it involves a conscious effort on the part of man to purify himself from all the activities of the ego. 'Abd al-Raḥmân Jâmi, a famous Iranian poet-philosopher of the fifteenth century, says, "keep yourself away from your own ego, and set your mind free from the vision of others".⁹⁾ The word "others" here means everything other than absolute Reality. Such efforts made by man for the attainment of *fanâ'* are technically called *tawḥîd*, meaning literally "making many things one" or "unification", that is, an absolute concentration of the mind in deep meditation. It consists, as Jâmi explains, in man's making his mind cleansed (*takhlîṣ*) of its relations with anything other than absolute Reality, whether as objects of desire and will or as objects of knowledge and cognition. So much so

9) *Lawâ'ih*, ed. M.H. Tasbiḥi, Tehran, 1342 A.H., p. 19.

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

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

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

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

ego disappears on the side of the subject, all the phenomenal limitations of things in the objective world disappear from the scene, and there remains only the absolute Unity of Reality in its purity as an absolute Awareness prior to its bifurcation into subject and object. This stage is called in Islam "gathering" (*jam'*) because it "gathers" together all the things that constitute the phenomenal world and brings them back to their original indiscrimination. In theological terminology this is said to be the stage at which the believer witnesses God, and God alone, without seeing any creature. It is also known as the stage of "God was, and there was nothing else". This stage would correspond to what the Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzŭ calls "chaos" (*hun tun*).¹⁴⁾

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

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

The "second separation", however, is not sheer Multiplicity, because at this stage all the essential demarcations of the things, although they are clearly observable, are known to be nothing other than so many self-determinations of the absolute Unity itself. And since the "unity" annihilates in its own purity all ontological differences, the whole world of being is here found to be ultimately reducible to

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

the same appellations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20) Wittgenstein: *Investigations*, p. 213.

reference has been made earlier is most profusely displayed.

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

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

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

22) *Ibid.*, p. 113.

23) *Ibid.*, pp. 113-115.

(*rahmah wujûdiyyah*).

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

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

In reference to the ontological status of the phenomenal world and its relation to the Absolute the Muslim philosophers here proposed a number of illuminating metaphors. In view of the above-mentioned importance of metaphorical thinking in Islam I shall give here a few of them. Thus Maḥmûd Shabastari²⁵) says in the *Gulshan-e Râz*:

The appearance of all things "other" (than the Absolute) is due to your imagination (i.e. the structure of human cognition),

Just as a swiftly turning point appears as a circle.

Concerning these verses Lâhijî makes the following observation. The appearance of the world of Multiplicity as something "other" than the Absolute is due to the working of the faculty of imagination which is based on sense perception and which is by nature unable to go beyond the phenomenal surface of the things. In truth, there is solely one single Reality manifesting itself in a myriad of different forms. But in this domain sense perception is utterly untrustworthy. For it is liable to see a mirage as something really existent when it is in truth non-existent. It sees drops of rain falling from the sky as straight lines. A man sitting in a

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Further, the waves and rivers are *not* the sea in one respect, while in another

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

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

31) *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

Multiplicity. It is only at this stage that the name God—Allâh in Islam—becomes applicable to the Absolute. It is the stage of the *parameshvara*, the supreme Lord, in Vedanta, and in the neo-Confucian world-view the position of the *ʻai chi*, the “Supreme Ultimate” which is no other than the *wu chi*, the “Ultimate of Nothingness” as an eternal principle of creativity.

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

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

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

anybody.

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

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

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

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

However, before we come to any hasty conclusion concerning this problem, we must consider the very important fact that, in spite of all these and still other

rather the verb "is", *das Sein*, which forms seemingly quite an insignificant part of this phrase.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The position of the *aşâlat al-wujûd*, the "fundamental reality of existence", of the Iranian existentialists presents a striking similarity to the position taken by modern Western existentialism with regard to the fundamental vision of the reality of existence. Of course, Western existentialism is quite a recent phenomenon, while the Iranian philosophy of *wahdat al-wujûd* has behind itself a centuries-old tradition. It is no wonder that Western existentialism lacks that systematic conceptual perfection which characterizes Iranian philosophy. And yet, precisely

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

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

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

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

It is my conviction that the time has come when we must begin making efforts to revive the creative energy contained in this kind of philosophy in such a way that its spirit might be resuscitated in the form of a new philosophic world-view powerful enough and alive enough to cope with the new problems peculiar to the

sophical thinking under the name of comparative philosophy. But it is no less undeniable that up till now comparative philosophy has remained rather in the peripheral regions of the intellectual activity of the philosophers. In most cases, the choice of the terms of comparison, to begin with, has been arbitrary, and the work consequently unsystematic. In short, comparative philosophy has, in my opinion, not been very successful, and it has not been given the kind of serious attention it duly deserves. And the main cause of this failure, I think, lies in its poverty in methodology.

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

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

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

itself, that is, in its purity, is attributeless. It is an absolutely simple unity or an absolute indiscrimination. Consequently, all differences that are perceivable at the level of sensible experience among various things are to be judged illusory. It is in this sense that Advaita Vedanta represented by Shankara declares: that all phenomenal things are nothing but illusions, that they are all illusory forms "super-imposed" (*adhyāsa*) upon the underlying pure unity of *Brahman*.

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

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

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

1) 大乘起信論.

2) 染法.

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

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

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

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

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

As the narrowly limited ego-consciousness of man thus becomes dissolved and absorbed into the limitless expanse of the absolute Consciousness, and as “existence” that has been crystallized into the determined form of an ego-substance returns to its original all-pervasive indetermination, all the determined forms of the objective world also go back to their original existential indetermination. For there is a fundamental functional correlation between the subjective state of the mind and the objective state of the external world. Where there is no subject, i.e. ego-substance

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

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

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

the fourteenth century, in his *Jâmi' al-Asrâr*.⁵⁾ It is a metaphor based on a peculiar relationship between ink and the letters written with it. Ink structurally corresponds to the all-pervasive unique reality of "existence" while the letters written with it correspond to the "quiddities" (*mâhiyât*) as actualized in the forms of the various things in the empirical world. Here follows the gist of what Ḥaydar Âmulî says about this metaphor.⁶⁾

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

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

But, Ḥaydar Âmulî continues to say, those who see only and exclusively the ink without taking notice of the letters are also imperfect monotheists, for their

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

6) *Ibid.*, p. 107, § 212.

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

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

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

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

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

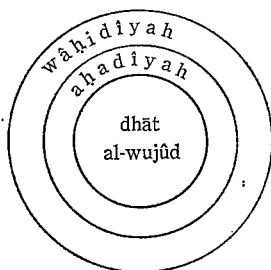
There are, however, some thinkers who do not remain satisfied with this view, and who insist on pushing the highest stage of "existence" further beyond *aḥadîyah*.

7) *wu chi* 無極, *t'ai chi* 太極.

metaphysical stages of "existence", and is naturally a step closer toward the world of the created things. It is interesting in this respect that Lao Tzū who refers to the absolutely unconditional aspect of the Way (*tao*) as the Mystery of Mysteries, immediately turns to its positive aspect and describes the Way in that aspect as the "Gateway of myriad wonders"¹⁰, that is, the Gateway through which emerge all things into the phenomenal world. In the Islamic view too, the *aḥadīyah* is the source of all phenomenal things.

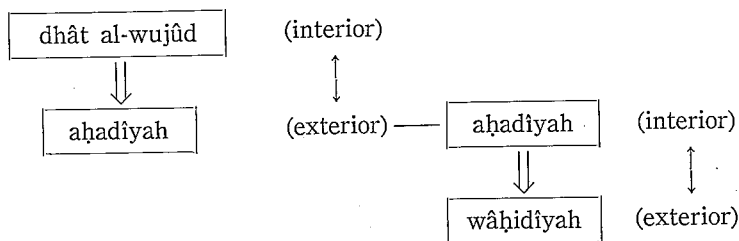
In fact, it is from the very midst of the *aḥadīyah* that the creative activity of the Absolute, i.e. the self-manifesting act of pure "existence", arises. This self-manifesting act of "existence" is technically known as the "most sacred Emanation" (*fayḍ aqdas*). The result of this Emanation is the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

Fig. 1.



dhāt al-wujūd
=existence-itself
or Mystery of Mysteries

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



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

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

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

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

Ontologically, the stage of *wâḥidiyah* is called *wujûd bi shart shay’*, i.e. “existence”-as-conditioned-by-being-something, which means “existence” as determined into the

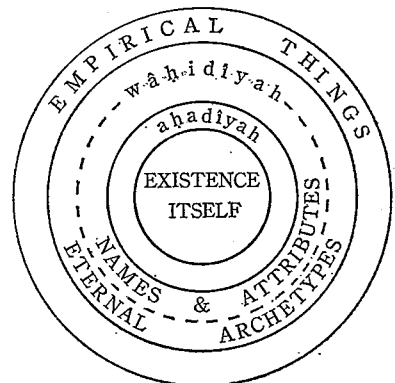


Fig. 2.

13) Cf. *supra*, p. 49.

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

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

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

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

In fact, the truth of the matter is such that we can go to the extent of asserting, and that without exaggeration, that a kind of philosophy which deserves to be regarded as typically and characteristically Islamic developed only *after* the death of Averroës, rather than *before*. This typically Islamic philosophy arose and matured in the periods subsequent to the Mongol invasion, until in the Şafawî period²⁾ in Persia it reached the apex of vigorous creativity. This peculiar type of Islamic

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

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

'Abbās al-Lawkarī,⁷⁾ (d. 1066) Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1273), Dabīrān al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī⁸⁾ (d. 1276), Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī⁹⁾ (d. 1311), and others.

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

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

7) Abū al-'Abbās al-Lawkarī was a disciple of Bahmaniyār and the author of a book called *Bayān al-Ḥaqq bi-Damān al-Ṣidq*, a systematic exposition of Peripatetic philosophy based on Avicenna and al-Fārābī, and comprising Logica, Physica, and Metaphysica. Aside from the fact that it is one of the earliest systematizations of Islamic scholasticism, the book is of a particular historical importance because Lawkarī's intellectual activity is said to have been the direct cause of the wide spread of the philosophical disciplines in Khurāsān (cf. 'Alī b. Zayd al-Bayhaqī: *Tatimmat Ṣiwān al-Ḥikmah*, ed. Shafī', Lahore, 1935, p. 120).

8) A contemporary and friend of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, he is known as the author of two extremely important works: (1) *Shamsiyah* (more precisely, *Kitāb al-Shamsiyah fi-l-Qawā'id al-Manṭiqiyah*), a complete system of Aristotelian logic, and (2) *Kitāb Ḥikmah al-'Ayn*, a systematic exposition of Peripatetic philosophy.

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

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

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

zawâri, for whom "existence", in the sense of *actus essendi*, precisely is the reality or Reality. Upon reflection, however, we find the opposition merely formal and superficial. It is a mere matter of different formulations, or rather of different ways of experiencing the same Reality. For Suhrawardî establishes, in place of "existence", as something really "real" the spiritual and metaphysical Light (*nûr*) which is the one and single reality having an infinite number of degrees and stages in terms of intensity and weakness, the highest degree being the Light of all lights (*nûr al-anwâr*) and the lowest being Darkness (*zulmah*).

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

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

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

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

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

It is interesting that the *Hikm* ultimate Reality as "pure existence". This fact is interesting because Taoism and Zen Buddhism for existence Nothingness. At the basis of this Absolute in its transcendent absolute "existence" and "non-existence". Out of Nothingness there appears Existence, and existents issue forth to constitute

It is readily observable, however, "Nothingness" as it is often called, of a negative nature conceptually, to illustrate. Thus Existence, which in itself is as the stage immediately following the first stage, 'Arabî to the second stage of "existence" of the first stage reveals that the concept of "existence" is conceived as "unconditioned existence" (*wujûd munbasit*), while the first stage is "seen", "pure existence", that is, "existence" the most basic of all the key-terms. This will be discussed in detail below.

Both Suhrawardî and Ibn 'Arabî were the first thinkers who came after them and they were influential in Islam, especially in Persia. Their ideas and were gradually welded into a new synthesis by men like Quṭb al-Dîn al-Shirâzî¹⁹ and others. It came when, in the middle of the thirteenth century, a philosopher who, incorporating the ideas of Suhrawardî, and Ibn 'Arabî—together with his own thought, created a philosophical system which was Mullâ Şadrâ of Shirâz. It was he who made the self-subsistent theosophic system of Suhrawardî, presenting it as a perfect unity of mystical and philosophical thought in the history of the later development of Islam in both scope and depth with that of Avicenna in the earlier ages of Islam.

19) See above, note 9.

Maritain puts it,²²⁾ with the “existentizing the concrete “existent”. From Maritain’s criticism of modern Existentialism according to them, a certain respect in which “existence” pure and simple is the face with which the latter must be confronted and in which the latter must be transformed. The most basic metaphysical truth can be found in the heart of human “existence”, that is, in the heart of human existence. This is true on condition that the latter is understood in the sense of supra-consciousness, which we can never accept.

Hikmat philosophy partially agrees with the latter’s assertion of the fundamental priority of “existence” over “essence”. At the same time, modern philosophy naturally disagrees with the latter’s points. The main difference between the two is that *Hikmat* philosophy is a result of the synthesis of mysticism and conceptual thinking. For *Hikmat* thinkers, modern Existentialism represents a disharmony and imbalance.

For instance, Martin Heidegger’s philosophy reached in the latter phase of his career a certain existential understanding. His idea of “being” is the truth into which man can and should exist. Heidegger’s truth as the “unhiddenness” in the world is the truth of his concept of “knowing” (*wissen*). The truth meaning here the disclosedness of being and other related basic ideas of Heidegger’s philosophy. In our minds Suhrawardī’s idea of “revelation” is the Light (*nūr*).

Yet the two definitely part from each other in that his philosophizing about “existence” begins at the point where we have

22) Jacques Maritain, *Existence and Essence* (1948).

23) These ideas have been picked up by Heidegger in *Wahrheit* (1947), *Über den “Humanismus”* (1947), *Führung in die Metaphysik* (1953).

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

Chapter 2

The Notion and the Reality of Existence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Qâla al-shaykh al-ra'is fi al-Najât inna al-wujûd lâ yumkin an yushrah bi-ghayr al-ism, li-anna-hu mabda' awwal li-kull sharḥ, fa-lâ sharḥ la-hu, bal şûratu-hu taqûm fi al-nafs bi-lâ tawassuṭ shay'.

The chief (of the Peripatetic Philosophers) states in his *Najât*: Existence (*wujûd*) cannot possibly be explicated except lexically, because it is itself the first principle of all explication. So it does not allow of any explication (by anything else). Rather, its essential form (i.e. its "notion") finds itself in the mind without the intermediary of anything else.

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

Naqûl inna al-mawjûd lâ yumkin an yushrah bi-ghayr al-ism, li-anna-hu mabda' awwal li-kull sharḥ, fa-lâ sharḥ la-hu, bal şûratu-hu taqûm fi al-nafs bi-lâ tawassuṭ shay'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33) *Kitāb al-Muṭabar* III, *Metaphysics* (Haydarābād, 1358 A.H.) pp. 20-21:

إذا ادرك الانسان شيئاً من الأشياء بحاسة من حواسه، كالبصر والسمع والشم والذوق واللمس، وعرفه و عرف ادراكه له، قال عن ذلك الشئى إنه موجود. و عنى بكونه موجوداً غير كونه مدركاً، بل كونه بحيث يُدرك قبل ادراكه له و بعده، و قبل ادراك مدرك آخر له و بعده، فان الشئى يكون فى نفسه بحيث يُدرك فيدركه المدرك. وهو بتلك الحالة قبل ادراكه و معه و بعده. و تلك الحالة هى التى يسميها المسمون وجوداً، و يقال للشئى لأجلها انه موجود، وهو كونه بحيث يدرك. ثم إن الذهن يتأمل فيعلم أن الادراك لا تشبه له فى الوجود، و انما هو شئى يكون للموجود فى وجوده من المدرك له. و ليس هو أمراً للشئى فى نفسه، و انما كونه بحيث يدرك هو صفته التى له فى ذاته و بذاته. ثم نرى أن من الأشياء ما يدركها مدرك و يعجز عن ادراكها مدرك آخر. ولا يكون كونها بحيث لا يتالها المدرك الذى عجز عن ادراكها فلم يدركها قادحاً فى وجودها، بل هى موجودة، سواء ادركها او لم يدركها. فيجوز أن يكون من الموجودات مالا يُدرك او لا يدركه بعض المدركين. فان الادراك ليس شرطاً فى الوجود، و انما الوجود شرط فى الادراك، إلا أن اعتراف العارف بوجود الموجود و علمه به انما يكون من ادراكه له. فلا يصح أن يحد الموجود بأنه المدرك ولا بأنه الذى يصح أن يدرك، وإن كانت المعرفة به حصلت بالادراك. بل الوجود و الموجود من الكلمات التى تدرك معانيها بأوائل المعارف من جهة الادراك و المعرفة، كما قلنا. فلا يحتاج الى حد يشرح الاسم، اللهم الا كما تفسر اللغات و تنقل من واحدة الى اخرى.

Herein is disclosed the strange
lectual attempt to solve this unsolvable
of Sabzawarian metaphysics.

The Co

At the beginning of the preceding
stages distinguishable in the meaning
according to this distinction, is the
standing of the meaning of a word,
of what is meant by a word. The
this preconceptual understanding of
further elaborated into the form of

For example, when we hear the
aware of something corresponding
something in our consciousness. So
notion of "man" at its first preconceptual
function by furnishing us in this way
something in the external world. Various
variously according to our preconceptual
most ordinary purposes this kind of

However, for the purpose of more
form of understanding. We proceed
stood at the first stage; we analyze
finish by obtaining a more or less
this stage of secondary elaboration
It is irrelevant whether the concept
such an analytic form or whether it
analytic form. The content of understanding
stage, the content of understanding
conscience. Now it is a step removed
ence in the consciousness. It has been

It often happens that the *Hikm*
such an explicit way. Instead, they

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

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

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

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

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

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

He (Fârâbî) was once asked as to whether the proposition, for instance, "Man exists" has a predicate or not.

He answered: this is a problem upon which the Ancients and the Moderns have put forth divergent opinions, some of them maintaining that it has no predicate, and some others that it *does* have a predicate. In my view, both of these positions are right in a certain limited sense. This is due to the following fact. When considered from the viewpoint of a specialist in *Physica*, whose function it is to investigate concretely existent things, this and similar propositions have no predicate, for the "existence" of a thing (in this case) is no other than that very thing,⁴¹⁾ while a predicate (in the real sense of the word) must mean something (i.e. a property) together⁴²⁾ with the judgement of the latter (i.e. that property) being existent or not in the thing (i.e. the thing indicated by the subject of the proposition). Thus from this point of view, the proposition in question must be regarded as having no predicate.

But when a logician considers the same proposition, he will recognize it to be composed of two terms as its two parts. He will also recognize that the proposition is liable of being true and false. Thus from this point of view, the proposition does have a predicate.

The gist of Fârâbî's argument may be summarized as follows. "Existence", in a proposition like "Man exists", is a predicate from the point of view of grammar and logic. For those, however, who are dealing with real and actual things, "existence" is not a predicate in the true sense of the word, because it tells nothing about real and actual things except that they are actualized, while a real predicate is supposed (1) to indicate some positive quality and (2) affirm or negate it of the thing to which it is attributed. Such a function is not exercised by "existence" when it is used as a grammatical or logical predicate. It has nothing new to add to the content of the subject. As Professor N. Rescher⁴³⁾ writes: "al-Fârâbî's insistence that the attribution of existence to an object adds nothing to its characterization, and provides no new information about it, effectively anticipates

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

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

43) *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

Now, in the case of a "primary intelligible", both "occurrence" and "qualification" happen *in concreto* in the external world, as a real event. In this case, the quality indicated by the predicate—"whiteness" for example—has an independent subsistence in the external world, independent from the thing itself (the subject) to which it "occurs". There is also in the external world a concretely ex-

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

47) *Mashâ'ir*, *op. cit.* pp. 11-12.

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

49) Such as "being-necessary" (*wâjibiyah*) and "being-one" (*waḥdah*).

extra-mental world something con-
having a real particular relationship
nity" is an abstract concept extra-
which there is found an actually ex-

Something "being-possible" and
of "secondary intelligibles". So also
of "existence" is a "philosophical
"being-existent" is not a real quality
takes place only in the mind, on the
It is, however, a concept extracted
quiddity". Otherwise expressed, the "quiddity".

But according to those who hold
who accept the fundamental reality
of the latter—and, we must remember
of this school—the above analysis
In their view, what corresponds to
world is not: existent "quiddities"
is determined and delimited quiddities
(*wujûdât*). These particularized
abstract concept of "existence" is

In the world of concepts, "quiddity"
"occurs" to the former. In the world
that precedes "quiddity", and it is
sense that "quiddities" are but verbal
delimitation of the reality of "existence"
drawn by the mind from the diverse
in order to understand this point
about the distinction between "existence"
task of the three following chapters.

In the preceding pages we have
its first and second stages of presence
now consider the distance that separates

The *Hikmat* philosophers consider
view on several different levels. In the
consciousness of men, "existence" has
details we may simply recall that
abstraction, is the farthest removed

Chapter 4

The Distinction between *Essentia* and *Existentia*

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

Indeed, from the earliest periods of Islamic thought, the dichotomy of *essentia* and *existentia* played such a conspicuous role that it deeply affected even the historical formation of Western scholasticism in the Middle Ages as one of the typically Islamic—or more strictly, Avicennian—theses. It is now a commonplace among scholars specialized in scholastic philosophy to say that Avicenna and his Western followers made a "real distinction" between *essentia* and *existentia*. Thus, to give an example picked up at random, Professor Louis de Raeymaeker of Louvain⁵²) says:

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

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

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

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

In Islamic thought the thesis of "existence" was first maintained explicitly since it has dominated the whole, however, can be traced back to Aristotle.

When Aristotle established the term "existent" (*to on ê on*) and criticized the distinction between "quiddity" implicitly raised. Moreover, in a footnote (VII), he clearly distinguishes "quiddity" at the beginning of the same Chapter as "what-is-it-ness" (*to ti est*

He who knows what "man"—also that the latter exists. For concerning that which does not, what a phrase or a word like "it really is. Besides, if one is to know how could one do so by one act of thing, and demonstration shows that exists are two completely different. What we want to maintain is that and-such, it must necessarily be the very "essence" (of the thing) to substitute the "essence" of anything, whether a thing exists or not, this is exactly what the scientist simply assumes what "triangle" who gives a definition of "triangle."

55) W. Norris Clarke in the Preface to *Essence to Existence in Existential Metaphysics*. This is said about Prof. Carlo's interpretation (Aegidius Romanus). It, therefore, has been directly through the influence exercised by him, however, admirably suit for a description.

56) 92, a, 34-35.

57) The classical example in Islamic

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

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

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

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

60) *Ibid.*, p. 90.

61) *Gamma*, 2, 1003, b, 26-27.

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

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

في ماهية هذه الأشياء. وألا، لكان الوجود مقوّمًا، ولا يستكمل تصوّر الماهية دونه، ويستحيل رفعه عن الماهية توهمًا، ولكان قياس الهوية من الانسان مثلاً قياس الجسمية والحيوانية، وكان، كما أن من يفهم الإنسان انساناً لا يشك في أنه جسم او حيوان، اذا فهم الجسم او الحيوان، كذلك لا يشك في أنه موجود. وليس كذلك بل يشك ما لم يقم حسّ او دليل. فالوجود والهوية، لما بنا، ليس من جملة المقوّمات من الموجودات. فهو من العوارض اللازمة. وبالجملة ليس من اللواحق التي تكون بعد الماهية. وكل لاحق، فاما أن يلحق الذات من ذاته ويلزمه، واما ان يلحق عن غيره. والوجود لا يمكن أن يكون من اللواحق التي تلحق الشئ عن ذاته، لأنه محال أن يكون الذي لا وجود له يلزمه شئ يتبعه في الوجود. فمحال أن يكون الماهية يلزمها شئ حاصل الابد حصولها. ولا يجوز أن يكون الحصول يلزمه بعد الحصول، والوجود يلزمه بعد الوجود، فيكون أنه قد كان قبل نفسه. فلا يجوز أن يكون الوجود من اللواحق التي للماهية عن نفسها، اذ اللاحق لا يلحق الشئ عن نفسه الا الحاصل الذي، اذا حصل، عرضت له أشياء سببها هو. فان الملزوم المقتضى لللازم علة لما يتبعه، والعلة لا توجب معلولها الا اذا وجبت. وقبل الوجود لا تكون وجبت. فلا يكون الوجود مما تقتضيه الماهية، فيما وجوده غير ماهيته، بوجه من الوجوه. فيكون اذاً المبله الذي يصدر عنه الوجود غير الماهية. وذلك لأن كل لازم ومقتضى، فاما عن نفس الشئ، وإما عن غيره. و اذا لم يكن الهوية للماهية التي ليست هي الهوية عن نفسها، فهي لها عن غيرها. فكل ما هويته غير ماهيته وغير المقوّمات، فهويته من غيره. فيجب ان ينتهي الى مبله لا ماهية له مباينة للهوية.

65) The word *huwīyah*, which Fārābī uses in place of the more commonly used *wujūd* has two meanings in Islamic philosophy: (1) the state in which a thing is completely actualized in the extra-mental world (*al-tahaqquq al-khāriji*), or the concrete and individual reality (*al-ḥaqīqah al-juz'iyah*) of a thing; and (2) that which brings a thing into such a state of actualization. In this second sense, *huwīyah* is synonymous with *wujūd*. And Fārābī is evidently using the word in this sense.

66) The text must be read: *Wa-lā (huwīyatu-hu) dākhilah fī māhiyati-hi.*

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

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

after the latter has been already
property) should occur to the
For in that case we would have
itself (i.e. before it became exist-
Thus it is impossible that "ex-
occur to a "quiddity" out of the
origin of its own properties only
zation. Only when a thing is a
occur to it, the thing being the
erty occurs and which necessi-
that follows it. And a "cause"
former be itself "necessary".
Thus to conclude: "existence"
"quiddity" except in case the
All this makes it clear that there
something other than "quiddity"
which occurs to something as
source in the thing itself or some-
been proved that "existence" can
except when the latter happens to
must come to the "quiddity"
Everything whose "existence" is
one of its internal constituent
other than itself. And (the char-
in which "essence" is not disti-

I have translated this fairly long
—the importance may be measured
upon Avicenna; indeed, the latter adopted
precisely this form and made it an
that we might examine and bring to
standing of this argument is of decided
development of metaphysical ideas.

Fârâbî, like Aristotle, starts from
primary reality for him. He sets out
as we have seen above, is in itself

72) The reference is to the Absolute

It often happens that you understand
tain doubt as to whether it is
not "existent". This is in spite of
your mind as being composed of
represented the triangle in the
whether it exists or not.⁷³⁾

Everything having a "quiddity"
creto or as a representation in
actually present.⁷⁴⁾ So when a
its (i.e. the thing's) being "exis-
(2) its being constituted by "e-
(i.e. something different, and c
thing, whether it (i.e. that s
"essence") or separable.⁷⁵⁾

Furthermore, the causes of "ex-
dity".⁷⁶⁾ "Being-man" (*insânî*)
a "quiddity", for which its being
a constituent element, but is s
stituent element of the "quidd
the "quiddity" be actualized in
constituent part (i.e. "existence
And it would be utterly impos

73) Avicenna: *al-Ishârât wa-al-Ta*

وجود في الأعيان أم ليس بموجود، بعد ما تمثّل

74) The implication is that, if "quiddity", it would be present together
be separable from the "quiddity" wh

75) "Inseparable existence" is t
exist, while "separable existence" is
cit., p. 203, note 3.

76) The causes of "existence" a
tum, while causes of "quiddity" are
203, note. 4. The "causes" of "quidd

77) For further details about the
elements or parts (*muqawwimât*), see
(Cairo, al-Amiriyah, 1953) p. 34.

then try to fuse them, by a metaphysical chemistry, into an object".⁸⁰⁾ On the contrary, he begins with the concrete object, subjects it to a conceptual analysis, and finds in it two component elements: "quiddity" and "existence". To do so is not the same as asserting that the concrete object is factually a composite of these two elements. Suhrawardî's criticism is completely misplaced, when he says that if "existence" is something coming from the outside to alight upon a "quiddity", that very "quiddity" would be "existent" before it is qualified by "existence". This criticism stands on the assumption that the relation between "quiddity" and "existence" is, for Avicenna, something that takes place in the extra-mental world of reality. Such, however, is not the position taken by Avicenna.

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

What is most important about this theory is the following. Avicenna is not asserting that "quiddities" are actually found in such a purified state in the world of concrete objective reality. Such an assertion would imply the absurd thesis that a "quiddity", prior to its "existence", is already "existent" in some way or other. What Avicenna wishes to say is that the reason, when it analyzes a concrete thing, can consider the "quiddity" which it finds therein (1) in the state of absolute purity away from all external determinations, just as it can consider the same "quiddity" (2) in so far as it is actualized *in concreto* as individual things, and (3) in so far as it is represented in the mind. He calls these three different aspects of one and the same "quiddity" the three ways of viewing the quiddity⁸¹⁾ (*ʿitibârât thalâthah*). The word *ʿitibâr* (pl. *ʿitibârât*) means a subjective manner of looking at a thing, something produced or posited through the analytic work of the reason. It is an aspect of a thing which primarily appears in the subject and which, then, is projected onto the thing itself as if it were an objective aspect of the thing. In our present case the most basic—because it is purest—of the three *ʿitibârât* of

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

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

any fissure. Since, however, it has two different predicates, it is also clear that the single object has in itself two different aspects. Now the problem which arises here is: Do these two aspects of a concrete object indicate two different "realities"? Or does only one of them have a corresponding "reality", whichever it may be? It is impossible that both of them should be not "real" at the same time. If such were the case, the concrete object would lose its "reality" altogether, and there would be nothing "real" in the world.

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

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

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

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

enthusiastic champion of the opposite thesis, as he himself says:⁸⁷⁾

In the earlier days I used to be a passionate defender of the thesis that the "quiddities" are *aşîl* and "existence" is *itibârî*, until my Lord gave me guidance and let me see His demonstration. All of a sudden my spiritual eyes were opened and I saw with utmost clarity that the truth was just the contrary of what the philosophers in general had held. Praise be to God who, by the light of intuition, led me out of the darkness of the groundless idea and firmly established me upon the thesis which would never change in the present world and the Hereafter.

As a result (I now hold that) the "existences" (*wujûdât*)⁸⁸⁾ are primary "realities", while the "quiddities" are the "permanent archetypes" (*a'yân thâbitah*) that have never smelt the fragrance of "existence"⁸⁹⁾ The "existences" are nothing but beams of light radiated by the true Light which is the absolutely self-subsistent Existence, except that each of them is characterized by a number of essential properties and intelligible qualities. These latter are the things that are known as "quiddities".

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

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

87) *Mashâ'ir*, p. 35, no. 85.

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

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

90) *Mashâ'ir*, p. 4, no. 4:

إنه (أى الوجود) الأصل الثابت فى كل موجود وهو الحقيقة، و ما عداه كعكس وظل و شبح.

predication" (*ḥaml shâ'i' šinâ'i'*),⁹⁴ is conditioned by both unity and divergence. When we make a judgment such as, "Man is capable of writing" (*al-insân kâtib*), the subject, "man", and the predicate, "capable of writing", must be different from each other. If they were completely one and the same, there could occur no subject-predicate relationship between them. There must, however, be a certain respect in which the two are unified. If they were separate and different from one another in all respects and had absolutely nothing to do with one another, they could never be brought together in the unity of the subject-predicate relationship.

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

The *concept* of "man" is definitely different from the *concept* of "writer". These two different concepts in some cases, however, pertain to one and the same object (*mišdâq*) in the non-conceptual, i.e. real, world, of which it is true to say both that "it is a man" and "it is capable of writing". The identity is furnished by "existence". "Existence" here as elsewhere is in itself one single reality, and both the subject and predicate exist thereby. This same "existence", nonetheless, has two different aspects or stages; the subject exists in one of these stages and the predicate in the other⁹⁵. The primary requisite of the "common technical predication", namely, the necessity of there being unity and duality at the same time, is thus satisfied by the collaboration of "existence" and "quiddities".

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

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

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

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

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

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

We must remark that for those who maintain the principality of "quiddity" it is difficult not to admit "analogical gradation" in the internal structure of "quiddity". Otherwise, they would have to admit that within a limited, i.e. finite, distance extending between the first stage and the last, there are actualized an

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

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

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

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

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

لا يلزم من التغاير الذهني التغاير العيني

100) *Ibid.*, p. 23:

إذا قلنا : وجود كذا غير ماهيته، فإنما نعني بحسب التفصيل الذهني.

101) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

and that the distinction between
realm of conceptual analysis.

As we have pointed out earlier,
has no force once it is admitted that
of Avicenna. The weakness of the
more important for our purposes is
the *i'tibârî* nature of "existence".
metrically opposed to the fundamen

The Peripatetic philosophers¹⁰⁵⁾
most evident of all things so that
else. This stand, Suhrawardî says,
a clear meaning or meanings discern
"existence". It is remarkable, he
of "existence" indicate that it is *i'*

The first of its meanings is "reality"
of propositions such as the following:
mind", "in reality", "in time" etc.
is invariably the same as the mean
denotes the relation of an actual exist
and time. This relation, denoted by
our reason.

The second meaning is the logical
In a proposition like: "Zayd exists"
istence" simply means the relation
by the subject of the proposition.

The third meaning is "essence"
pression: the "existence" of a thing
or the thing "itself". The "essence"
abstraction, an abstract notion which
from the actually existent thing (i

In all these three cases, what
aspects" (*i'tibârât 'aqlîyah*) which
level of conceptualization alone. The
extra-mental world, but "existence"

105) The argument here developed
Quṭb al-Din's *Commentary*, pp. 189-190.

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

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

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

The passage just quoted speaks also of "possibility" being a "mental attribute" (*ṣifah dhiknīyah*). Consequently, "existence" too is to be considered a "mental attribute". The concept of "attribute" (*ṣifah*), or "accident" (*ʿaraḍ*) in connection with "existence" raises a very important and interesting problem in Islamic ontology. We shall deal with this problem in the following chapter. Here we confine ourselves to reproducing a passage in which the concept of "mental attribute" is

109) *Ibid.*, p. 346, § 103:

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

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

infinite regress.

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

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

Suppose a thing is actually "non-existent" (*ma'dûm*). You ask them: Is the "existence" of that thing "non-existent", or is it "actualized"? It will be absurd to say that the thing is "non-existent" but its "existence" is "existent". So the latter also must necessarily be "non-existent".

But since in this way the "existence" of something is conceivable together with the judgment that it (i.e. that "existence") is of necessity "non-existent", it is patent that "existence-being-existent" is not the same as "existence" itself. For otherwise, it would be utterly impossible for us to have the representation of "existence" judging at the same time that it is "non-existent" (i.e. not actualized) in the external world.

Thus they will have to admit that "existence" becomes "existent" only by dint of something (i.e. another "existence") which occurs to it when the "quiddity" becomes "actualized" and "existent". That is to say, they will have to admit that "existence" becomes "existent" only through another "existence". And this will lead to an infinite regress.

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

112) *Ibid.*, pp. 358-359, § 109 :

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

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

Chapter 6

Is Existence an Accident?

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

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

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

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

116) Thomas: *In IV Met.*, lect. 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

125) Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī: *Commentary on Avicenna's al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbihāt*, III, pp. 462-463:

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

126) *Mashā'ir* p. 27, no. 71.

127) *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

نقول: إن الموجود منها إما أن يكون موجوداً بذاته و عن ذاته، وإما أن يكون وجوده وجب عن غيره، ولم يجب له بذاته. وهذه قسمة عقلية تعتبر في الأذهان في كل موجود، ولا يخرج عنها موجود.

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

ذلك أن الموجود الذي له علة في وجوده ليس له مفهوم من ذاته الا العدم، أعني أن كل ما هو موجود من غيره، فليس له من ذاته الا العدم.

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

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

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

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

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

136) *Al-Ta'liqât*, quoted by Mullâ Şadrâ in the *Mashâ'ir* p. 34, §83.

wise. Only when it descends, so to speak, from the highest stage of absolute metaphysical simplicity and receives various limitations and determinations, does it appear as particular things. These limitations and determinations of "existence" by which the latter leaves the stage of absoluteness and becomes particularized, are "quiddities".

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

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

For a better understanding of "quiddity" as the intrinsic limitation of "existence", Professor William Carlo¹³⁸⁾ proposes another metaphor. The thesis of "quiddity" being an *extrinsic* limitation of "existence" may be explained by comparing "existence" to an infinite ocean and "quiddity" to a vessel or container into which the water is received. Each container, i.e. each "quiddity", receives as much water, i.e. "existence", as it can hold within its limits of circumscription. In this metaphor, "quiddity" is given a kind of self-subsistence and the positive capacity of limiting, determining, and contracting "existence".

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

137) See, for instance, Muḥiy al-Dīn Maḥdī Qumshī'ī: *op. cit.*, I, pp. 18-19.

138) *Op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

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

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

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

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

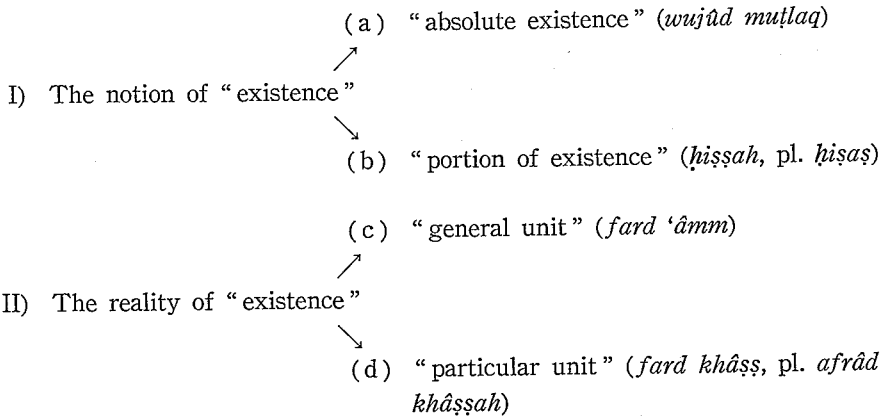
It will be interesting to observe in this connection how a contemporary existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, who is professedly an atheist, describes his own personal encounter with the reality of "existence". It is described as an awful, uncouth and crushing experience. The illumination (*ishrâq*), with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

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

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

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

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



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

The first (a) is the “self-evident”, primary concept of “existence”, which we elucidated in the first part of the present paper. It is a concept of the widest extension, being applicable to all things without discrimination. “Existence” at this stage is represented in the mind in its absolute simplicity, without any determination whatsoever, whether intrinsic or extrinsic. It is evident that “existence” thus

143) *L'être et l'essence*, pp. 297-298.

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

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

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

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

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

146) This paragraph is based on Mullâ Şadrâ's explanation of this position in the *Ma-shâ'ir*, p. 28, §§ 71-72.

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

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

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

X ↘
Y ← "existence"
Z ↙

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

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

Sabzawârî, however, thinks that this doctrine does not represent the "tasting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“accident” by way of intensity-weakness. Likewise, the reality of “existence” is also of an “analogical” structure. According to the Pahlawī philosophers, the reality of “existence” as it appears in the Absolute is clearly different from its reality as it appears in other “possible” existents. In the former the reality is “more intense” and “prior”, while in the latter it is “weaker” and “posterior”. In the same way, the reality of “existence” as it appears in a non-material being is “stronger” than the same reality as it appears in a material being.

“Analogicity”¹⁵¹ is technically divided into two kinds: (1) “analogicity” in a specialized sense (*tashkik khāṣṣī*) and (2) “analogicity” in a popular (i.e. non-specialized) sense (*tashkik ‘āmmī*).

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

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

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

151) The following explanation owes a great deal to a very clear exposition of the problem by Professor Muḥiy al-Dīn Mahdī Qumshī’ī in his *Ḥikmat-e Ilāhī*, pp. 10-11.

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

The position taken by the Pahlawî philosophers is described by Sabzawâri in the following way.¹⁵⁴⁾

"Existence" according to the Pahlawî philosophers is a "reality" characterized by "analogical gradation" and comprising various degrees.....that vary like the real (i.e. supra-sensible) Light which, in fact, is the same as the reality of "existence" because "light" (in general) is that which is self-manifesting and which brings all else into manifestation. This is precisely the characteristic of the reality of "existence", for it is of the very nature of the latter that it is self-manifesting and that it brings all else into manifestation. The word "others" in this context refers to all "quiddities".....

("Existence"-Light in this sense) resembles sensible light which is also an analogically graded entity having various degrees as it becomes strong or weakThe basic characteristic of "light" (whether sensible or metaphysical) is that it is self-manifesting and that it brings all else into manifestation. This characteristic is actualized in every degree of "light" and "shadow", so that weakness does not prevent a weak degree from being a "light"; nor are intensity and moderation essential conditions or constituent factors of a particular degree except in the sense of being something which does not remain outside of "light"; nor do they prevent (it from being a "light"). Thus a strong "light" is a "light" just as much as a moderate one is a "light". Likewise, a weak light is yet a light.

The "light" thus has a wide expanse with regard to its various non-composite degrees, and each of these degrees also has an expanse with regard to its relation to its various recipients.

In exactly the same way, the reality of "existence" has various degrees in terms of intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority, etc., in its very reality. Every degree of "existence" is non-composite. It is not the case that a

154) *Sharh-e Manzûmeh*, ad. vv. 34-35.

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

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

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

Suhrawardî's position concerning "existence" is complicated by the fact that, although he categorically denies all objective reality to "existence", he transfers, so to speak, what he denies to "existence" to the metaphysical reality of "light". The nature of metaphysical "light" as "that which is self-manifesting and which brings all else into manifestation"¹⁵⁸⁾ and its "analogical" (*tashkîkî*) structure¹⁵⁹⁾

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

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

ان النور هو الظاهر في حقيقة نفسه المظهر لغيره بذاته.

159) *Ibid.*, p. 197, pp. 133-134.

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the light of His Face all things become illumined. But in the presence of the light of His Face everything else is but a shadow.

In this verse God Himself is understood as pure Existence. "His Face" refers to "unfolded existence". It is His *actus* as "light" which is "self-manifesting and which brings all else into manifestation". That "all things become illumined by this light" refers to the fact that the "quiddities", which are in themselves *itibâri* and non-existent, become apparent to our eyes as "existents" by dint of the activity of the "light". Their real status, however, is indicated by the symbol of "shadow".

Before bringing this chapter to a close, one more important point must be mentioned.¹⁶³ Against the view of the Pahlawî philosophers who recognize in "existence as negatively-conditioned" the highest stage of "existence", i.e. the Absolute or God, many of the leading Sûfis take a different position in their metaphysical doctrines. "Existence as negatively-conditioned" (*wujûd bi-sharṭ lâ*), they argue, cannot be absolutely absolute, for it is *conditioned*, albeit negatively. It is pure "existence" with the negative condition that there be nothing else associated with it, that it not be determined by any possible determinations. In the eyes of the Sûfis, "existence" at this stage is, thus, already determined. Instead of being the stage of absolute absoluteness, "existence as negatively-conditioned" is the stage of first determination.

The highest stage of "existence", in the Sûfis' view, must be "existence as non-conditioned" (*wujûd lâ bi-sharṭ*), i.e. "existence" having absolutely no condition, not even that of being absolute, and not even that of being "non-conditioned". The highest stage is the reality of "existence" pure and simple. For the human consciousness it is real Darkness. The Absolute at this highest stage has no condition, no qualification. It is the "unknown-unknowable", the Mystery of mysteries (*ghayb majhûl*), the "hidden treasure" (*kanz makhfi*).

Thus, in the metaphysical system of these Sûfis, what constitutes the first stage of "existence" in the Pahlawî system is relegated to a subsidiary place, whereas the stage of the "non-conditioned", the second stage according to the Pahlawî philosophers, is placed at the highest point of the hierarchy. The Sûfî view implies a peculiar understanding of the term "non-conditioned". They take the term to mean absolutely "non-conditioned" thus denying even the condition of being "non-conditioned". The concept of "non-conditioned" understood in this way constitutes the very source of the triple division into "negatively-conditioned", "non-conditioned" —as understood in the ordinary sense—and "conditioned-by-something". "Un-

163) Cf. Âshtiyâni: *op. cit.*, p. 157, 193.

Categories (of Aristotle):
91, 107.

Chuang Tzū:
* his concept of non-existence: 22 (n. 29). * his concept of Non-Non-Non-Being: 48.

Chu Tzū:
13 (n. 15).

Chu Tzū Yü Lei:
13 (n. 15).

Clark, Norris:
87.

Corbin, Henry:
6 (n. 3), 7 (n. 5), 58 (n. 1), 59, 65 (n. 20), 118 (n. 114). * on Mollâ Şadrâ's emphasis on existence: 70, 103.

Dashtakî, Şadr al-Dîn:
* denies the reality of existence altogether: 134.

Das Wesen des Thomismus:
119.

Dawwânî, Jalâl al-Dîn:
* and the "tasting of theosophy": 136.

Dögen:
9 (n. 12).

Duns Scotus:
58.

Durar al-Farâ'id:
106 (n. 95), 135 (n. 148).

Durrah al-Tâj li-Ghurrah al-Dibâj fî al-Ḥikmah:
60 (n. 9).

Essence and Existence in Avicenna:
70, 98 (n. 80).

Existence and the Existent:
66 (n. 22).

Fârâbî:
58. * and the problem of existence: 3, 38. * on existence as a predicate: 79-80. * on the distinction between

essentia & existentia: 86, 88, 91-95, 99. * difference between him & Aristotle on the existence of quiddity: 92 (n. 67).

Fuṣûṣ al-Ḥikam (of Fârâbî):
63, 91.

Ghazâlî (Algazel):
* attacks Ibn Sinâ: 60.

Giles of Rome (Aegidius Romanus):
88 (n. 55), 141-142, *similarity between him & Pahlawî philosophers: 141-142.

Gilson, Etienne:
* on *chosisme intégral*: 89, 97 (n. 79)
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