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and showed the way in which through intellectual analysis, quiddity is an accident of existence. Contrary to this outlook, Suhrawardi (and apparently Ibn Sina) had held that in the existence-quiddity dichotomy, existence is an accident of quiddity and existence is solely a mental concept without correspondence to fact while quiddity constitutes reality.

Mulla Sadra by taking the opposite opinion, reiterated that it is existence which constitutes reality and that it is quiddity which is the mental construct. By approving the primacy of existence and attributing existentiality to existence and mentality or accidentality to quiddity, Mulla Sadra was able to expound some main philosophical issues as the systematic ambiguity of existence, substantial motion, the emanation from the divine presence to the physical world and then a return to it, the archetypal intellects or lights, the universal and active intellect, the universal souls, the creation and the question of the pre-eternity (*qidam*) or createdness (*buduth*), in destructibility and immortality of the soul and ascribing the punishment and reward according to corporal and spiritual resurrection. He succeeded to answer the opponents objections of the primacy of existence (like: Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Ibn Rushd [or Averroes], and Mir Damad).

The primacy of existence has no merely one definite interpretation: There are at least three kinds. The differences derived from their premises, presumptions principles and their own perceiving on the primacy theory. The definition of quiddity, the accidentality of quiddity and the meaning of primacy are the three main issues which constitute the diversity of interpretation over the primacy of existence.

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\*. The identity of existence of God and His attributes. He maintains that God, the principle of all existence, is the pure, absolute and infinite being, from whom other existing things and all emanate. His attributes and names do not exist "in-itself" but through "The One truth and reality" exist (Mulla Sadra, 1360, p. 39).

Thus in the same way the divine's essence and attributes are one in being but distinctive in concept, existence distinguishes with quiddity in concept and united in predication. (Mulla Sadra, *Mashair*, p. 55)

\*. The identity of time and motion.

Substantial motion is the third key for Mulla Sadra. He exposed the movement from potentiality to actuality of a thing in which the material being itself is in a constant state of flux perpetually undergoing substantial change. Existence can be conceived of as a continual unfolding of existence, which is thus a single whole with a constantly evolving internal dynamic. Time is the measure of this process of renewal, and is not an independent entity such that events take place within it, but rather is a dimension exactly like the three spatial dimensions (*abaa'de salaase ye jesme ta'limi*) in which the physical world is station-Temporal continuum. Therefore in intellectual analysis Time and Motion are distinguished but in external world they are one and identical (Mulla Sadra *Asfar*, vol. 3, p. 147)

The second basis construes the ability of intellect to analyze one thing in external world into two things: existence and quiddity. (Ibid., vol. 1, p. 56).

In the theory of knowledge, Mulla Sadra identifies the mental faculties of the soul in terms of their epistemological function. Intellect has the ability to analyze one concrete fact into diverse affairs. Mulla Sadra's stand on the fundamental nature of intellect follows his view over its ability. Intellect can distinguish various notions in simple abstracts Nature of God and His attributes, time and motion, and three spatial dimensions from natural body. These could be identified the feature of intellect.

Therefore, after expousing premises and bases, it deserves to conclude as follows: Intellect through analyzing and distinguishing two concepts, should judge that which of them is prior and has primacy. It endeavors to clarify existence and quiddity alone and what are their features and apart else which specification has.

After analytic contemplation, intellect realizes the primacy of existence. It itself has being and doesn't need anything else to exist. Thus he pointed out that existence is neither of constitutive element of a quiddity nor a necessary attribute. He expounded the accidentality of essence

## Mulla Sadra and the Primacy of Existence

(ملاصدرا و تقدم وجود)

(*asalat al-wujud*), but he used the following terms:

- \*. *Ta'assol* (primacy)
- \*. *Moteassel* (having primacy)
- \*. *Al-asl fil mujudiab* (original or prior in being)
- \*. *Al-mujud be dhat* and *al asallat* (existent in-itself and in prior)
- \*. *Dho wujud* (having being) (*Mashahir*, pp. 4-10, 52, *Asfar* vol. 3, pp. 257, 277, vol. 1,

VIII- Things are different in existent, that is to say the existence is one but graded in intensity or systematic ambiguity of existence. Existence predicates on it's assents in the mode of graded and intensive. Mulla Sadra asserted that existence is capable of a range of intensities and has the property of combining "unity in multiplicity" and "multipity in unity". (Javadi Amoli, 1386 S. H., p. 427)

IX- Every fact in external world is the predicate-ness of both the concept of existence and quiddity. In other word, both denote to one thing.

X- The primacy of existence is ontological case and not epistemological discussion. Thus believing in primacy of existence does not entail this conviction The concept of existence should be abstracted directly from external world. The main question of the primacy theory is to study whether the existence or quiddity is the concrete reality or essential actualized?

Only by virtue of above premises, it is possible to construe the first interpretation of the primacy of existence. This has two bases:

1. The identity of existence and quiddity in external world.
2. Division of one object (Thing) into two concepts through intellectual analysis.

Mulla Sadra repeatedly explained in his *Asfar*, the identity of existence and quiddity in external world as the first base of the primacy. (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 60, 67, 258; vol. 6, p. 50; vol. 7, p. 66)

That is to say, the one fact is both the predication of existence and quiddity. Thus in outer world both are in actual but not distinctive. It rather means that these two are identical and exist in one predication or they are one thing (Mulla Sadra, 1378, pp. 200-204).

Mulla Sadra reiterated on the identity and even regarded the implication of "qualification" (*al-ittesaf*) in which mak relation between existence and quiddity. By extension and equivocally (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1, p. 58) he asserted that it is not a "True qualification". (*Mashair*, p. 27) He proposed some samples to expose the identity theory:

- \*. The identity of genus and differentia in simple beings in which their genus and differentia are stipulative (Tabatabaee, 1382 S.H., chap. 5)

(Mulla Sadra, *Mashair*, p. 4). Mulla Sadra explains six reasons in *Asfar* in different positions in a scattered way but present eight reasons in *Mashair* systematically.

Diverse interpretations over the primacy of existence was generated and mere three of them are acceptable. For understanding the true interpretation of Mulla Sadra outlooks it is desirable to discuss three modes of the theory, but here we just expound the first interpretation.

The first interpretation of the primacy of existence needs more than ten premises:

I- the world is all fact and constituted from reality so that totality of world is not mere doxa and imagination or fanciful (Motahari, 1384, vol. 6, p. 481)

II- we can abstract existence and quiddity concepts from one reality in external world. Here quiddity would be applied to "every concept except existence" and denotes on three senses:

- \*. The essence of thing
- \*. The nature or entity of thing
- \*. Every beings else existence

The first meaning is the restricted while the second is most general, but the third is more particular than the second. Mulla Sadra in *Asfar* asserts that quiddity implies according the third sense (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol1. p. 65)

III- The concept of existence is distinguished from the concept of quiddity. It indicates the accident of the concept existence over quiddity (Ibid., p. 249)

IV- These two concepts cannot substitute each other. For the concept of existence indicates on the being and reality of things while the concept of quiddity denotes merely the essence and conceptual modes of things.

V- In primacy theory, the center debate is the reality in which every concept indicates it. The main aim of essence in the existence-quiddity dichotomy should be the denotation or meaning of quiddity and not solely it's concept.

VI- The existence in the primacy theory indicates its denotation and the reality and not it's concept. Thus Mulla Sadra called the reality of existence as "actuality and concreteness" (Ibid., p. 340)

VII- Primacy in the present essay means "Being in Essential". That is to say the primacy is in sense of actuality and "Being in itself" and not mere absolute actuality. Therefore primacy indicates existence in-itself stage and non-primacy not entailing the being and not-being.

Mulla Sadra himself did not applied the term the primacy of existence

central question of *Al-Qabasat* (book of embers) is the creation of the world and the possibility of its extension from old : This debate was regarded on the primacy of essence versus the priority of existence.

After a long discussion, he ultimately decides on espousing the primacy of quiddity, a view that would later be fundamentally disputed by his distinguished disciple, Mulla Sadra (See: Mir Damad, 1977).

*Jadhwat* is also devoted to the controversial debate on understanding the nature of existence and quiddity. He exposed in the descending order the gradations theory and stressed on descending and ascending act of creation. (Nasr, 1966, pp. 917-920)

The debate over the primacy of existence or quiddity, is regarded an age-old contentious problem in Islamic philosophy, Mir Damad construed the primacy of *mabiyah* (quiddity) while his most significant disciple, Mulla Sadra defended the theory of priority of *wujud* (existence). The central debate in primacy of whichever regards to reality the primacy of existence considers the existence to be real and it's quiddity to be solely accident. The priority of quiddity indicates the reality of essence and existence to be just an accidental. That is to say, it is a necessary attribute for actualization, and all the existent beings share this accidental necessity of existence. But what distinguishes and thus constitutes their unique ontological status is their quiddity, their what-it-is-ness, their apple-ness as opposed to orange-ness. (Nasr and Leaman, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 614-615).

Mulla Sadra disputed his teacher's view in the primacy of quiddity over existence and argued on the priority of existence, while he has been a passionate defender of the theory that the essences are extramentally real while existence is a mental construct, but it seems after departing his teacher and contemplating over metaphysics independently, he came in the contrary position. Mulla Sadra construed a divine guidance and by seeing Lord's manifestations came to the thesis of the primacy of existence. Although he tried to explain the spiritual inspiration and the light of intuition which opened his eyes and saw with utmost clarity that the truth was just the contrary of what he and other philosophers had held, but he himself presented diverse arguments in proving the primacy of existence logically and philosophically. Mulla Sadra did not content himself with the clarity and immediate cognition of existence but argued over it's primacy and the mentality of quiddity. He emphasized that his arguments should be considered as testimonies not logical reasons.

In the third part of *Mashair*, Mulla Sadra presented eight reasons in proving the primacy of existence and asserted that existence and it's primacy is the basis of theosophy (Hikmat) and the axis of his innovative views

Suhrawardi by basing his philosophy on Light was able to introduce two significant notions which may be thought of as the seeds of Mulla Sadra's philosophy: that of intensity of existence and gradation, and that of presence and self-manifestation. The former led Mulla Sadra to the primacy and ambiguity of existence and the latter led to the thought of presence knowledge. Therefore Suhrawardi had exerted a powerful influence on Mulla Sadra's adaptation of his concept of intensity and gradation to existence which resulted in the settlement of principles. (See: Razavi, 1997)

## 2. The primacy of existence

According to a commonly held view, Mulla Sadra made the primacy of existence as the cornerstone of his philosophy which soon became one of the main schools of Islamic philosophy, and he intentionally called it metaphysical philosophy (*al-hikmatal-mutaaliyah*) to indicate the comprehensive and transcendental dimensions.

I would like to point out that diverse reasons led Mulla Sadra to realize the primacy of existence, including: the problem of creation, epistemological questions in particular presence knowledge, the theory of gradation and intensity which were under the impression of Suhrawardi, eschatological problems and substantial motion. Furthermore, his preliminary studies in Isfahan had exerted a powerful influence on him. There he enrolled in courses on transmitted sciences and learned Shiite views concerning traditions (hadith), Jurisprudence and interpretation of Quran. This side of sciences and fusion with intellectual sciences distinguished him from almost all the earlier philosophers.

Mulla Sadra expounded in *Asfar* how he realized the primacy of existence as a kind of "Conversion": In the earlier times I was in espousing of the quiddities and was frenzied with love to defend the primacy of essence and the conceptuality of existence. My Lord emanated me a spiritual guidance and I could experience his presentations. I was in very sorry that the truth was not clear to me and philosophers in general held the contrary of truth. Now I believe in true the primacy of existence and quiddity is its shadow. (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1, introduction)

Some believe that MIR DAMAD's views on quiddity made a powerful influence on Mulla Sadra during his discipleship. Sadra al-Din began his studies on intellectual and even transmitted sciences under the tutelage of Mir Damad, who is known as one of the greatest and most original Islamic philosophers. There is resemblance between Mulla Sadra's views and some significant works of Mir Damad as *Al-Qabasat* and *Jadhawat* (manuals). The

The two fundamental principles helped him to settle a new philosophy are:

1. the primacy of existence and rejecting the primacy of quiddity and proving “the systematic ambiguity of existence” (*tashkik-al-wujud*)
2. the substantial motion (*al-haraka al-jawhariyya*)

He was well cognizant of the prominence of existence and reiterated that understanding of every thing even non- existence is possible by cognition of being. He exposed in *Mashair* (the book of metaphysical penetrations) that the existence is the principle of philosophical

bases and divine affaires. He writes:

Existence is a foundation and center on which every philosophical, theological, and eschatological question is based. Therefore, ignorance to existence would make ignorance to main divine knowledge. Thus, existence is the reality and the principle of every being (Mulla Sadra, *Mashair*, no date, p. 4).

Mulla Sadra in other works like *Asfar* and *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah* (Divine Testimonies) construed that the existence is the base of every concept and is considered as the most familier. Existence is most clearly conceived. (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1, p. 38; *Mashair*, p. 9)

It is presupposed that Suhrawardi made a distinctive break with the previous peripatetic tradition and is considered as the above all the conceiver and main proponent of the theory of the primacy of quiddity and critique to peripatetic logic and epistemology (see: Ziyaaai, 1990)

Mulla Sadra rejected the primacy of quiddity in Suhrawardi and explained and stressed in *his Comments ... on Hikmat al-Isbraq* (the philosophy of illumination) the sameness of existence and light.

He held that what Suhrawardi presented on light theory was nothing except the existence and it's grades, but he used light instead of existence (Mulla Sadra, *Comments ... on Hikmat al-Isbraq*, p. 283)

Mulla Sadra's innovation on existence certainly relies on Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi's philosophies and their attitudes on existence and essence.

In developing this distinction between the principles and the subject of metaphysics, Ibn Sina made a distinction between existence and quiddity in which we cannot infer the essence of something from its being. Ibn Sina stresses that essence regards mere to the nature of facts or things and may be the property of mind. (See. Goodman, 1992; Rahman, 1958, 4, pp. 1-15).



## Introduction

Every school and thinker in Islamic philosophy has construed the subject of philosophy as existence and defined it into concrete, external and corresponded to the objects (Avicenna, 1375 A. H. 6, vol. 3, 9-10). Main Islamic philosophers expounded the world in a systematic, strong and logical method in which ontology is the cornerstone and unique source of understanding the world. Islamic philosophy therefore, is considered as the Strong School in philosophy at present.

Despite the impressions of Hellenistic philosophy on Islamic philosophy but it has been the influence of Quranic verses and East tradition, Particularly Iran, which led to an independent thought.

Avicenna, Suhrawardi, and Mulla Sadra are regarded as the foremost philosophers in the Islamic tradition who presented a comprehensive, detailed and rationalistic account of the nature of Being, *Isbrag* and Light (*Nur*) and God. Central to their philosophy is Being with different interpretations. They stress the importance of Being, gaining knowledge and develop the theory of the primacy of Being.

They clearly intended to found a philosophy which departs from Hellenistic tradition. The only way was the theory of the primacy of the existence which was not the base of Hellenistic philosophy. They contemplate on "existent" which differs to existence or Being.

Sadr al-Din Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Yahya al-Qawami al-Shirazi, known as Mulla Sadra or Sadr al-Mutaallihin is the most important and influential philosopher in the Muslim world in the last four hundred years. He expounded a comprehensive and detailed philosophy which brought together Peripatetic, Illumination and Gnostic philosophies along with Shiite theology and traditions on the base of "the primacy of existence" what he termed a "transcendental philosophy" (*Al-hikmat Al-mota'aliyah*). It was based on existence as the merely constituent of reality. Existence and its primacy was for him a starting point which enabled him to find authentic solutions to many difficulties.

### 1. Mulla Sadra and settlement a principle in Islamic philosophy

Sadra-al-Mutaallihin is perhaps the single and the most important philosopher who presented a new school in Islamic philosophy which was not only a new trend and approach from Ibn Sina downwards to the contemporary philosophy in Islam, but also tried to depart thoroughly from Hellenistic philosophy.

## Mulla Sadra and the Primacy of Existence

Ghasem Pourhassan\*

### Abstract

*Mulla Sadra is considered unanimously as the most influential philosopher in the Islamic Philosophy tradition in the last four hundred years. Mulla Sadra's philosophy is founded on existence as the unique constituent of reality and its primacy, the intensity of existence, and finally transsubstantiality or substantial motion of being.*

*Mulla Sadra made the primacy of existence as the main basis of his philosophy. He distinguishes between the concept of being and the reality of being. The first, is the most obvious of all concepts and the most universal, while the second, is the most ambiguous, since it requires presence knowledge and pure intellect, which would be able to discern existence as reality.*

*Farabi and Ibn Sina perceived that in the existence-quiddity relationship, existence is an accident. Al-Subrawardi holds the theory more radical that existence is merely a mental concept with no corresponding reality and it is quiddity, which constitutes reality. Ibn Rusbd had criticized this approach. Mulla Sadra despite all Islamic philosophy tradition and his teacher, Mir Damad adopts an opposite and new outlook. His fundamental doctrine is principality of existence, and then quiddities are the mental constructs.*

*Reality is then the base of existence, which is graded and existentiating the reality of all things. Mulla Sadra at first followed his teacher and only after visionary and Gnostic existence, came to realize that it is existence, which bestows reality and has primacy on quiddity.*

**Keywords:** *existence, primacy, intensification, Mulla Sadra, Islamic philosophy, reality.*

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