

CONCEPTION OF TIME AND BEING IN THE TRANSCENDENT PHILOSOPHY OF MULLA SADRA

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Abstract

Concept of time has been intriguing in the circle of the intellect; it has been observed that time remains worth being questioned like Being of beings is questioned by philosophers. However, this forgetfulness of the questions of either time or Being has not only been detected by Heidegger, but more closely by Sadrudin Shirazi in Persia. The only difference lies between them is either Being concealed or discovered as Transcendence or something more than this God is a simple and pure Being in the Transcendent Theosophy of Mulla Sadra. For Heidegger, such Transcendence is not some extra-terrestrial power; rather it is Being of beings in the world always and already there. Heidegger and Sadra both equally strive for the novel conception of time with reference to the Being of beings. They confronted manifold troubles in their theorizations on the Conception of being of Time and Being of beings. Following this realm of reasoning, in this article we would critically and closely look into major trends of philosophical existentialism in the critical perspective of time. The reality of time and Being of beings is concerned with idea of motion either substantial or non-substantial, because all change is reversed to motion as the processor or time constituent intermediary between what is and what is not or nothingness. However, this conception of nothingness should not be construed as any kind of nihilism or in the least thing like that. Indeed philosophical existentialism is a colossal deterrent to nihilism; therefore nihilism would remain no challenge due to existentiality of Is-ness. This existentiality of Is-ness is a full manifest of whatever exists either in time or beyond the quantification of motion. However, time presumes significance and preponderance of motion. For such an idea it is believed that all change perpetuates continuity and flow of bits of moments within substantiality of Is-ness of (whatever) is. Realizing the reality of time with reference to Being of beings requires some intermediary substance which could regulate all spheres of Is-ness and that of nothingness as well. In the same realm of thinking, Substance not only is a regulator of motion but at the same time it is a primordial principle of all motion permeating through and through substance itself. Therefore, all motion is substantially actualized. However, this substantial motion is the primordial benchmark of all diversity, identity and intensity of Is-ness towards nothingness of what it is in the constant flow of becoming. In this article we would critically investigate the basic problems such as time via substantial motion, Being (principality of Being), Dasiem as being there (antic and ontological), simple existence, plurality (monism and pluralism), identity and difference. Furthermore, we would like to analyze the doctrine of Being by Mulla Sadra in the perspective of Theology.

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For him GOD is the Ontological foundation of whatever exists, and even thing will be back to it. This would be object's journey towards perfection after they penetrate their being into Being as such.

The concept of time continues to intrigue intellectual circles. As observed, time as a concept remains questionable, just like the Being of beings remains questionable in philosophical circles. However, the forgetfulness of the question of time or Being has not only been discovered by Heidegger, but rather more closely studied by Sadrudin Shirazi on the Persian soil. The only difference between these two thinkers is of the basic concepts, either Being concealed, or discovered as Transcendence, or something more than it (historico-hermeneutic).

Heidegger and Sadra both equally strive for the novel conception of time with reference to the conception of the Being of beings. At the same time as they confronted manifold troubles in their theorizations on the Conception of being of Time and Being of beings. Following this realm of reasoning, this article looks critically and closely into major trends of philosophical existentialism with respect to the critical perspective of time.

The reality of time and Being of beings is concerned with the idea of motion, either substantial or non-substantial, because all change is reversed to motion as the processor, or time constituent intermediary between what is and what is not or nothingness. However, this conception of nothingness should not be construed as any kind of nihilism¹ or in the least, like it. Indeed philosophical existentialism is a colossal deterrent to nihilism; therefore nihilism would no longer remain a challenge due to existentiality of is-ness. This existentiality of is-ness is a full manifest of whatever exists, either in time, or beyond the quantification of motion.

However, time presumes significance and preponderance of motion. For such an idea it is believed that all change perpetuates continuity and flow of bits of moments within substantiality of is-ness of (whatever) is. Realizing the reality of time with reference to Being of beings requires some intermediary substance which could regulate all spheres of is-ness and that of nothingness as well.

In the same realm of thinking, substance is not only a regulator of motion, but at the same time a primordial principle of all motion permeating through and through substance itself. Therefore, all motion is substantially actualized. However, this substantial motion is the primordial benchmark of all diversity, identity, and intensity of is-ness towards nothingness of (what it is) in the constant flow of becoming.

Sadra's preoccupation with conception of motion is a critical onslaught on the traditional concept of time and motion. For him, motion does not reduce to the mere change beyond what exists in the spatial world. The novel idea is that time quantifies all motion, evident

¹ Nihilists, like Nietzsche, believe that Truth is nothing but Illusion, what we conceptualize or aesthetically express "is not a vehicle of truth, but a flight from truth. Therefore, we have no access to reality." See Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in the portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), pp.46-47.

not only in spatial objects but beyond things substantially. This idea goes further than the Kantian philosophy of time. For Kant time is an *a priori* concept which is the source foundation of all *a priori* synthetic judgments. Altogether, time as an *a priori* concept is not abstracted from the sense perception, but is a source foundation of all those scattered sensations transmitted to the dynamic faculty of mind. This follows that time is a precondition of all human experiences. Hence, all epistemic process depends on an *a priori* category of time. Therefore, time exists prior to all human experiences. Nevertheless, time would not be a *posteriori* particular, which can be experienced itself before it experiences neutral, objective and spatial reality itself (thing themselves).

Kant here follows the Newtonian conception of absolute time, which can subsist without spatial simultaneity. As Kant interprets Newton, “absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equally without relation to anything.”² The major purpose of this critique was construed with reference to “space and time, (which) is to prove not only their particularity but also their *a priori* character.”³

Kant deals with the conception of time as *a priori* particular. For him, all fragments of time such as past, present, future, and now or then are the “parts of same time.”⁴ Accordingly, similar time exists is *a priori* because, “we cannot imagine any perception which would not be in time, although we can imagine empty time.”⁵ However, in the same paragraph he is stated by the S. Corner that time differs from space because; space is compartmentalized into three-dimensional postures. Whereas, time does not hold the same like space why because time has only one dimension.

Kant may lead this idea of time to the idea of subject as a primary agency to have capacity of schematizing of the given raw sensations to the transcendent apparatus of mind. For he believes that “*a priori* forms of perception are also subjective and that we consequently cannot perceive the world as it is, rather we change it by perceiving it.”⁶

Following this argument we may construe Kantian phenomenology of time empirically real but transcendentally ideal or unreal. However, at the very same time further argument depicts the Kantian philosophy of time demonstrates that time and all division of time is possibly applicable to phenomenal and sensual spheres of human experience only because it is not to be applied to trans-empirical domain of things in themselves. It implies that time is not a quantifier of motion within substance of whatever is (exists) rather time belongs to those all measures of the empirical world i.e. matter of facts. For this reason he says:

“Time is a transcendentally ideal one’s we abstract from the subjective conditions of perception it is nothing at all and cannot be attributed to the things in themselves.”

² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trns. By S. Corner, Penguin books, 1954, p. 33.

³ Ibid. p. 34.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. p. 38

Furthermore, he says:

“... space and time are the spectacles through which our eyes are affected by objects, the spectacles are irremovable. Objects can be seen only through themselves. Objects, therefore, can never be seen as they are in themselves.”⁷

This implies that space and time, for Kant, are subjective particulars which are preconditions of the all human experiences. These apriori particulars ensure that all sensible objects in the world are perceived within the parameters of spatio-temporal. However, human perception is endangered here due to its inability to explore what things in themselves are.

Thus, a critique of the faculty of pure reason, by itself, manifests limitations of human reason. That is, to know how and what is possible for our net experience, or to show us as whatever appears to our perception (that which is seemingly true). Therefore, time, which is measure of all motion is never possible in the domain of the impossible e.g. transcendence. For Mulla Sadra, man is able to grasp innermost reality of existence from within. Therefore, he interprets prophet’s saying:

“Lord show me things as they truly are (as they exist in reality)”, not on the basis of guess-work, but on the basis of reason, and demonstration. The purpose of this should be to establish a rational system in the world of human efforts as desired by God.⁸

Thus Sadra associates human reason with the nature of God. For him, reason and demonstration would be the seat of understanding reality itself as God has shaped human nature on the account of his own nature which is total justice in itself.

However, Sadrian analysis of time is totally different from the Kantian model of time. He believes that time is neither original nor ideal but the “...quantity of motion.”⁹ This means that time does not only quantify motion of objects in their spatial location but also measures motion within the substantial domain of objects. Therefore, for Mulla, time in the world of continuous substantial motion is an intrinsic characteristic of the cosmic reality (existence).

In the same line of discussion we may extract some very important points such as time (if natural) is a derivative of *existential time*. However, it must be understood simultaneously that time is indeed an *existential trait* for physical things which exists in the spatial world. *Time* does not contain anything; rather, it *quantifies substantial motion*.

It follows that time is a basic truth of the fluid existence because all physical stuff pre requires continuity in its being on the basis of substantial motion (which time quantifies).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Mulla Sadra. *Al Asfar Al-arbaa*, part one (Safar e awal) of the first volume: translated by Molvi Syed Manazir Ahsan Gilani, Press Darul tabia Jamiaa Uthemia Sarkar Aali Haider Aabad Dakhan. 1941. p.1.

⁹ Hossain Nasr, *Sadr Al-Din Shirizi* (Mulla Sadra) A Life and Work in ‘*A History of Muslim Philosophy*, edited and introduced by MM Sharif. Vol-II, Royal Book Company reprinted 2007 in Pakistan. p.950.

Sadra's conception of time rejuvenates the idea of temporality. In this sense if we hold that time is nothing but the measure of change, this would follow that time is the determiner of substantial transformation of beings.

It (time) is the dominant reality in the span of life of every ontic being and constitutes the ontological structure of the region of becoming.¹⁰

Sadra's conception of time shows certain directions of existence towards *diversity, multiplicity, then identity* in terms of *similarity*. Time is not merely a mental or linguistic construct. He defies all those philosophers who believe that time is merely a mental construct or anything which depends for its being, on the mind. Nor does he approve of the idea of natural source of time in motion. His idea differs from his predecessors while he believes that *divinity is the real source of existential substantial motion*. This divine grace creates *unified everlasting forms* from which motion originates. Thus Sadra finds that the source of this motion is not merely in nature but has its roots in divinity, which is the *creative agency* of every moment. This is what makes substantial motion possible.

The whole world, therefore, both in its gross and subtle domains, partakes of substantial motion, and time is the measure of this motion as it occurs in the heavens....¹¹

Here, he deters the Avicennian concept of motion, because for Avicenna (IbnSina) motion is not possible in substance itself. We observe that earlier Greek philosophers weigh his notion of time. For instance, he believes that time is *restless* with reference to the existence of objects in the course of motion. However, substantial motion is essentially a *rebirth and recreation* of what is not and out of what is, "because it always means attainment of a *new state of Being*."¹²

Both Being and Nothingness overlap each other through the process of change in the course of substantial motion. Hence time measures every change and recreation of ontic and ontological constituents of Being which regulates motion in transcendence. For instance:

Non-existence of a particular being precedes its existence in *time*, and is in the state of non-existence prior to its existence caused by being. In this process of creation or coming into being of non-being, an individual being requires a new identity constantly and its existence is not fixed.¹³

¹⁰ M. Kamal, *Mulla Sadr's Transcendent Philosophy*, reprinted by Ashgate Publishing Limited Gown House England, 2006, p.71.

¹¹ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit. p.950.

¹² *Ibid.* p.950.

¹³ *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit. p.70.

Time, Motion and existence via Being

Mulla does not use the empty world of motion. For him, real motion is grounded in the substance of every thing which transforms every moment slowly and gradually. However, Sadra believes that:

Substantial motion (is) an inner transformation of things somewhat in the alchemical sense in which there is not simply a coming into being and passing away but a process through which a new state of being is reached.¹⁴

However, at the very same time, this *substantial change* following motion is not all and sudden. As Hossain Nasr writes: "...substantial change is... *gradual like other forms of motion...*" And simultaneously, Mulla Sadra would not limit the substantial change to the sublunary region, "...while for Mulla Sadra the whole of gross and subtle manifestation *partakes* of substantial motion."¹⁵

It implies that no being can escape from the *impact* of the Transsubstantial motion; hence time is a *united reality* which is being actualized within its three spheres of origin i.e. past, present and future. All these spheres of origin are amalgamated into a single most unity. However, we analyze time in its original elements; which is designated as *moment*. Time and moment are interconnected indispensably. Mullah holds that time and substantial motion both are indispensable for each other. Reality of time is the *prerequisite substantiation* for *understanding* transsubstantial motion. Time must be regarded as a methodical accident for both, *fluid being* and motion itself. Consequently, a-priori and a-posteriori character of experiences of existence are engrossed with accident. Since time is not an independent container for the physical objects, there comes an intermediary being that is able to grasp the reality of time with allusion to motion in substance and understanding himself (self); (human soul).¹⁶ He is able understand what and how he knows things and knows himself. However, for Heidegger he is *Dasien* e.g. "*being there*" for him *Dasien* always involved in an understanding of its Being.¹⁷

Sadra goes further than the Heidegger. He attempts to recognize human *consciousness* not in the complexities of *history* or *hermeneutic*. Rather, he regards the human self as a *transcendent theosopher*, one who is able to understand the world as a phenomena and transcendence beyond the empirical sphere of time. He is able to grasp the Being of beings. However, time is very important for Sadra's conception of Being. Therefore, Mullah articulates that being of objects is substantiated in the paradigm of *temporality*. Due to the spark in time we are able to *recognize* objects located in spatial dimensions.

¹⁴ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit, pp.948-949.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.949.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.954.

¹⁷ Krell. David Farrell. *Basic Writings, Martin Heidegger*, Rutledge, London 1994. p.48.

In the same course, it demonstrates that physical objects are time-bounded because they are in the state of flow constantly.¹⁸ However, everything that comes in the circle of existence must have a new identity after rejuvenation slowly and gradually in time. It infers that: whatever exists along with its physical essence (form) is an innovative, transitory and gradually continuing. For this reason, transition of physical objects into other beings is prone to bound-ness. And this time bound-ness is indeed the manifest of substantial motion. This implies that either matter or essence (which is a mental construct) are subject to creative and original motion. So:

...It is clear that in Mulla Sadra's view of motion is principal (isalat e harkat), for it is an inherent character of corporeal and even subtle existence, and time is subservient to it contrary to the view of many pervious philosophers who considered motion to be subservient to time." For Mulla's conception of time the quantity of substantial motion, which is itself the renewal of cosmic existence....¹⁹

This further implies that whole cosmos is in incessant motion. Motion would not only partake in existence but also *identifies with each moment* beyond the becoming of *non-existence into existence*. Therefore, motion is *unique* everywhere in the cosmos which gives *new identity* to a being in its gradual continuity. Thus time is a sign of eternal motion. Hence, it signifies *eternity* of motion which is incessant and an indispensable source of the universe to reshape and renew itself in moments. This idea demonstrates Mulla Sadra's philosophical analysis of the conception of *creation*. He holds that the universe cannot be created out of nothingness (*ex nihilo*). However, he believes at the very same time that "...creation is in time...."²⁰ Nevertheless, every particle is in a constant state of *destruction* and *recreation* through the substantial motion in entire course of the universe. Mulla holds:

...through substantial motion the being of the universe is renewed at every moment or, more explicitly, that the world is created at every instant, so that one can say that the being of the world depends upon its non-being at a pervious moment....²¹

Further, he believes that every physical phenomenon must be prone to change not only in its *essence* but also in its *existence*. Thus *essence does not remain the same when the being of something is vulnerable to change*. The substantial change does not leave any being and form of being to remain constant. Everything is subject to substantial change through substantial motion. Therefore, new phenomenon is instigated and put on *new identity* with reference to two different *moments* through evident or hidden motion. This means nothing pervious exists in the next moment. Every thing that substantially changes must *renovate* its identity in the *next* moment. Therefore, *route of time is the means of*

¹⁸ This idea of change resembles with Heraclites' notion of 'Logos' that everything is in the state of flow, we can not step twice in the same, therefore, everything changes except the principle of change itself. Logos is the primordial principle of all change. See, Samuel Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*. Published by McGraw-Hill, 2008.

¹⁹ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit, p. 950

²⁰ Ibid, p. 951.

²¹ Ibid.

access to the universe. Time is *equivalent* to the universe in motion, which is originating every moment *renovating* its identity in diversity of existence. As Kamal writes:

Non-existence of a particular being precedes its existence in time, and is in the state of non-existence prior to its existence caused by Being. In this process of creation or coming into being of non-being – an individual being requires a new identity constantly and its existence is not fixed.²²

It must not be construed that deficit or imperfection in being is the attribute of the innermost reality of Being. However, *contingent* (possible or impossible) beings are graded toward perfection in existence. Therefore, such *deficient* beings are rooted in the rank of *contingency* and *posteriority*. Pure and *simple* Being is the source of beings in the world (temporal occurrence) of multiplicity and diversity. For this reason the entire realm of ontic beings are only same when they share their identity. However, pure and simple Being is the *foundation* of the similar identity of beings. This idea differs from the Deleuzian philosophy of *difference and repetition*. For Deleuze similarity and identity is gained at the expenses of difference. Only difference is real, whereas identity is unreal and a total deception. Here Deleuze describes Nietzsche's philosophy in order to affirm the nature of *pure difference*. For Nietzsche, the universe affirms the reality in the continual state of becoming. Deleuze's philosophy of difference and repetition is the manifest expression of the nature of being. Deleuze here implies Nietzsche's *eternal return* to a circle where he finds difference in the center and identity or sameness in its periphery. "... Difference is thus a *divergence* and *decentering*, and the eternal return leads to a *plurality of centers* which give depth to the world of difference."²³

Nevertheless, Mulla does not reject such an idea that difference or diversity is real, but he goes further stating that similarity and identity are not unreal as well.

All ontic beings are same and share identity because they spring from the single fountainhead. In all of them, Being becomes a common character and inner identity.... (Further in the same paragraph Kamal interprets Sadra) ...there will be no distinction between diverse ontic beings and Being as they belong together. They only differ in their perfection, deficiency, richness (intensity)... these terms do not describe or apply to the realm of Being because Being is a unity and pure and has no essence.²⁴

Sadra believes that being in the world is temporality; however, "...this (temporality) is external to the realm of *pure* Being."²⁵ For him, pure Being is not subject to temporality and contingency. Every ontic being gains its identity from the single fountainhead which is pure Being. For this reason every thing exists on the basis of the reality of Being. Being does not allow anything to be destroyed absolutely, but rather renews it under the influence of temporality. Therefore, under the influence of temporality substantial change

²² Mulla Sadra's *Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit. p. 67.

²³ Gilles Deleuze, *difference and repetition*, translated by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. p. 55.

²⁴ Mulla Sadra's *Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit. p. 67.

²⁵ Ibid.p.67.

causes physical objects and their mental constructs (essences) to get move towards *perfection*. Objects' journey to perfection is only possible when things go through the substantial change in order to receive a *higher level of existence*. This does not mean that objects clothe themselves with new forms and negate the pervious forms. Rather, due to substantial motion, past forms are *preserved*. From this discussion we may understand that Being is not subservient to trans-substantial change. The process of change only happens to *modalities* of Being because they presuppose temporality:

...the renewal process of the world is not externally caused or is not in contrast to Being. Whatever, goes through change is one of the modalities of Being which has a temporal dimension and belongs to the region of becoming.²⁶

However, the difference between Being and its modalities would bring us to the idea of *primacy* of Being itself. Since, Being is the most primary among everything which is (exists). The doctrine of Being in Mulla Sadra is about "...principiality and the unity and gradation of Being."²⁷ The insurmountable controversy lingered high in the intellectual circles over the *principiality* either of Being or Essence (*quiddity*)²⁸ in the history of Muslim philosophy. Some philosophers considered that existence is contingent or mere *accident*; consequently they *prioritize* essence over existence.

Mulla is described as a thinker who does not accept the notion that existence is accident. Rather he posited existence as primary. His basic treatment of the conception of Being is to mark that reality is existence and not essence. He agrees with the *Sufis* who "...believed in the principiality of Being..."²⁹ This would mean that being is totally different from quiddities in the sense that quiddities are *mental abstractions*. Thus Mulla Sadra prioritizes existence over essence, for his existence is the only reality. The essence or quaddities are mental archetypes, they have no reality independent of existence (Being).

This ontological turn taken by Mulla Sadra is metaphysics' journey from the primacy of essence to the primacy of Being. Since, his predecessors, such as Suhurwardi Maktul, would hold that "...essence is only reality.... And this primacy can not be attached with Being (existence)."³⁰ Mir Damad, Sadra's own teacher, "... developed the 'metaphysics of essence' and held the opposite view that existence is an accident and that the essences are principial."³¹

However, Mulla differed from the *peripatetic teaching* and the *Sufis* only on the subject of *unity* and of *gradation* in terms of *upward* or *downward* movements of being. The movement is the "... downward movement of Being when *multiplicity* of *ontic* beings emerge, (which) these beings *exhibit* diverse essences." And the former is, the "... the

²⁶ Ibid, p 73.

²⁷ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit. pp. 942-943.

²⁸ It is mode of existence, which manifests itself to human mind. Mind does abstract quiddity (form) from whatever exists. However, mind is unable to grasp existence itself.

²⁹ Ibid, 943.

³⁰ *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit, p. 43.

³¹ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit. p. 943.

upward evolutionary movement, this (twofold identity of beings towards becoming) **emphasis added**, duality gradually disappears until, at the end, being can be grasped in its absolute positively without essence.”³²

This implies that *essences are not real beings*; their existence pre-requires *modalities* caused by Being itself. Thus ontic beings and their conjoint essences result of Being’s *modalities*. Essences do not persist by themselves, while they are to be *qualified to existence*. This is what we call ‘*Ontological Monism*’ of Mulla. He does not distinguish between two different realities of existence and essence. ***The single most reality is only and only existence***. Therefore, Mulla believes that:

... existence is ontologically prior, a unified reality graded in degrees on intensity and an elusive reality that cannot be fully grasped. Any attempt to conceptualize existence falsifies it through reification that determines an essence grasped in the mind.³³

For this reason Being is *same* in all conditions, as Mulla says: “... Being is the same reality in all realms of existence; it is a single reality but with gradations and degrees of intensity.”³⁴ Further, in the same paragraph it has been stated that subject of everything is same “... but with different predicates i.e. with different conditions of manifestations... So it is one reality...but in various degrees of *intensity of manifestation*.”³⁵ In due course, we may regard that if existence is same in all conditions, then nothing is different and multiple or diverse *in itself*. Would this not be an illusion to have experience of existence as multiple?

For Mulla even though existence is *single most reality*, differentiation comes only in its *gradation via intensity* in terms of *horizontal* and *vertical* hierarchy of existence permeating through and through. Thus we can not say that there are stable substances beyond individual objects to exist. Rather every particular being entails *difference* through substantial motion. Subsequently, in the Aristotelian sense we can predicate being in various ways. Such as:

... existence can become more intense and become weaker, it can become more perfect and it can become imperfect...” This plurality is possible at the level of gradation of Being. Otherwise, “... Existence in everything is foundational... it is the principle of individuality (*mabda’ al-shkhsiyya*) and the source of essence of thing...”³⁶

Therefore, Being is a *common* term which could apply to various expressions and different contexts either mental, conceptual or linguistic or extra-mental beings. At the same time, Existence, being a *simple reality*, does *not* mean it is the most *universal*

³² Mulla Sadra’s *Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit, p 57.

³³ Kitab Al-masha’ir, tr. *As Liver Des Penetrations Metphysiques* by H. Corbin (Tehran: L institute Franco-Iranian) 1964. p.6.

³⁴ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit, p.943.

³⁵ Ibid. p.943.

³⁶ *Al-Hikma Al-muta’aliya Fi-l-asfar Al-arba’a* (The Transcendent Philosophy of Four Journeys of Intellect, gen. ed. S.H Khaminahi, 9 vols. Mulla Sadra’s Summa with the glosses of his 19th commentator Sabzvari. Mulla Sadra 2001-5, III: p.351.

concept. If we designate Existence as the most universal Being then linguistic categories and logic would engulf the Being. Mulla believes that:

Existence is a single, simple reality having neither genus nor differentia, nor definition or a demonstration or a definiens. It only admits of degrees by perfection and deficiency, by priority and posteriority and by independence and dependence.³⁷

... Being (is) not a universal concept: its universality transcended any universality of genus and differentia....³⁸.

This implies that Being is above and beyond everything which exists, including substance or substantial motion. However, *it is not a universal conception*. And the things we know in the world of manifestation are the *limitation* of the reality of one and same Being. This is what Mulla believes that the mind abstracts these limitations above and beyond everything manifested in the phenomenal world. These limitations take the shape of:

... from of quiddities (*maheya*) of things....” “unlike Being which is objectively real and in fact is the reality of the cosmos, the *mahiyyat* (essences) are accidents of Being abstracted by the mind without having a reality independent of Being.³⁹

And that Being is the pure one which:

... is the cause of all things. ... it is the beginning of everything and not all things. ... all things flow from it and subsist and are sustained by it and return to it. So, if someone says: how is it possible that things are from a simple one that has no duality or multiplicity in it in any sense? (It will be reasonable to reply that) ... because a pure simple one has nothing in it, but because it is pure one, all things flow from it. Thus there was no existence (*hywiyya*), being flowed from it.⁴⁰

All forms and archetypes are formulated in the mind; they do not have existence independent of *Simple Being*. Pure Being *sustains* everything which would *return* to the Simple and Pure Being.

By proving the priority and the reality of principiality of Being in the transcendent philosophy of Mulla Sadra, we would like to discuss the conception of Being in contrast to Heidegger's notion of Being.

We have already discussed in this article that Sadra does not acknowledge any definition of Being which demonstrates the universality of Being as such. If we take some comparative analysis of the philosophical *existentialism* between Heidegger and Sadra we may realize that both Philosophers would agree on the conception of *Isalat e wujjud* i.e. primacy or principiality of Being. Heidegger believes that Being is the *pre-ontological*

³⁷ Mulla Sadra, op cit, 1964, pp.68-69.

³⁸ Mulla Sadra's *Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit, p.43.

³⁹ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, pp.943-944.

⁴⁰ Mulla sadra 2001-5, VII: 351. op cit.

condition beyond everything in the world of phenomena. Whereas, Mulla Sadra held the same conception regarding the principiality of Being. "... [He] stresses the principiality of Being' and reality of Being as the pre-ontological condition for the existence of *all beings*."⁴¹ Because everything exists, including essences due to the reality of Being. This implies that Being is the reality of every thing, (psychical or physical) modifications, concepts, categories or any other abstractins. And things other than it are nothing but its *limitations* or *manifestations*.⁴² "[the] various beings in the world of manifestation are all limitations of the one reality or Being."⁴³

Heidegger argues the meaning of Being has been forgotten, therefore, he realizes that the question of being should be rejuvenated in the history of philosophy. Meanwhile, he believes that nothing in existence can be reduced to an idea or system of *essential conceptualization*. Nor does he acknowledge Aristotelian logic, which he thinks is devoid of illuminating the meaning of Being as such. Heidegger ventures to reawaken "... an understanding of the meaning of this question (of Being)..." he further believes that it would *necessitate* "... an explicit recovery of the question of Being."⁴⁴

After Aristotle, many Philosophers discussed the Conception of Being. However they failed to *excavate* the *meaning* of Being. Therefore, he undertook the *task* of clearing the meaning and *question of Being* (darkest of all). Even though, for him the conception of Being cannot be defined. Nevertheless, this *indefinableness* would not nullify *inquiry* into the meaning of Being. Likewise, Sadra *eschews* definability of Being, because, reality of Being is so transcending that none of the *category* and *concept* could apply to it. Sadra goes even further, "... that even positive attribute will not render definition, nor any description of the conception of Being."⁴⁵

We have discussed in the previous pages of this article the oneness and simplicity of Being. Being is most universal concept, for it does not involve any definition of *genus* or *differentia*, *definiens* or *definiendum*. Nor does it perpetuate *accidental qualities* in itself. However, Mulla believes that "Being must be understood through *negative attributes*. Being is neither substance nor accident" (but above all of them). Emphasis added.⁴⁶ Being transcends either substance or accidental qualities. These are not the qualities of Being. Because Being is neither substance nor accident in itself. Therefore, Being is prior to essences whereas, substance can *involve* essences. Being has neither similar nor opposite beyond or before it. Nothing is similar to the single most Being, for the reason that being is not like existing things.

Moreover, for Sadra it is very much indispensable to grasp the total passage of reality of Being on the basis of *mystic experience*. One can *apprehend* reality of Being provided that he adopts the way of mystic way of experiencing. This mystic way will lead us to

⁴¹ *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit. p.43.

⁴² *Asfar. Al-arbaa*, op cit pp.52-53.

⁴³ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit, pp.943-945.

⁴⁴ *Basic Writings of Heidegger*, op cit, pp.40-41.

⁴⁵ *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit. p.44.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.44.

investigate and grasp the meaning of Being by knowing presence. Intuition is a *cognitive apparatus* if applied would apprehend the reality of Being as such. Sadra and Heidegger, both believed neither rational epistemology nor *traditional ontology* will help us to inquire into the meaning of Being. Because, Being with capital B is distinct from the b of beings. Thus, we are unable to know Being like beings. In view of the fact, we can know beings rationally and conceptually. Mulla believes that Being of beings can be known (experienced) *intuitively*. "... Being which reflects the reality of all things can not be known rationally and conceptually. It only can be experienced intuitively."⁴⁷

For Heidegger, neither rational epistemology nor any kind of mystic experience can manifest Being of beings. However, to discover the meaning of Being is still indispensable. Heidegger holds that there exists difference between entity and Being. An entity can be seen, touched and sensually realized; like we can see mountains, hear sounds, touch things are hard or soft, cold or hot. These qualities belong to entities captured by our *senses*. This argument entails corollary that Being for Heidegger must be *Transcendent* "... by saying Being is not an entity, we draw an *ontological distinction* between Being and beings, at the same time, Being can not be distinct because no entity can exist without it."⁴⁸

In the perspective of the above argument, Heidegger inquires Being of beings through *existential analysis* of an entity. The entity has '*ontic and ontological*'⁴⁹ significance which can come manifest by *illuminating* the meaning of Being. Heidegger argues that the power to question is very important. The capacity of the power of questioning only belongs to an entity as in Dasien's being. Dasien's being is able to raise not only the question of meaning of being but also to inquire into the being of its own. As Heidegger writes:

The kind of Being which belongs to Dasien is rather such that, in understanding its own Being, it has a tendency to do so in terms of that entity towards which it comports itself proximally and in way which essentially constant in terms of world. In Dasien itself and therefore, in its own understanding of Being, the way the world is understood is, as we shall show, reflected back ontologically upon the way in which Dasien itself gets interpreted.⁵⁰

It entails that Heidegger *necessitates* the existence of Dasien to inquire into the meaning of Being. With this, the Hermeneutic-historical dimension of being of Dasien would make the interpretation of Being possible. Meanwhile, Mulla does not stop here in the analysis of Dasien i.e. being-there-in-the-world. He goes further to excavate manifold dimensions in the conception of Being. Therefore, he would not stop at the historic-

⁴⁷ Mulla Sadra's *Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit, p.52.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.48.

⁴⁹ Ontic, Heidegger uses this term in contrast to ontological when he gives descriptive character of a particular thing and the plain facts of its existence. Ontological, opposed to ontic is used when the nature, and meaningful structure of existence is at issue, ontology a discipline of metaphysics, focuses on the formal study of Being. See. *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Basil Blackwell, 1962. pp.28-32.

⁵⁰ Ibid. pp.36-37.

hermeneutical way of expressing the reality of Being as being-there. For him, it is indispensable to have an in-depth understanding of Being in order to prove the principiality of Being.

For instance, Being is *self-evident*. It does not require further description like *ontic structure* of things studied in Physics, chemistry and many other positive sciences. In order to prove this idea, we must understand the reality of existence. Conversely, *apprehending* the reality of existence, we must perceive what is *out there* in the world. This apprehension of existence requires our experience of things which exist in reality. This means that nothing is *real* without *existence*, or in other words reality of *everything* is existence. *Whatever exists is because of reality of its existence*. This proves that Being is an *a-priori ontological provision* for anything and all things to exist. Furthermore, Being enlightens the existence of everything either *subjectively present* or *objectively situated* in the *temporal symmetry*. Thus it is not the essence which underlies the existence of *whatever is*. Rather, Being *determines* the reality of existence (*is-ness*) of the things.

But if we argue that essence should be prioritized over existence, then unity of things predicated would be affected. Since essences can be *diverse* about things, whereas, existence must remain *same* in all conditions. Though, we can construct the term existent(s) in language, it is impossible to stipulate the term existence(s) in plurality. Existence is the *manifestation* of reality as *unity*, but this is not true in the case of *essence(s)* which is *plural by nature*. We can predicate two diverse concepts into unity. *The unity is existence and diversity is essence* (which is not external to existence). The essence or diversity can not persist without existentiality of some things. Thus essence could not *persevere* independent of existence itself.

If we take for example that essence is principial with regard to existence, then it will lead us to non-sense. As we have already discussed, essence for Mulla is a mental construct, such as we do not and can not know the roots of Being of things "... it is only quiddities or *mahiyyat* which we can know." For instance, "... these quiddities or (*mahiyyat*) are limitations placed upon being and abstracted by the mind."⁵¹ How can *mantel abstractions* be the source of reality as *unity*?

In this sense, we may construe Sadrian analysis of *Nothingness* of Being is *absurdity*. Because, whatever exists is owing to *is-ness* of Being of beings. Then it would be totally *absurd* to let *non-existence* of Being occur in the world of beings. If existence is refuted altogether, so would follow that essence must *cease to exist*. Essence presupposes existence without which essence is non-existence, but this is not the vice versa case with existence without essence.

This follows that existence is the *necessary ontological condition* beyond individual things and their *universal quantification*. So, nothing individual can exist without the *determinate force* of Being. Since, all generalities must rely on the Being. For instance

⁵¹ A History of Muslim Philosophy, op cit. p.945.

Zaid is an individual being, the tree near my home is a particular individual. However, their being is only understood with reference to species of their own kind. Simultaneously, Maness and tree-ness would both presuppose *Is-ness* of their individuals within the world of Being. Therefore, neither generalities or universal concepts nor essences could qualify as necessary conditions beyond whatever exists except existence itself.

This *implies* that the Sadrian doctrine of principiality of Being *reshuffles* problems of essence, accident and existence in a very new order. He concretizes the structure of *existentialist philosophy* not only in the Muslim philosophy but also in the history of philosophy. While recognizing the existentiality and Principiality of Being as a single most unity, he rejected those philosophies which made the human being subservient to religious *dogmas* of *predestination*, *creation of the phenomenal world out of nothingness*, *empty time and temporality*, and *the Being devoid of the supreme Power of God*. In the next paragraphs we would discuss his doctrine of Being in the perspective of *transcendent theosophy*. Mulla's transcendent theosophy would give his philosophy basis of the **Unity of God**.

The simple existence as proof for the existence of GOD

It has been discussed in the previous pages that Mulla Sadra believes that existence is ontologically prior; absolutely unified with degrees of intensity in its gradation. In his doctrine of the simple reality, Mulla would argue that the nature of GOD is *simplicity* e.g. he is absolutely simple and pure Being. In the *Wisdom of the Throne* he writes "... nature of God is as that simple being...."⁵² And this simple Being must be prior to all things, because simple Being is absolute unity which does not require otherness for its existence. This in turn concretizes the relationships between God (*one*) and plurality (*many*) through pure reality. Therefore, one is the ontological foundation for many, and this plurality finds its way of existence through the oneness (*Unity*) of God. This pure Being causes all things to come into existence through substantial motion which means everything is renewed and reshuffled into many other forms in bits of moments.

The simple being is a being totally different from plurality in the sense that it is the *most perfect* of all things. God exists without multiplicity; because nothing imperfect can corrupt His Being. This implies that no linguistic signification can apply to the simple existence. The questions of genera, composition, definition and division can be raised with reference to *plurality* and *privation* of things subservient to temporal dimension of reality. Thus simple reality of God does not let imperfection, corruption and contamination of plurality to participate in the *purity* of God.

This characterization of simple existence must overcome the distinction between existence and essence. Since, simple existence has not essence but *pure existence*. It follows that everything which partakes of the existence must be *complex*; and what is complex entails the *blend* of essence-existence. For this reason, this category does not

⁵² *Al Hikma al- Arshiyya*, tr. As *the Wisdom of the Throne* by James W. Morris (Princeton: Princeton University Press). pp.98-99.

apply to the simple existence. However, God is *devoid* of any essence or system of quiddities in his simple existence. For Mulla Sadra, this doctrine of *ontological monism* is *ontological evidence* in his transcendent theosophy, in order to prove the existence of God. This implies that rational theology is not only possible in Sadrian doctrine of principiality of Being, it is also *necessary* for proving the existence of the *necessary Being*.

In *asfar Al-Arbaa*, Sadra goes about manifold division and categories of Being. We would like to discuss a few of these divisions in order to have easy access to understanding the conception of Being. As Hussain Nasr writes: “one division of Being is into connective being (*al-wujud al-irtabati*) and *self*-subsistent being (*al-wujud al-nafsi*).”⁵³ The latter division of being is very important, because *al wujud al naïf* i.e. self subsistence being exists by itself *independently*, and does not connect any two things or their corresponding terms. Thus, there exists not subject/predicate distinction. However, former division demonstrates that subject/predicate division in statement, such as Socrates is a philosopher.

Here we would not go into the depth of these divisions. On the other hand, it is very indispensable to have little bit understanding of the self-subsistent being, which will help us in fathoming the distinction between necessary being and that of contingent beings. As Hossain Nasr writes:

This category of being which exists in itself is in turn divided into three kinds: that which is objective existence is not the quality of something else and is called substance (*jauhar*), that which is quality of something else is called accident (*ard*) and finally, that which has need of no cause outside of itself, i.e. the Being of God.⁵⁴

However, the last division is ambiguous and involves absurdity. For this reason, Mulla considers being of everything other than Being of God to be (*wujud al rabit*). From this emanates the *division* of being as necessary (*wajib*) and being contingent or possible (*mumkin*) and impossible (*mumtani*). Mulla *inherited* this division of being from his predecessors. Hossain Nasr gives definition of necessary being in the Sadrian sight:

If the intellect considers a being and finds that the meaning of being is essential to it i.e. lies in its essence, and there are no causes outside it which have brought it into being, that being is called necessary Being.⁵⁵

For Sadra this will entail the proof for the existence of God as a *necessary being*. Necessary being does not have cause beyond its existence; since such Being is a *primordial cause* for everything to exist. The Intellect demonstrates the necessity beyond every contingency in the world of phenomenal creation. This is the main reason for Mulla *that there is something rather than nothing*. For Heidegger, why there is something rather than nothing is *ambiguous* because of the “... abandonment of the conception of

⁵³ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit, p. 944.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 945.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

God....”⁵⁶ Mulla believes that God is a *Necessary Being* who is Reality of Existence (*haqiqat al-wujud*). Being as a Reality of Existence is simple because it does not possess essence. The Necessary Being must be *perfect*, which nothing weaker can contaminate. However, things (existents) other than the Necessary Being, are weaker in their *intensity* because they cannot be a pure reality of existence. Nasr writes: the possible being requires “... need of cause outside itself....”⁵⁷ he further writes that:

... the attributes of possibility pertains to its quiddity as well as to its being. The possibility of its quiddity concerns its relation to the *particular Being*, and the possibility of its being pertains to its relation to the Necessary Being. The being or existence of each object, therefore, depends upon the being of God and the knowledge of anything upon the knowledge or root or principle of its own being. Since the roots or basis of the Necessary Being is unknowable, the knowledge of the being of things remains also unknowable to us and it is only the quiddities or *mahiyyat* which we can know.⁵⁸

At this point the intellect is able to grasp the reality of Being, but it cannot know the *roots* of Being. Thus knowledge of the Necessary Being is *impossible*. Being remains *indefinable*, it is neither *genus* nor *differentia*. Man’s real *perfection* lies in the knowledge of Divinity (God). One should attain perfection only when he would realize his being in the *actuality of God*. As Hazrat Ali said, ‘*mann araf a nafsaho fakad araf rabbaho*’ (one who knows himself, will know his Creator). For Sadra the purpose of the human being is to get *exaltation* in *seeking* the *proximity to God*. The philosophical wisdom consists on knowing the existence of God because knowledge of the Supreme Being would *promise* emancipation and *eternal* salvation for the human being provided he *seeks* the *truth*. On the other hand, for Heidegger the meaning of Being is completely inaccessible, its meaning cannot be apprehended completely.⁵⁹ Following this we may understand that *abandonment* of the conception of GOD for Heidegger would befall him into *vagary of ignorance*. This will further *dethrone* the human being from the seat of exaltation and emancipation.

Finally we may summarize Sadrian argument in following points:

- One cannot deny existence.
- God is the Necessary Being whose perfection is known in existence.
- Existence is perfection, no perfection can be conceived other than it.
- Denial of metaphysical pluralism is inevitable.
- This entails that existence is simple and singular.
- There is no pure monism with reference to the conception of being
- Denying absolute monism will lead to ontological monism
- This would imply that the reality of existence is manifested through gradation in intensity in the degree of perfection.

⁵⁶ See Stephen Priest. *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*, Rutledge 2001, New York and London. p.31.

⁵⁷ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op cit. p. 945.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ *Mulla Sadra’s Transcendent Philosophy*, op cit. p.55.

- Thus there can be a limit of this scale along with existence, either greatest in intensity of existence itself.
- Above all God exists as a Necessary Being, causing everything to move in the sphere of becoming. Where substantial motion plays a vital role in complementing the deficiency of existence in intensity.
- Time is a quantifier of substantial motion.
- Time is a necessary measure for the phenomenal sphere of temporality.
- Time is neither subjective nor objective, but it only quantifies substantial motion.