Theistic Arguments in the Islamic Tradition: Existence and God

By:

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Abstract

Islamic philosophical and theological heritage is an intellectual tradition that expands over a period of more than fourteen hundred years and has produced innumerable thinkers. It has been influenced by the Hellenistic, Persian and Indian philosophical and theological traditions. Muslim philosophers and theologians have also been an important influence on thinkers of other philosophical and theological traditions. Its originality comes from the Islamic holy book, the Qur'ān, the narrative tradition of the Prophet Muhammad and the various different Islamic saints and the efforts of its different thinkers. The current study delves into one aspect of this tradition, namely, the endeavour to find a proof for God's existence. This endeavour can only be explained through the role that is given to reasoning as a tool for proving the existence of God. Therefore, chapter one begins with the role of reasoning in the Islamic intellectual tradition. In chapter one, I give a brief historical account of the different issues which contributed to the increase and decrease of the role of argument in the Islamic philosophical and theological tradition.

In chapter two, I attempt to provide a categorization of theistic arguments in the Islamic philosophical and theological tradition. The rest of the study is dedicated to the explanation of four traditional Islamic proofs for the existence of God and one of my own. The four theistic arguments include the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary, the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible and two versions of the Demonstration of the Veracious. I present the proofs and the discussions related to those proofs and compare them with similar proofs and discussions in the Latin and the Christian traditions. I also present the criticisms that have been directed towards the arguments both by Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers and show that they have either misunderstood the premises or that they do not apply. I end the discussions regarding the Islamic theistic arguments for the existence of God with an ontological proof of my own.

To:

My wife Mrs. Zahra Yasmin Soltanian and my son Ali Husayn Soltanian

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Contents

Introduction

Islamic theology and philosophy as an independent subject of enquiry has in the past one hundred years become a significant field of study in Western Academia. The religion and its theologians and philosophers were not unknown to the West prior to this time. As early as the late eleventh century, Arabic texts were being translated into Latin and much of what was being translated represented some of the theological and philosophical issues being debated in the Muslim world. These works also had a major impact on Latin writers. Thomas Aquinas (1225 C.E.-1274 C.E.), for example, used the works of Abū `Alī Husayn ibn Abdullāh Ibn Sīnā (370A.H./980C.E.-428A.H./1037C.E.), the Muslim philosopher more popularly known as Avicenna in medieval Europe, to produce some of his important philosophical works, for example, his five proofs for the existence of God.[1] Ibn Sīnā's impact on John Duns Scotus (1266C.E.-1308C.E.) is also well-known.[2] Translation of many works also took place during Europe's renaissance most of which were first translated into Hebrew and then into Latin.[3]

Latin speaking Europe was thus somewhat aware of the philosophical and theological works that were being produced by Muslims. Nevertheless, serious study of the origins,

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[1]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Existence And Nature of God*, trans. Timothy McDermott (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol.2, 15. Aquinas seems to not have fully comprehended some of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical discourses. For example, his discussion of Ibn Sīnā's theistic argument reasoning from contingent beings to the necessary being shows that he might have not completely understood the underlying principles of the argument.

[2]Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus on God* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 4-5.

[3]For essays on the translation and introduction of Arab and Muslim philosophical works into Europe see: Charles E. Butterworth and Blake Andrée Kessel, ed., *The Introduction of Arabic Philosophy into Europe* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994). Also see: W. Montgomery Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972).

foundations and development of the writings of Muslim theologians and philosophers began in mid-twentieth century. This included a wider scope of subjects related to the religion of Islam, its history, theologies and philosophies and sociological and anthropological studies of its different communities. Despite this new drive and wider access to the Muslim world, its libraries and resources, many of these studies have had significant shortcomings. These shortcomings have resulted in less than objective accounts of the religion of Islam, its history, the development of various different schools of thought related to it and its philosophical and theological heritage.

Examination of the abundant works on Islam and Islamic thought requires much more detailed analysis than there is space in this introduction. On the other hand, a careful and precise description of a subject matter is difficult when there are inadequacies in the methodologies used to investigate it. For this reason, it is necessary to give a general indication of what has been overlooked in previous studies and present some recommendations that are within the limits of the focus of this research.

The subject of enquiry is theistic arguments in Islamic Arab and Persian tradition. In particular, the main concentration is on the theistic arguments that are somewhat or entirely peculiar to Islamic theology and philosophy and in some cases not well-known in Western Academia. These arguments include: the 'Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary', known in the West as the 'Argument from Contingency to Necessity', the 'Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible' and the 'Demonstration of the Veracious'.[4]

Not many works can be found in English on the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible and some versions of the Demonstration of the Veracious. The Demonstrations of the Veracious are arguments that reason from the concept of God rather than God's creation and can be compared with what is known in Western philosophy as ontological arguments. These arguments and their foundation in the Qur'ān and traditional narrative and theological texts do not seem to be the subject of many major works in Western scholarship. A number of studies are available on classical versions of the Demonstrations of the Veracious limited mostly to Ibn Sīnā. Many of these studies usually

[4]The term 'Demonstration' is a direct translation of the word '*burhān*' and is used here to keep with the terminology used by Muslim philosophers and theologians to refer to these arguments.

do not interpret Ibn Sīnā's argument in the ontological sense and confine themselves to reading the argument as a cosmological argument.[5]

The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary is well known and features in prominent philosophical writings of both medieval and modern Western philosophers.[6] Some of works of different medieval Muslim philosophers which have argued either in favour or against the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary are now available in English. Nevertheless, its principle premises are not widely understood. Furthermore, its similarity to another argument known as the 'Demonstration from Origination' or the 'Kalām Argument' is exaggerated. Such issues comprise an important part of the analysis of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary in the present work.

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed regarding the most appropriate method of approaching research into Islamic theistic arguments and their origin. The first of these issues include the use of primary texts. Despite the move towards using primary sources, there is still a tendency to refer to the same texts traditionally accepted in Western academic circles when examining early Islamic history, theology and philosophy. Many of these texts are the products of or influenced by the theological and legal views of the Sunnī school of thought.[7] The use of such texts is mainly due to the presumption that orthodox

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[5]There are a number of exceptions. For example see: Toby Mayer, "Ibn Sīnā's 'Burhān Al-Siddīqīn'," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12 (2001): 18-39. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

[6]For example see: Herbert A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 281-335. Although, as it will be discussed in the chapter about the argument, Davidson has misunderstood crucial premises of Ibn Sīnā's version of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary and has presented criticisms to the argument that do not apply. Davidson's criticisms seem to be inspired from Abū Hāmid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazzālī's arguments in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*. The argument seems to have influenced later ontological and theistic arguments both in the Western and the Islamic philosophical tradition.

[7]The tendency to use orthodox Sunni references as an authoritative text is more apparent in some writings than others. Indeed many have even used the same degrading terminology used to refer to theologians and adherents of other schools of thought as that used by Sunnī orthodoxy. For a recent example, see: Josef Van Ess, "Political Ideas in Early Islamic Religious Thought," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28 (2001): 151-164. Van Ess uses the title *Shaytān al-Ṭāq* (The tall Satan) to refer to the Shī`ī Theologian Muhammad ibn al-Nu`mān al-Kūfī (d.148A.H./765C.E.). Ibn al-Nu`mān was known to the Shī`ah as *Mu`min al-Ṭāq* (The tall Believer). Montgomery Watt also uses the same title for Ibn al-Nu`mān in his essay titled *Sidelights on Early Imāmite Doctrine* despite stating that this is a title used by his opponents, see: W. Montgomery Watt, "Sidelights on Early Imāmite Doctrine," *Studia Islamica* 31 (1970): 290-291. In an older work he does not even state that the title is one he took from Ibn al-Nu`mān's opponents. See: W. Montgomery Watt, "The Rāfiḍites: A Preliminary Study," *Oriens* 16 (1963): 114, 116. For what the Shī`ah called Ibn al-Nu`mān see: Al-Hasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah*, (Najaf: Al-Matba`at al-

Sunnī thought is representative of early Islamic thinking, including that of the period of its propagation by the Prophet Muhammad. Several questions thus arise. For instance, the assumption that one creed is of a better representative–in comparison to others–of the Islam presented by the Prophet Muhammad needs to be justified through evidence. If the evidence provided comes only from the claims of a particular creed and is not subject to scrutiny then, that evidence is circular in nature. In other words, unless some kind of objective evidence can be provided other than a simple claim by the texts of a particular creed, there is no reason to accept one version over another.

In addition, the same Sunnī oriented texts are used to gain insight into the thinking of early theologians of other schools. These texts are usually polemic and propagandist and contain gross misinformation regarding other schools of thought.[8] An entire body of research work, both critical and accepting, has been written on the topic of the usage of such kind of texts as a primary source for understanding early Islamic thought and history. Most such works, however, are confined to considering only orthodox Sunnī polemic texts and viewpoints about an important period of Islamic history.[9] As a result, such an approach ignores aspects of other texts in the narrative and historical traditions of other Islamic creeds that are crucial for a proper understanding of the study of early Islamic history and

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Haydarīyah, 1936), 78-79; Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, trans. and ed. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), vol.1, 438.

[8]An example of this is the use of *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn* of Abul Ḥasan `Alī ibn Ismā`īl al-'Ash`arī (269A.H./873C.E.-324A.H. /936C.E.) for describing the beliefs of early Shī`ah theologians. It has been common practice to state that part of al-'Ash`arī's *Maqālāt* was composed before his conversion from Mu'tazilah theology to the Sunnī traditionist ideology. Whether or not that was the case does not affect to the point being made in regards to use of such text to define beliefs of Shī`ah theologians. Polemical attacks from the Mu`tazilah against the Shī`ah were common and it is also possible that al-'Ash`arī added and changed his work to fit with his polemical attacks after his conversion.

[9]Western academics have generally shown preference for Sunnī texts when verifying claims about early Islamic thought and history considering Shī`ah sources as heterodoxical. The aforementioned approach to early Islamic history and thought extends to the procedures that early Muslim scholars used to verify historical claims. This includes Ignaz Goldziher's famous criticism of developing an idea of early Islamic thought and history through the various different narrative collections. Goldziher criticizes the methods used by Islamic scholars for verifying oral transmissions about the statements of the Prophet Muhammad, his life and early Islamic history. He does not see such methods as reliable and as being able to give an accurate account of early Islamic history. Firstly, Goldziher limits himself to the methods used by the scholars of narrative tradition limited both in methodology and ideology to the Sunnī creed. Secondly, he fails to investigate the various claims, especially within the Shī`ah tradition, of written works that were supposedly produced in early Islamic history. There will be more critical discussions about the early Islamic theological thought in chapter one.

thought. One of the more important aspects is the impact of the different ideological, moral and legal views of the early companions of the Prophet Muhammad on later Islamic thought.

The question that must now be addressed is why early Islamic history and the development of schism in the Muslim community are of any relevance to the discussion of theistic arguments and Islamic thought. Its significance is related to questions about the origin of Islamic beliefs and the arguments defending them. There is good evidence that orthodox Sunnī jurisprudence corresponds to much of what was applied by the caliphs of the Islamic Empire in the early periods of Islam after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, with the exception of a brief period under the caliph `Alī and even a shorter period under his son Hasan. Sunnī theology dominated the political scene under the *Banū 'Umayyah* (Umayyad) dynasty with its various rulers severely persecuting those who disagreed with the court endorsed doctrine. There is, however, no reason to deny the existence of the different groups opposed to the caliphs and the Umayyad rulers and their theological background rooted in Islam. This is especially the case since prominent companions and family members of the Prophet Muhammad, including many early converts to Islam, were among these opposition groups. The distinctive theological and jurisprudential texts of the creeds that included such individuals and their heirs in future generations can be used to both develop a picture of Islam during the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the various different theological and philosophical theories that developed over the course of history.[10]

One of the major sources that can assist in the task of developing an idea of Islamic belief from its advent to the death of the Prophet Muhammad is the Qur'ān. Most Western studies of Islam have not realised the importance of the Qur'ān and Qur'ānic exegeses in getting a better understanding of early Islamic history and thinking. What is known about the Qur'ān is that it consists of verses that the Prophet Muhammad imparted to people through a period of about twenty three years. These verses deal with a variety of issues ranging from Islamic doctrine to ethics and a legislative system. The entire set of Islam's doctrinal beliefs and arguments in their defence are included in the Qur'ān. Many of its verses refer to actual situations that occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad and they consist of responses to doctrinal questions and criticisms, the establishment of a particular law or practice, the narration of an event and praising or admonition of the

[10]This includes serious examination of the narrative texts and collections of these creeds.

contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad. Additionally, most Muslim theologians, jurisprudents, ethicists and philosophers in one way or another have attempted to justify or support their fundamental conclusions through Qur'ānic verses. Hence, a comprehensive and meticulous examination of the Qur'ān is required for a better understanding of Islamic thought in the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the origins of the variant different views associated with the sects that developed later.

Admittedly, many Qur'ānic verses are contextual and need further clarification beyond what is contained within a particular verse itself. To this end, the assistance of narrative collections, historical records and exegetical works are required. Such works usually only represent a particular doctrinal view. However, this need not be an impediment to the proper understanding of the text. There are many verses in the Qur'ān with meanings and themes that are not contextual. Also, much narrative and historical information with exact or similar content in the texts of various creeds can be used to explain verses among some of the contextual parts of the Qur'ān. The information gained from both these categories can then be used as a guide for understanding further Qur'ānic verses. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that exegeses that have been written by individuals affiliated with a particular theological inclination cannot give some explanation of Qur'ānic verses if the evidence they provide is scrutinised objectively. The data that can be acquired from the Qur'ān in these ways can be and indeed should be used to achieve a better understanding of Islam and Islamic theological discourse during the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

A third issue that needs to be considered when exploring the origin of a particular Islamic belief or discourse is whether or not similarity equals derivation. There is no doubt that Muslim philosophy has been influenced by Hellenistic thought. One has to only go through the number of books and commentaries written on Aristotle, Plato and other Greek and Neoplatonist philosophers to see the impact of Greek ideas on Muslim philosophers. However, it has been common practice to assume that similarity between views and arguments presented by Muslim philosophers and those with Greek origins is tantamount to the former being, *ipso facto*, a product of the latter. Hence, according to such a view, if a philosopher discusses the ultimate realities which are the subject of metaphysics, then he must be following in the footsteps of Aristotle's metaphysics. Derivation in a number of cases has been assumed rather than proved. In many instances the similarity between the two has either been exaggerated or has been superficial. In this regard two points need to be taken into account.

Finding signs of Hellenistic philosophy in some or even many discourses of Muslim intelligentsia is not an indication that 'all' views and arguments presented in those discourses can be traced back to it. The source of each view and argument has to be discovered independently. In the process of discovering such sources, there has to be a distinction made between content and procedural origin. In the case of the source of the content, the content of an idea or argument, including its principal premises, is traced back to an original work of some kind. In the case of a procedural origin, the presentation of an idea or construction of an argument is derived from a specific source.

In other words, to properly trace the origins of an idea or philosophical view, a thorough survey of both Islamic and Greek sources need to be undertaken. These sources should include the Qur'ān and Qur'ān related works, the Islamic narrative and theological compilations and Hellenic literature that had been available to Muslim theologians and philosophers at the time a theistic argument was first formulated. In this process, content and procedure need to be identified in the sense that at times the content or the premises of an argument are derived from one source while the procedure and style of presenting that argument is taken from another. It needs to be taken into consideration that the terminology of the procedure is sometimes transferred onto the content and therefore although it might appear the content is from one source, in reality it is from another. Thorough and careful analysis of these points makes it possible to draw an accurate picture of the origin of an idea or argument in a specific theological or philosophical tradition.

Among the other concerns of any researcher who intends to explicate and find the origins of beliefs that had been promoted by Muslim philosophers and theologians should be the culture, the language, the style of discourse and the political scene of both the early years of the Islamic movement and the later era of a particular theologian and philosopher concerned. It has become common practice to evaluate the early Islamic period and subsequent Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties through a post-twentieth century view of how the world should be rather than how the world was at the time. The severity of this approach is more apparent in the Western attitudes towards the subject. At times there is lack of knowledge about the style of discourse during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the uniqueness of early Islamic texts in their way of using language, rhetoric, poetry and reasoning. Instead, the style of presentation used in the language of today, limited at times only to the English language, is used not just for assessing content but also to decide on whether there is content in the first place. In this spirit, Francis E. Peters writes:

> The Qur`ān is a descendent of Deuteronomy and not of the Summa Theologica, and the early religious literature of the Islamic community of casuistic, gnomic, aphoristic…Pre-Aristotelian "theology" in Islam was, as has already been mentioned, casuistic in its approach. It handled its problems, which, like the Qur`ān itself, tended to be pragmatic rather than theoretical, by resort to a precedent derived by authoritative transmission, from the Prophet.[11]

Again in another part of the book Peters claims:

> The Qur`an is no more a scholastic treatise than are the Gospels. Questions are raised in it but not answered definitely; other questions, obvious to the nonprophetic hindseer, are not touched upon at all.[12]

Peters seems to not consider the considerable amount of argumentation presented in the Qur'ān in its own unique style that combines eloquence, rhetoric and reasoning and draws on a number of different methods to persuade its follower of the theoretical and practical foundation of Islam. No doubt his familiarity with Greek philosophy enables him to analyse later writings that were presented by Muslim philosophers. After the translation movement, many Muslim intellectuals used the style of argumentation used in the Hellenistic tradition when presenting Islamic thought as was the trend of the period. Others were heavily influenced by Greek thought. Nevertheless, neither of the two cases provides a reason to dismiss the notion that different methods of reasoning and argumentation were used previous to and after the era of the adoption of the Aristotelian and the Neoplatonic system of analysing arguments. Ibn Sīnā in his introduction to *Mantiq al-Mashriqīyīn* writes:

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[11]F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs*, (New York: New York University Press, 1968), xix-xxi. Interestingly, the rational elements of *Summa Theologica* are to a large degree influenced by Ibn Sīnā's works and those of other Muslim philosophers. Ibn Sīnā's works, especially those related to his theistic arguments, can in turn be traced back to the Islamic view of God in the Qur'ān and the narrative tradition and the theological distinctions between the needless and the needy that followed from them. Admittedly, Peters' work is an older book but is nevertheless a representative of a view that to a large extent prevails today.

[12]Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs*, 137.

> My aspiration resulted in (me) saying a few words about that in which polemics have differed and in doing so not giving into fanaticism, assumptions and habit. And I do not care if I differ with that which the teachers of Greek books have become accustomed to due to their carelessness and low power of comprehension. And I am not afraid to suggest something other than that which I presented in what I wrote for the common philosopher. The commonality who have been deceived by the peripatetic philosophers and reckon that God has not guided anyone but them and no one but them have reached God's mercy…In this way I was afraid that they would discover my differing views about such matters.[13]

He goes on to criticise the fanatical way that philosophers followed the Aristotelian tradition. Clearly, Ibn Sīnā is describing the pressure of his era to adhere to the Greek and Hellenistic style of discussing philosophical and theological issues and the difficulty of presenting differences of opinion. He himself in the introduction states how he had to conform to the norm that was prevalent in his time and write many of his philosophical works in the style of the inherited Greek tradition. He does, however, state that despite such conformity he acquired knowledge from non-Greek sources.[14] Certainly, his independent philosophical opinions are clear in many of his works.

Instances can also be cited where works of Muslim philosophers and theologians have been interpreted from a Judeo-Christian theological perspective. Peter Heath in his book writes:

> Avicenna divides the cosmos into three connected yet essentially disparate parts. At the fount of existence stands the "Necessary Existence" (*Wājib al-Wujūd*), which in many ways constitutes a synthesis of Plato's "The Good," Aristotle's "Prime Mover"

[13]Ibn Sīnā, *Mantiq al-Mashriqīyīn*, (Cairo: Sekka Al-Gedida, 1910), 2-4. This translation is mine, however, a lengthier portion of the same text has been translated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, see: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Ibn Sīnā's "Oriental Philosophy"," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1996), vol.1, 248-249.

[14]Ibid. In his autobiography, Ibn Sīnā claims that he had read and become accustomed to Qur'ānic sciences by the age of ten; see: W.E. Gohlman, trans. and ed. *The Life of Ibn Sina: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1974), 19. This would have had an impact both on the way he interpreted Greek philosophical views and in formulating his own philosophical idea.

> and Plotinus's "The One."…As the only cosmic entity that has "real" existence, it is the primary and, ultimately, the only, Cause of all things.[15]

Never in his writings does Ibn Sīnā include the Necessary Existence, the term he uses to refer to God, as part of the "cosmos" or as subsisting in it. The anthropomorphic idea of a God who lives in the cosmos or heaven and creates the world is rejected by most Muslim philosophers. The idea is quite common in the Christian-Judeo theological works. Avicenna and many other Muslim philosophers and theologians would regard God as completely unique and independent of the universe, which in every sense of the word has been created by that God. In Heath's defence he does state that according to Ibn Sīnā the Necessary Existence is removed from creation and alone. However, being removed and alone does not give the meaning of not existing in the cosmos and as such introduces Ibn Sīnā's theological views in a Judeo-Christian manner.

The influence of post-twentieth century thinking is furthermore apparent in the analysis of the political situations of early Islamic history. The Umayyad rulers are therefore seen as representing a more secular face of Islam as though they would be categorised by today's definition of what constitutes a secular government. In this way their considerable impact on orthodox Sunnī theology and their persistent and ferocious policies of propagating that theology is disregarded. Certainly, the Umayyad rulers were not religious. But that did not stop them from using their version of religion in their favour and persecuting the opposition. The impact of the Umayyad dynasty on orthodox Sunnī theology and jurisprudence is an important issue that needs to be considered in any research on Islamic intellectual and theological history.

Finally, there is the general assumption within Western studies of Islamic theology, which is not shared by Muslim scholars, that early Muslim thinkers could not have engaged in complex or speculative theological discussions and that such discussions could not have existed during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and a few centuries following his death. Other than reliance on mostly, Sunnī texts for such an assertion, the attitude towards early Islamic intellectual history is that Arabia was both isolated and intellectual deprived of such theological discussions. It is only after the expansion of the Islamic empire and coming

[15] Peter Heath. *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā): With a Translation of the Book of the Prophet Muhammad's Ascent to Heaven* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 36-37. Heath is referring to "the cosmos" as the universe and not as a ordered system of ideas, hence his statement, "Avicenna divides the cosmos...".

face to face with the superior civilizations of their time were Arabs in particular or Muslims in general able to become familiar with the various different theological issues and criticisms that would face any religious belief.[16] Hence, according to such a view, the Islamic empire of 7th, 8th and 9th century that was in contact with at least the many ideas of Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and their many different branches as well as a number of pagan religions was deprived of complex theological issues and thinkers to discuss such issues and could only engage in such discussions with the help of the translation of a set of Philosophical ideas developed over a thousand years before, in a group of islands that was yet to expand beyond the borders of the Mediterranean islands.

Such an account is a very simplistic view of Islamic intellectual thought which unfortunately is still prevalent in Western academic analysis of Islamic theology and philosophy. Muslims were in contact with many non-Greek cultures and ideas which required much more innovative thinking than simply reproducing the same philosophical text of Greeks that was in most cases at odds with Islamic beliefs to begin with.

Taking into consideration what has been said above this research is divided into three parts. In the first chapter, the role of reasoning at the advent of Islam will be examined along with the functions assigned to it by the different creeds created due to schisms in theological thinking. There will also be some discussion about the concept of God in the Qur'ān, the Islamic narrative traditions and the different theological schools of thought associated with Islam. The second chapter presents a categorization of theistic arguments according to the Islamic theological and philosophical tradition.

Subsequent chapters describe and analyze the three kinds of theistic arguments mentioned above in addition to an ontological argument of my own. The aim of these chapters is to give a detailed explanation of the theistic arguments and elucidate the principles that they are built upon. The utmost effort is made to use primary sources of reference. The exception to this is when the view of a particular author is considered. English translations of Arabic or Persian works are cited if they are available.

[16] I say Muslims in general because even during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, there was a number of non-Arab Muslims, some of who are revered by Muslims of all creeds. Among them were Salmān al-Fārsī, who was said to have converted from Zoroastrianism to Christianity before becoming a Muslim and Bilāl al-Habishī, the famous *Mu'adhdhin* (the person who calls to prayer) of the Prophet Muhammad, who was from Habishah (Abyssinia) and many Christian and Jewish converts to Islam.

Arabic terms and proper names are transliterated in accordance to the system of transcription given on page 235. The definitive article ‘al-’ is always written in between words in its original form even in cases where ‘a’ is not pronounced or ‘l’ is absorbed into the word the exception being in regards to some names. In case of the translation of a text by me, what I have added for clarification is included in square brackets.

Dates related to births, deaths and events are presented by its year according to the Islamic calendar as represented by A.H. (After Hijrah) or the Persian Calendar as represented by H.S. (Hijrī Shamsī), followed by its year in Common Era, represented by C.E. Dates of the publication of the works cited will be given according to the calendar system used by the publishers. Accordingly, ‘A.H.’ refers to ‘After Hijrah’, ‘H.S.’ refers to the Iranian Islamic calendar and stand for ‘Hijrī Shamsī’ and publications using the Common Era calendar will just have the date of the publication. This is simply for accuracy as many dates recorded in accordance with the Islamic or Persian calendar do not contain the days and the month, making its conversion into the Common Era calendar difficult.

It is hoped that the present work will acquaint Western academics with the previously unfamiliar or misunderstood theistic arguments in Islamic thought and will be a prelude to further elaboration and discussion both regarding the arguments and their origins.

1 Role of Reasoning in the Islamic Tradition

A study of the role of reasoning in the Islamic tradition is crucial for developing an understanding of the historical background of that tradition's theistic arguments. Non-circular theistic arguments are meant to arrive at conclusions about the existence–and in some cases attributes of God–based on a rational process that does not appeal to revealed text. In other words, an argument for the existence of God is circular if it attempts to prove the truth of its claim by having as its premise the authority of religious texts that declare the existence of God. The circularity of such arguments is due to the fact that the authority of a religious text (i.e., a text from God or agents of God) is not established until the existence of God is established. Consequently, by appealing to those religious texts the argument assumes the existence of God. For a theistic argument to not be circular it must appeal to something independent of religious texts to prove that God exists, namely, reason. Hence, beliefs about the ability of a human being to acquire such knowledge independent of revelation are of central importance in the development of theistic arguments. Furthermore, how a theological or philosophical tradition sees the place of reason in obtaining answers to religious questions could also determine the types of theistic arguments that it presents or develops.

A comprehensive explanation of the role of reasoning in the Islamic tradition in general and the Islamic philosophy in particular requires that this subject is discussed by delving into the approaches of the different creeds arising from the schisms in Islamic intellectual history. Considering the variant attitudes towards the ability of human beings to have a rational understanding of religious doctrine is important for several reasons. First, the position of human reason in a particular theological and philosophical tradition determines whether or not it approves of argumentation relating to the principal tenets of faith. In turn, the acceptability or non-acceptability of evaluating such beliefs through a reasoning process

determines the centrality of the procedures and conclusions used in such evaluations when dealing with religious questions.

Lastly, the significance given to rational methodologies for proving religious doctrine is the factor that ensures both the active development and the survival of those methodologies in a particular school of thought. The discussion that follows will begin with the place of reason at the advent of Islam. The rest of the chapter will go on to analyse the distinct approaches to the role of human reason and reasoning in the variant creeds.[1] A detailed analysis of the role of reason in the Islamic tradition and the personalities associated with that tradition is beyond the scope of this study and therefore only those thinkers that had a major influence on the tradition will be mentioned.

The Support for Argument in the Qur'an

Reasoning is an important feature of the Qur'ān and the Islamic narrative collections. Numerous verses in the Qur'ān emphasize the use of reasoning to arrive at conclusions and for engaging in discussions. Other verses invite individuals who make a claim or do not agree with the statements and arguments of the Qur'ān to bring 'proof' for their assertions.[2] A large portion of the Qur'ān includes arguments for the existence and attributes of God, prophethood and divine leadership, the existence of a life after death and other principal articles of faith. A complete account of the Qur'ānic position regarding reason needs a separate study of its own. There are, however, a few important points to consider.

At the advent of Islam with the exception of a few close relatives of the Prophet Muhammad and a number of his companions the rest of the societies that inhabited the Arabian Peninsula and the surrounding nations were pagans, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews and a certain monotheistic religion traced back to Abraham by the Arabs. To convince

[1] I will not be discussing the theological views of a number of creeds and their successor in the present day that differed fundamentally in some doctrinal matters. This is mainly due to two main reasons. First, my concern is with the distinct approaches that differing theological schools of thought had regarding reasoning and the intellect. The theological schools of thought I will be discussing outline the various different approaches regarding the subject matter at hand and other theological schools can in general be categorised with one of them. Second, my concern is with those theological doctrines that had and continue to have a major impact on both the doctrinal and practical issues of Muslims throughout the centuries.

[2] For example of verses that ask for proof see: Qur'ān 2:111, 21:24, 27:64, 28:75. The verses literally ask for a rational demonstration (*burhān*).

these individuals to convert to the new religion, the new Prophet could not simply refer to the authority of the Qur'ānic text as proof for the principles that were the basis of that religion. As a result, Qur'ānic verses and the statements of the Prophet Muhammad that dealt with principal Islamic beliefs had to argue for their claims. The verses of the Qur'ān indicate that the Prophet Muhammad did argue for the doctrinal beliefs of Islam to convince people to accept the new religion. This is clearly indicated in the verse that commands the Prophet Muhammad and his followers to "call thou unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation (*bi-al-hikmati wa al-maw`idhati al-hasanah*) and reason with them (*jādilhum*) in the manner which is the best."[3] Accordingly, there are many Qur'ānic versus that are intended to persuade Christians, Jews, pagans as well as adherents of numerous other belief systems and ideological viewpoints to accept the Islamic position.

An independent analysis of Qur'ānic arguments requires a separate research work of its own. For the current purpose, examples of some of these arguments should give an overview of how the Qur'ān intended to convince people to convert to the Islamic position.

The Qur'ān contains numerous verses that deal with the issue of resurrection. The main criticisms that had been put forward against the view of a life after death seem to have been based on the premise that physical resurrection is impossible. The Qur'ān approaches the answer to this criticism from different angles with each angle being a reasoned reply to a different way that the criticism could be put forward. The overall impetus of the verses dealing with the said criticisms seems to be that the possibility of the resurrection of the physical body by God rationally follows belief in a God who has created the 'worlds' and the creatures (including human beings) in it.[4] According to the Qur'ān, in the same way that God created everything when there was nothing and humankind from mud, he has the power to bring back human beings after they die.[5] However, the verses seem to concentrate on a different point related to this general reasoning. A verse might, for example, in one instance reasons that God has knowledge of how and where the disintegration and the

[3]Qur'ān 16:125. This is one of the earlier Meccan verses of the Qur'ān when there were still only a few adherents of the religion. There are also verses in the Qur'ān encouraging thought and consideration (*fikr*) on religious matters and using one's reasoning ability (*`aql*); see for example another Meccan verse: Qur'ān 30:8 and the Medinan verse: Qur'ān 2:73.

[4]Qur'ān 17:49-51. Also see: Qur'ān 19:66-67.

[5]Qur'ān 32:7-10.

distribution of the physical body occurs and therefore is able to restore it to its original form.[6] Other verses might draw comparison between the growth of herbage and plant life and the stages of human development to that of bodily resurrection.[7]

The most fundamental principal article of faith in Islam is the uniqueness and unicity of God. This is in direct contradiction to the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine of trinity. This led to the Christians approaching the Prophet Muhammad and enquiring into the reason why he was slandering Jesus by stating that he was not the son of God when clearly he had no father.[8] The Qur'ān responds by stating that having no human father is not a reason for divinity since Adam was also created without a father.[9] In another verse, the Qur'ān gives the argument that Jesus is not God because like other prophets he needed to consume food for sustenance (i.e., that Jesus was in need of other things for his existence).[10]

The abovementioned examples give a general overview of reasoning for doctrinal beliefs in the Qur'ān. These are only some among numerous verses that can be cited as instances where the Qur'ān has presented an argument for its position. Each of these verses needs to be understood in its historical context. These give an insight into the circumstances under which the verses were presented and reasons for their presentation. However, the fact that a reasoned argument has been given in each of the aforementioned verses is clear from the verses themselves.

There are many verses in the Qur'ān that are replies to challenges directed towards the principal Islamic articles of faith. Such challenges and the subsequent replies are illustrated

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[6]Qur'ān 50:3-4.

[7]Qur'ān 86:5-8, 22:5.

[8]Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, trans. Muhammad Ebrahim Ayati (Tehran: Sherkat Enteshārāt `Elmī wa Farhangī, 1382 H.S.), vol.1, 449-452. (Persian translation); Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Balādhurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State: Being a Translation from the Arabic Accompanied with Annotations, Geographic and Historic Notes of the Kitāb Futūḥ Al-Buldān of Al-Imām Abu-l `Abbās, Aḥmad Ibn-Jābir Al-Balādhuri*, trans. Philip K. Hitti (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2002), 99; Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of the Ancient Nations: An English Version of the Arabic Text of the Athār-ul-Bākiya of al-Bīrūnī, or 'Vistiges of the Past'*, trans. and ed. C. Edward Sachau (London: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain, 1879), 332.

[9]Qur'ān 3:59. The Islamic view does not consider rejecting the divinity of Jesus as slandering him. Jesus is revered by Muslims as a Messenger of God.

[10]Qur'ān 5:75.

in the Qur'ān in various different ways. In some cases, an argument against a specific Islamic principle is presented as statements from those who opposed previous prophets and divine messengers and in other verses a reply is given to a direct question or criticism posed by people of other faiths during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. The verses which attempt to engage other religions or beliefs do so differently reflecting the various methods of argumentation used in the Qur'ān.

Reasoning in the Qur'ān is not limited to doctrinal beliefs. There are also quite a number of reasons given by the Qur'ān for various different moral and ethical stances of the religion of Islam. Take, as an example, the practice of pre-Islamic Arabs of burying their daughters alive because of their preferences for sons and their belief that daughters were a burden to the household. The Qur'ān's response to this barbaric practice was the following statement, "And when the female infant buried alive is asked, for what sin she was killed?"[11] This statement which is part of a larger set of verses about the judgement day is intended to tell those who engaged in the practice of burying their daughters that there will be a day that they are made to answer for their acts. It also indicates the argument that punishment is only appropriate where a sin or a crime has been committed and being of a particular gender is neither a crime nor a sin.

A Qur'ānic verse also argues that there is no compulsion in religious belief because if God wanted to compel human beings to believe in His religion rather than a person freely choosing to do so by herself He had the power to carry out such an act.[12] Furthermore, according to the Qur'ān compulsion takes place in cases where the truth is unknown and the aim is to force a belief onto others without proof which is not the method approved by God.[13] Another important verse of the Qur'ān argues for the sanctity of human life by stating that the killing of a single individual is similar to the killing of the whole of mankind.[14]

In general, the Qur'ān strongly discourages individuals from accepting the tenets of religion through the imitation of their forefathers or religious priests and warns them of a day of reckoning (i.e., Judgment Day) when each person will be held responsible for his

[11]Qur'ān 81:8-9. Also see: Qur'ān 16:58-59.

[12]Qur'ān 10:99.

[13]Qur'ān 2:256. Compare with: Qur'ān 11:27-29.

[14]Qur'ān 5:32.

own beliefs and actions.[15] It further criticises those who do not use their reasoning capabilities to arrive at conclusions by referring to them as the vilest of creatures that are deaf and mute, with the expression deaf and mute referring to intellectual depravity and not a physical handicap.[16] It also demands from its followers that they not follow what they do not have knowledge of.[17]

The abovementioned points show that the Qur'ān encourages reasoning and contains reasoned arguments for its principal beliefs, a claim made in the Qur'ān itself.[18] Probably one of the unique features of the Qur'ān is that, as far as the God of the Qur'ān is concerned, revelation is proof not just for the reason that it is revelation from God but that it contains reasoned arguments from God.[19]

Indeed, many philosophical works written by Muslims have been commentaries on the Qur'ān and it is common to find philosophers who have either emphasized the influence of the Qur'ān in their work or quoted its verses as evidence that the solutions to their enquiries was found in them.[20] Their reference to the Qur'ān, as is apparent in their works, is not

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[15]For examples of each individual being held responsible for his or her own actions see: Qur'ān 53:39, 35:18, 30:44, 52:21, 99:7. For examples of Qur'ān's reprimand of individuals who follow their forefathers without rational reflection see: Qur'ān 2:170, 5:104. For an example of Qur'ān's reprimand of people who follow the authority of priests in what Qur'ān considers as being incorrect belief see: Qur'ān 9:31.

[16]The verse in question states: Surely the vilest of creatures, with God, are the deaf mutes who do not understand (*ya`qilūn*); see: Qur'ān 8:22. The word *ya`qilūn* means those who have understood or comprehended through reasoning and is a derivative of the word *`aql* (literally: reasoning faculty).

[17]Qur'ān 17:36.

[18]For example refer to Qur'ān 2:185, 4:174, 6:104, 6:57, 7:203, 45:20.

[19]Many examples of this point can be found in the Qur'ān. For one instance see: Qur'ān 11:88.

[20]For examples of discussions of Qur'ānic verses within a philosophical work see: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt: Ma`a Sharḥ al-Khāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī wa al-Muḥākimāt l-Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, ed. Karīm Fayḍī (Qom: Matbū`āt Dīnī, 1383 H.S.), vol.2, 411-416, Method 3, Physics and vol.3, 79-80, Method 4, Metaphysics; Al-Ghazzālī. *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, ed. Abul `Alā al-Afīfī (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-`Arabīyah, 1963). Al-Ghazzālī was actually a theologian but his work did have a significant impact on future philosophical and theological works, especially that of the Sunnī creed and Sufism. There is some doubt in regards to whether *Mishkāt al-'Anwār* is al-Ghazzālī's work but there seems to be a generally accepted position that it is. Also see: Ibn Sīnā, *Panj Resalah: Tasnīf Shaykh Ra`īs Abū Alī Sīnā*., ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Hamadan: Bu-Ali Sina University, 2004), 33-63. In this work there are three Persian translations of Qur'ānic interpretation attributed to Ibn Sīnā. Works by present day Muslim Philosophers and theologians that use Qur'ānic verses are innumerable. Suhrawardī also uses Qur'ānic verses in his *Ḥikmat al-'Ishrāq*. As an example of Suhrawardī's use of Qur'ānic verses see: Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of*

merely for the purposes of acquiring an authoritative status for their ideas but rather reflected their belief that they were inspired by its verses.

Concerning theistic arguments, past and present proponents of the five main theistic arguments in the Islamic tradition claim to have either acquired the basis for their arguments (if not the arguments themselves) from the Qur'ān or to have been inspired by its verses to produce the argument. The aforementioned theistic arguments include the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary, the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible, the Demonstration of the Veracious, the Demonstration of Natural Tendency and the Demonstration from Order (*nadhm*).

A further point giving strength to the view that reasoning played a significant role at the advent of Islam is that many Qur'ānic arguments allude to real situations that occurred in the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Hence, it is reasonable to state that the Prophet Muhammad himself must have also followed the same procedures and methodologies that were laid out in the Qur'ān. Detailed analyses of the circumstances and the context in which a Qur'ānic verse was presented to the general public reveals that in many situations, verses are referring to an enquiry or challenge made to the Prophet Muhammad and the replies given by the God of the Qur'ān.

The Source for Theistic Arguments in the Qur'an

It is reasonable to suggest that Qur'ān's description of the attributes of God have contributed to how many Muslim theologians and philosophers have viewed and continue to view the concept of God. Qur'ān is also a good source of understanding beliefs about the concept of God that is prior to the kind of influences that might have followed from Hellenistic or other philosophical traditions.

In the Qur'ān, a clear distinction is made between the attributes that should be affirmed for God and those that should be denied of God. For example, there are Qur'ānic verses that describe God as being omniscient, omnipotent, merciful, gracious, not like any other 'thing' (*shay`*) and that he does not beget children.[21] Similar kinds of verses can be found

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Illumination, ed. and trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 148-149, Part 2, Fifth Discourse.

[21]For example, refer to the following verse for God being described as omniscient: Qur'ān 2:29. For an example of God being described as omnipotent see: Qur'ān 2:20. For examples of God

throughout the Qur'ān. In one of its chapters, three verses both affirm a number of attributes and deny others in the following manner:

> He is God who there is no god other than Him, knower of [that which is] hidden and [that which can be] seen. He is the gracious, the merciful. He is God who there is no god other than Him, the king, the holy, the [source of] peace, the securer [i.e., the one who gives security], the guardian [or overseer of all], the almighty, the supreme, the great; glory to God [from] that which they set up [with Him]. He is God, the creator, the shaper out of nothing, the bestowal of form. His is the best of names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth glorifies Him and He is the omnipotent, the wise.[22]

Accordingly, Muslim philosophers and theologians later divided the attributes of God into necessarily affirmative (*thubūtī ījābī*) and negative (*salbī*) attributes. Affirmative attributes of God are those that can be attributed to God and which indicate perfection, such as, for example, omniscience and omnipotence. Negative attributes of God are those attributes that deny limitation from God. Such things as being composed of parts, being in a place and being a body indicate limitation. Hence, among God's negative attributes are that He is not composed of parts, or limited to a place or a body.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the way omniscience and omnipotence are described in the abovementioned verses of the Qur'ān. In both cases, God either has knowledge of, or power over, everything (*kull-i shay'*).[23] In another verse it is stated, "The praise is for God who created heavens and the Earth and brought about the darkness and light, yet those who disbelieve set up equals with their Lord."[24] In several verses of the

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being referred to as merciful and compassionate refer to Qur'ān 1:1, but also every chapter (with the exception of one) that starts with the phrase "In the name of God, the merciful, the gracious". For God not being like any other thing refer to: Qur'ān 42:11, 112:4. For God not begetting children see: Qur'ān 112:3.

[22]Qur'ān 59:22-24

[23]Op. cit.

[24]Qur'ān 6:1. Note that the term 'darkness' is actually used in the plural form in the Arabic text of the Qur'ān. There is no English equivalent for the plural form of the expression darkness.

Qur'ān God is described as being unlike any other thing.[25] Two verses also declare that God cannot be seen.[26] One interesting verse states, "So shall it be! Your lord says, 'It is easy for me and I created you before when you were nothing (*lam taku shay'an*).'"[27]

Such verses produce in the mind of the reader, or listener, a concept of God that is completely transcendent of His creation, who is unique and who has created everything other than Himself *ex nihilo*.[28] In another passage, the Qur'ān described God in the following manner: "Mankind! You are the needy [who are in need] of God. And God is He who is free from need (*ghanī*) and the praised one."[29] Also in another verse in the Qur'ān, it is stated: "...then surely God is free from need (*ghanī*) of the worlds."[30] There are a number of other verses that describe God as free from need and His creation as in need of Him.[31] In a passage in the Qur'ān, being free from need is stated as a contradiction to having a son.[32] One verse at the end of chapter *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28) reasons that nothing other than God should be worshiped because everything other than God is perishable.[33] Interestingly, the verse makes the claim that what distinguishes God from

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[25]Qur'ān 6:19, 28:88, 42:11.

[26]Qur'ān 6:103 where it is stated: "Vision does not comprehend Him..." (*lā tudrikuhu al-abṣār*) and in Qur'ān 7:143, when replying to Moses when he requested from God to show Himself to him, God states, "...you can never see me.." (*lan tarānī*).

[27]Qur'ān 19:9. Also for a similar verse see: Qur'ān 19:67.

[28]Harry Austryn Wolfson is his book *The Philosophy of the Kalam* dedicates a section to whether creation *ex nihilo* is something that early Muslims could have been acquainted with due to the verses of the Qur'ān. He claims that the position of the Qur'ān on the matter is vague but concludes that early Muslims probably believed that God did create out of nothing and that the world is not eternal without knowing the intricate details associated with such a claim. See: Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 355-359. However, it seems that Wolfson did not consider all the verses of the Qur'ān, especially those mentioned above that specifically state that God created things when they were nothing. In my opinion, there is nothing vague about the abovementioned verses and others with a similar claim.

[29]Qur'ān 35:15.

[30]Qur'ān 29:6, 3:97. The term '*`ālamīn*', which is the plural form of 'world' in Arabic, refers to everything that exists.

[31]For example see: Qur'ān 3:97, 47:38, 39:7, 64:6. Also for examples of verses that claim God is free from need (i.e., self-sufficient) see: Qur'ān 2:263, 2:267, 22:64, 29:6, 31:12, 31:26.

[32]Qur'ān 10:68.

[33]Qur'ān 28:88.

everything else is the fact that it is possible for all other things other than God to not exist. All these verses give an account of creation being completely dependent on a self-sufficient and necessarily existing God.

Many Muslim philosophers in addition to inheriting a certain concept of God from the Qur'ān and the prophetic traditions also used the expressions used in them to build a theological and philosophical vocabulary. How a particular expression should be used and what meaning it referred to became a source of controversy that led to a number of different theological schools. Take, for example, the question of what 'thing' refers to. What the meaning of 'thing' should refer to became an issue of great debate between the differing theological schools of the time. There will be some discussion related to the nature of 'thing' and the view of the different theological-philosophical schools in the chapter about the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary.

The Narrative Tradition

There was another significant tradition that was established during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad and which is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān, namely, the recording of the statements, actions and even non-action of the Prophet Muhammad.[34] This became known as *Sunnah* of the Prophet and his statements became known as the *aḥādīth* (singular: *ḥadīth*). The narrative tradition of recording the actions and statements of the Prophet Muhammad ultimately affected the role of reason in the intellectual development of different creeds in the Muslim community. One must also not overlook the impact of the narrative tradition of a particular creed associated with Islam in defining that creed's beliefs

[34]"O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority (by God and his messenger) from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger." Refer to: Qur'ān 4:59. The verse clearly places the importance of the statements of the Prophet Muhammad next to the Qur'ān. Such a conclusion can be drawn from the verse because the Qur'ān is believed by Muslims to be the 'word' of God. When the verse says obey God 'and' his messenger, it is referring to a source other than the Qur'ān. Also see: Qur'ān 59:7. In the verse there is a part that states, "…and whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep away (from it)." The term 'the Messenger' is often used in the Qur'ān to refer to the Prophet Muhammad. This part of the verse is a command to adhere to the instructions of the Prophet Muhammad. Even the non-action of the Prophet Muhammad was recorded by Muslims as an indication that a particular action is permissible by Islam. That is, the Prophet Muhammad had a duty from God to criticize an action if the action was a sin or a wrong of some kind. Hence, Muslims believe that if the Prophet Muhammad did not criticize an action that he had seen or had heard, then the action must be permitted by God.

regarding human reason and the concept of God. Muslims were encouraged to learn the Qur'ān and the statements of the Prophet Muhammad and relate them to others who either did not have access to the Prophet himself or were not present when a verse or statement was read. The statements of the Prophet Muhammad had the important function of elucidating Qur'ānic verses.[35] Many Qur'ānic verses appear to be making general statements regarding ritual practices and practical laws. The details of such laws and ritual practices needed to be explained and clarified.[36] Hence, the statements of the Prophet Muhammad were regarded as important as the Qur'ān itself.

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the Islamic community was divided into two distinct groups. One group, which included a number of the Prophet Muhammad's close and prominent companions, called for the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (599C.E.- 40A.H./661C.E.), to be the political and the spiritual leader of the Islamic community.[37] The second group allied with `Atīq ibn Abū Quḥāfah (573C.E.- 12A.H./634C.E., otherwise known as Abū Bakr) and `Umar ibn al-Khattāb (586?- 23A.H./644C.E.) and appointed the former as the first caliph of the Muslim community.[38]

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[35]Qur'ān 16:44.

[36]Take for example, the Muslim ritual prayer. The Qur'ān has clearly given the times and some of the procedures of the prayers but the details regarding the rites need further explanation that can only be discovered through the statements and practices of the Prophet Muhammad. Hence, the practice of referring to the instructions of the Prophet Muhammad in regards to such issues and others must have started at the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad himself.

[37]`Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib was the cousin of Prophet Muhammad who later married his daughter Fāṭimah. He was twelve years old when the Prophet Muhammad proclaimed himself as a messenger of God. He was the first male adherer of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad's wife Khadījah being the first female adherent. His father Abū Ṭālib had raised the Prophet Muhammad and he himself was raised by the Prophet Muhammad. Some of the prominent companions who sided with `Alī included among others Miqdād ibn al-Aswad al-Kindī, Salmān Fārsī, Jundub ibn Junādah ibn Sakan (more famously known as Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī), `Ammār ibn Yāsir and one of Muhammad's prominent uncles `Abbās ibn `Abdul Muṭṭalib. See: Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.1, 522-527; Al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah*, ed. Muhammad Sādiq Āli Baḥr al-`Ulūm (Najaf: Al-Matba`at al-Haydarīyah, 1936), 17-18; Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī*, ed. Muhammad Bāqir al-Anṣārī al-Zanjānī (Qom: Dalilema Publications, 1424 A.H.), 139-158.

[38]`Atīq ibn Abū Quḥāfah known as Abū Bakr was a wealthy Meccan merchant. He was one of the earlier individuals who claimed conversion to Islam in Mecca. His daughter `Ā'ishah was one of the Prophet Muhammad's later wives. `Umar ibn al- Khattāb became the second Caliph after his appointment by Abū Bakr. Before proclaiming his conversion to Islam, `Umar was an adamant supporter of the pagan beliefs of the Meccans known to persecute the new converts to Islam. According to historical records on the issue, the decision to choose `Atīq ibn Abū Quḥāfah as the leader was made by a number of Madinite tribes (known as the *Ansār*) after a rash decision by

The former group were known as the Shī`ah (singular: *Shī`ī*, literally meaning the followers) of `Alī and their school of thought later became known as the Tashayyu` school.[39] The latter group though not known by any name at the time became known as the *Ahl al-Sunnah Wa l-Jamā`a* (The United People of the Tradition) or Sunnī.

What distinguished the two groups was not simply limited to their belief about who was the rightful successor of the Prophet Muhammad. There was a clear distinction between the two groups regarding matters related to the administration of the Islamic community, the content and application of the justice system and ritual practices and doctrinal beliefs. Historical records show that those who sided with `Alī were well-known companions of the Prophet Muhammad who were regarded with high esteem. It can be assumed that the new leadership in order to consolidate their new power would have easily offered them positions of high rank for the purpose of reducing criticism of their leadership.[40] Hence, the resistance of such prominent companions of the Prophet Muhammad to the first three caliphs indicates that their motives were not mere political ambitions–as is popularly suggested–but also included ideological differences.[41] This view is further strengthened

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`Umar to put forward as a candidate a relative of Muhammad and an older member of the Meccan tribe of Quraysh. See: Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Last Years of the Prophet (Volume IX)*, trans. and ed. Ismail K. Poonawala, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 186-194; Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.1, 522-523.

[39]In Western scholarship there is a general assumption that the Sunnī school of thought represents orthodox Islam and the Tashayyu` school separated from this main body relying mainly on Sunnī polemical heresiographies and historical accounts. Hence, theories have been put forward about the 'origin' of the Shī`ah. The assumption that the Tashayyu` school needs to have had an origin while the Sunnī school is orthodox Islam needs to be justified with a definition of what precisely was the Islam introduced by the Prophet Muhammad by referring to various sources of historical evidence not limited to works with Sunnī inclination. Until now, the works in Western scholarship have failed to do this. This makes the conclusions of Western scholarship about early Islamic history circular in the sense that it has assumed that the Shī`ah version of history is not representative of early Islamic thought and then attempted to show how the Shī`ah thought and historical accounts developed through the centuries following the advent of Islam. Hence, a revaluation of this assumption is necessary. For definition of Shī`ah see: Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah*, 2, 17-20; Sa`d ibn Abdullah 'Ash`arī Qommi, *Tārīkh `Aqāyid wa Madhāhib Shī`ah (Al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq)*, ed. Muhammad Jawad Mashkur, trans. Yūsuf Fazāyī (Tehran: Āshīyanah Ketāb, 1382 H.S.), 56, (Persian translation). Also for early Shī`ah belief and theology see: Jamāl al-Dīn al-Hillī, *'Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, ed. Alī Akbar Ḍīyāī (Tehran: Al-Hoda, 2007); Al-Ṣadūq, *A Shī'ite Creed*, trans. Asaf A. A. Fyzee (Tehran: WOFIS, 1999).

[40]In fact, such companions as `Ammār ibn Yāsir were given to a certain limited degree such ranks but yet continued to remain faithful to the cause propagated by `Alī.

[41]Supporters of `Alī, other than the Banī Hāshim who were the clan of Prophet Muhammad and `Alī, included many non-Arab converts to Islam, slaves and the poor. Individuals such as Salmān

when it is seen that their behaviour towards and protests against the newly established leadership was reformative rather than a mere vying for power.[42]

Furthermore, the subsequent actions of most of those companions of the Prophet Muhammad who resisted the leadership of Abū Bakr and `Umar under both their reign and those of the third Caliph `Uthmān ibn `Affān (d.35A.H./656C.E.) indicates ideological opposition relating to the method of governance, the justice system, Islamic belief, ethical matters such as the rights of individuals (especially the underclass), fabrication of statements relating to the Prophet Muhammad and many other issues.[43] An example of actions that demonstrate this ideological resistance can be found both in `Alī's actions and the actions of those aligned with him. Of significance is `Alī's frequently differing judicial opinions regarding punishment for presumed criminals, his abolition of laws instituted under `Umar, his refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the rulings and laws of Abū Bakr and `Umar as a precondition for accepting the caliphate, and so forth.[44] The constant

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Fārsī were well-versed in cultures, politics and civilizations of non-Arabs. Their support for `Alī indicate a devotion to a belief system and ideology that must have been radically different from the others who vied for the caliphate.

[42]Furthermore, there are clear instances where people who were obviously devout Muslims rejected the caliphate of Abū Bakr, see: Balādhurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, 149-150.

[43]An example of the fabrication of statements from the Prophet Muhammad in the early period after his death is the claim of Abū Bakr that God's prophets do not leave an inheritance. See: `Abdul Ḥamīd ibn Abil Ḥadīd al-Mu`tazilī, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah* (Qom: Library of Ayatollah Mar`ashī, 1404 A.H.), vol.16, 209-296; Al-Hilālī, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī*, 226-227; Balādhurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, 52-56; Abdul Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Al-Firaq Bayn al-Firaq*, ed. Muhammad Muhyī al-Dīn Abdul Ḥamīd (Beirut: Maktabah al-`Aṣrīyah, 1995), 15-16. Abū Bakr used this alleged statement of the Prophet Muhammad against Fāṭimah, the daughter of Muhammad and `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's wife, when she asserted her ownership of a tract of land known as *Fadak*. Abū Bakr's claim was clearly false as there are instances in the Qur'ān that refer to individuals who had inherited from prophets. For example, see: Qur'ān 19:2-9, 27:16. Zakarīyā is considered a prophet by Muslims. Moreover inheriting from the Prophet Muhammad is also clearly asserted in the Qur'ān, see: Qur'ān 33:6. These verses, especially the latter verse concerned with a legal procedure rather than a tenet of faith, are clear and leave no room for interpretation as having a metaphoric meaning. Strangely enough the Sunnī polemics have interpreted the aforementioned verses as having a metaphoric meaning while taking literally other verses that are clearly figurative. In addition, the Qur'ān has a comprehensive system of inheritance and with the exception of Abū Bakr's claim there are no records of the Prophet Muhammad excluding himself from the Qur'ānic verdict. In either case, Fadak seems to have been given to Fāṭimah by the Prophet Muhammad before his death which meant the issue of inheritance should have never arisen and was used as a political tool to stop the flow of earnings from Fadak to Fāṭimah.

[44]`Alī frequently differed with `Umar when it came to judicial opinions. Take for example, the instance where `Alī condemned `Umar's decision to stone a psychologically disturbed woman who had committed fornication; see: Sulaymān ibn al-Ash`ath al-Sijistānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma`ārif Li-Nashr wa al-Tuzī`, 1998), vol.3, 55-56, The Book of Punishments

objection to the ruling regime, especially in its treatment of the destitute, of one of ` Alī's prominent companions by the name of Abū Dharr (d.32A.H./653C.E.) can also be noted among many to indicate the ideological differences that existed between the followers of `Alī and the first three caliphs.[45]

The said disagreements also extended to include the way each group considered the role of reason in answering religious questions. There was the obvious difference in approach to jurisprudential questions. The Shī`ah regarded their *Imāms* and Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (the

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(*al-Ḥudūd*), Narration number 4399-4403. On another occasion he condemned `Umar's ruling to stone a pregnant woman; see: Al-Mufīd, *Al-Ikhtiṣāṣ* (Qom: Congress on Sheikh al-Mufīd, 1413A.H.), 111. Among the changes made by `Alī to laws established under `Umar was `Umar's system of distributing public wealth. `Umar gave priority to Arabs over non-Arabs and certain clans over other clans. `Alī changed it to include equal distribution among every citizen regardless of their ethnicity and tribal affiliation and even set aside portions for non-Muslim citizens. For `Umar's system of distribution see: Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 40-42; Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Conquest of Iran (Volume XIV)*, trans. G. Rex Smith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 115-118. Despite Ṭabarī's ambiguous narrations surrounding the distribution of public wealth under `Umar, he nevertheless narrates `Alī's advice regarding the distribution of public wealth and Salmān al-Fārsī's criticism of `Umar's method of distribution. For `Alī's system of distributing public wealth see: Muhammad ibn Ya`qūb al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī* , ed. `Alī Akbar al-Qaffārī (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1384 H.S.), vol.8, 69; Ibn Abil Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol.7, 37. For his refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Abū Bakr and `Umar's rulings and laws as a precondition for accepting the caliphate see: Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 53; Ṭabarī, *The Conquest of Iran*, 159.

[45]For Abū Dharr's criticism of the governance of `Uthmān and his governors see: Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate (Volume XV)*, trans. R. Stephen Humphreys (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 64-68; `Alī ibn al-Husayn al-Mas`ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma`ādin al-Jawhar*, ed. Muhammad Hishām al-Na`sān and Abdul Majīd Jalabī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rafah, 2005), vol.2, 303-305. For the disagreement of a number of the companions of `Alī with `Uthmān and examples of some of `Uthmān's actions that angered the Muslim community that led to his killing see: Al-Mas`ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol.2, 298-310; Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 54-55. Most Orientalists and Western scholars of Islamic studies have missed this crucial point by relying on a limited number of references (usually heresiographies) that are either the works of extreme elements of the Sunnī sect or works done by previous scholars that refer back to these writings. There are, however, a sufficient number of historical texts from both Sunnī and Shī`ah sources that give a picture of the disagreements that had arisen after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. These differences included, among other things, the refusal of `Ali to follow the methods of the first two caliphs when it was made as a prerequisite by a council given the task of electing the third caliph, as well as differences regarding ritual practices, ethics and principal beliefs covering a vast range of issues that defined the identity of the different creeds in Islamic history. Furthermore, there is no reason for later adherents of the Tashayyu` school to fabricate detailed stories of disagreements between `Alī and the first three Caliphs if such a disagreement did not exist. It is also important to point out that after an uprising that led the disaffected public to the killing of the third caliph, people turned to `Alī and demanded that he becomes the next caliph. Such an emotional plea to take over the leadership of an empire and establish justice among the dissatisfied cannot be disregarded as a simple power struggle.

daughter of the Prophet Muhammad) as being designated by God and their position announced by the Prophet referring to them along with the Prophet Muhammad as the *Ahlul Bayt* or 'People of the House'.[46] Each *Imām* would remind the general public of the one who would inherit the vicegerency.[47] The *Imāms* were direct descendents of `Alī and Fāṭimah and were infallible and inerrant.[48]

For the Shī`ah, the position of an *Imām*–or other 'guides' such as Fāṭimah–is similar to that of a prophet, with the exception that he or she is not to bring any new religious laws (*sharī`ah*) from God.[49] The *Imām* is appointed for the purpose of explaining religion and guiding humanity and is meant to know the actual interpretation of sacred revealed texts (in the case of Islam, the Qur'ān) and the reasons behind God's commandments.[50] The *Imām* is said to know this because it was either revealed to him by God or taught to him by a prophet, a guide or previous Imams (in the case of Islam by the Prophet Muhammad, Fāṭimah or one of the *Imāms* of the Shī`ah).

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[46]Al-Ṣadūq, *A Shī'ite Creed*, 83-87, 94-95.

[47]Muhammad ibn Ya`qūb al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī* , ed. `Alī Akbar al-Qaffārī (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1383 H.S.), vol.1, 286-329.

[48]In general, for a discussion on Imāmah and the points mentioned refer to: Al-Ṣadūq, *A Shī'ite Creed*, 83-87, 94-95, Al-Hillī, *'Anwār al-Malakūt*, 283-321, Aim 15; al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah*, 17-20. Hence, according to the Shī`ah, `Alī appointed his son Hasan as his successor and Hasan appointed his brother Husayn and Husayn his son `Alī. After Husayn's son `Alī several splinter groups were formed along the line of succession of the Imāms, including that of the Zaydīyah, Ismā`īlīyah and numerous other smaller creeds. The line of succession, however, as accepted by the group consisting of majority Shī`ahs today known as the Ithnā `Asharīs (literally: Twelvers) or Imāmīs, includes twelve Imāms beginning with `Alī and ending with the ninth direct descendants of Husayn called Muhammad ibn al-Hasan or al-Mahdī.

[49]According to Tashayyu` theology and narrative collections, there have been guides such as Imāms, Prophets and Messengers who were sent by God in different eras to the nations around the world–or according to some narrations, the universe. For the Shī`ah, Imāms are not necessarily lower in rank and virtue than Prophets and Messengers. Hence, after Muhammad, who according to Shī`ah has the highest ranking position among creation, the Imāms of *Ahlul Bayt* and Fāṭimah are higher in status and excellence than other prophets and messengers. There are also a number of women, in addition to Fāṭimah, who are considered in the Tashayyu` theology as being an authoritative figure. This includes Zaynab bint `Alī, the granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad, whose shrine is located in Damascus, Syria, and Fāṭimah bint Mūsā, more famously known as 'Fāṭimah the Infallible (*Ma`sūmah*)', whose shrine is located in Qom, Iran. Mary, the mother of Jesus is also highly regarded as being infallible both in Tashayyu` theology and the Qur'ān. According to the Qur'ān, Mary's mother was given a girl purposefully to be dedicated to the service of God (i.e., in the temple) even though such a position was usually only reserved for men. See: Qur'ān 3:35-37, 42.

[50]Al-Ṣadūq, *A Shī'ite Creed*, 85.

The Shī`ah believed, as still do today, that their *Imāms* were the custodians of the *sharī`ah* (the Islamic legal system) and therefore referred to them for the explication of jurisprudential matters. As far as the Shī`ah were concerned, appealing to the authority of the *Imāms* was the method of establishing the duties and practical responsibilities of Muslims. Referring to their *Imāms* did not mean that they gave up the recording of the Prophet Muhammad's statements and traditions. While the Sunnīs under the direct verdict of the second caliph `Umar had stopped the recording of the Prophet Muhammad's traditions until the reign of the Umayyad ruler `Umar ibn Abd al-Azīz (d.101A.H./720C.E.), the Shī`ah disregarding `Umar's verdict as heresy continued compiling the Prophetic statements and traditions.[51] Moreover, as far as the Shī`ah were concerned their *Imāms* were most preferred transmitters of the prophetic tradition.

The Sunnīs, on the other hand, regarded the companions (known as the *Ṣaḥābah*) of the Prophet Muhammad as each having what was later termed *ijtihād*.[52] Each companion, according to the Sunnīs, was able to arrive at religious laws through his own understanding or opinion of the statements of the Prophet. In numerous cases, this ability of the companions also included establishing new laws or altering and changing the traditions set by the Prophet Muhammad.[53] At the early stages, this concept was not fully developed by

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[51]Examples of Shī`ah works and compilations during the early period of Islam are: The work by Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī (c.620C.E.-86A.H./705C.E.) which contains prophetic narrations. Al-Nadīm mentions the book in his *al-Fihrist*, see: Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, trans. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), vol.1, 535. Al-Nadīm introduces Sulaym ibn Qays as the companion of the 'Commander of the Faithful.' In the footnote Bayard Dodge states that Sulaym ibn Qays could have meant `Alī ibn Husayn (33A.H./654 C.E.-95A.H./713C.E.), the fourth Imām of the Shī`ah, rather than `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, since the Shī`ah considered their Imāms as caliph whether or not they are recognised as caliph by the majority. This is, however, incorrect. The Shī`ah reserve the title of 'Commander of the Faithful' only for `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and have narrations in this regard. Al-Hilālī's book is also mentioned in the *Fihrist* of Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, known as Sheikh Ṭūsī, see: Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Fihrist*, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī (Nashr al-Fiqāhah, 1422 A.H.), 143. Al-Nadīm also mentions two books of theological nature by `Alī ibn Ismā`īl ibn Maytham ibn Yaḥyā al-Tammār a companion of `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, see: Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, 437. These books must have contained prophetic traditions.

[52]Note that the term *Ijtihād* has been used differently among the Sunnī and Shī`ah jurisprudents. The former have used the term to refer to appeal to personal opinion to establish a *sharī`ah* law when there is a lack of evidence from the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition. The term *Ijtīhād* with the meaning given to it by Sunnīs was denounced by Imāms of the Shī`ah and jurisprudents. In the 13th century (7th Century A.H.) the term began to be used by Shī`ah jurisprudence to refer to the process of deducing *sharī`ah* law from the Qur'ān and the traditions of the *Ahlul Bayt*.

[53]For an example of the alteration of Islamic rituals by the second Caliph refer to Al-Bukhārī, *Sahīh al-Bukhari: Arabic-English*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Beirut: Dar Al Arabia, 1985),

the Sunnīs. The first three Caliphs and their supporters among the tribal elite used their status as companions of the Prophet to gain endorsements for their methods of governance and to consolidate their rule over the Muslims. `Umar had prohibited the writing of the Prophet Muhammad's statements. The only access to the statements of the Prophet Muhammad and the clarification of ritual practices and Islamic laws was through the Prophet's companions. As a result, among the Sunnīs, the status of being a companion of the Prophet Muhammad became a point of reference like that of the *Imāms* of the Shī`ah.[54] Those who were not a companion referred to the companions to answer their enquiries regarding religious matters.

The practice of referring to those who claimed to have knowledge of the Prophet Muhammad's statements for explanation of both religious matters and legal issues was continued by the later generations of Sunnīs by referring to those who learnt the narrations and traditions of the Prophet from his companions (known as the *Tābi`ūn* or followers of the companions) and so forth (the *Tābi`īn* of the *Tābi`īn*). By the second century of the

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vol.3, 126-127; Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 22. `Umar in contrast to the statement of Prophet Muhammad decreed that the recommended ritual prayers that are offered by Muslims during the Arabic month of Ramaḍān be performed in congregation rather than individually. Other examples include the abolition of the Islamic practice of temporary marriage (*mut`ah* of marriage) and certain acts that were allowed in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad during the pilgrimage to Mecca (i.e., the *mut`ah* of Hajj); see: Avraham Hakim, "Conflicting Images of Lawgivers: The Caliph and the Prophet Sunnat `Umar and Sunnat Muhammad," in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, ed. Herbert Berg (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), 159-178. Temporary marriage is a kind of marriage that can be contracted between a man and a woman for a duration agreed by both of them in contrast to permanent marriage that does not have a time limit. In a temporary marriage certain conditions can be placed on the couple that is not acceptable in a permanent marriage. For example, as part of the temporary marriage contract a couple may decide to exclude sexual intercourse in their relationship, although they do not have to. Furthermore, many restrictions and duties of the husband and wife that apply in the permanent marriage do not apply in a temporary marriage. Some restrictions continue to apply in cases of temporary marriage as it does in cases of permanent marriage and one such restriction includes a waiting period for a woman after her temporary marriage is terminated before she can enter another marriage contract, whether temporary or permanent. In regards to permanent marriage, there is also a waiting period for a woman who divorces from her husband or her husband passes away. Shī`ah accept the legality of temporary marriage and the abovementioned type of pilgrimage. However, until today the adherent of the Sunnī school of jurisprudence continue to comply by `Umar's rulings.

[54]Sunnīs clearly preferred the authority of some companions over others. Innumerable traditions about the statements and activities of the Prophet Muhammad are reported from a handful of individuals (some of whom were on the direct payroll of the Umayyad rulers) while others are almost completely left out. There is barely any statement from the followers of `Alī or even `Alī himself in prominent books of tradition among the Sunnīs and the statements that are recorded and attributed to `Alī are in many cases reported on the authority of individuals who had engaged in wars against him such as, for example, Amr ibn al-`Āṣ).

Islamic calendar (around eighth Century C.E.), Sunnīs were deferring to the most accessible individual from among the *Tābi`īn* or their successors, usually limited to the village or region of the enquirer, who were either a member of the tribe connected to the *Tābi'īn* or appointed by the government of the time. The practice of referring to any of the numerous claimants who professed to have knowledge of the statements of the Prophet Muhammad and the ability to discern Islamic laws gradually faded away within the Sunnī community as some jurisprudents and their students from the later generations gained favour with the ruling elite. Verdicts that were strictly enforced by authorities against anyone who adhered to schools of jurisprudence other than those endorsed by the government of their time steadily ensured the survival of the four jurisprudential schools (*madhāhib*, singular: *madhhab*) of Ḥanafīyah, Mālikīyah, Shāfi`īyah, and Hanābīlah among the Sunnī that still exist today.[55]

The two creeds of Tashayyu` and Sunnīs also fundamentally differed regarding the articles of faith. There were definite differences in regards to what each creed considered as the accurate understanding of the main Islamic principles of unicity and attributes of God (*tawḥīd*), prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and leadership (*imāmah*), resurrection and judgement (*ma`ād*). However, the groups also differed in the way they answered ontological, metaphysical and epistemological questions. The narrative traditions of the two creeds are an indication of how they differed in terms of the role of reasoning with regards to religious doctrine.

Sunnīs and Shī'ah on Reasoning and Argument

The narrative collections of the Shī`ah clearly indicate a similar approach to that of the Qur'ān in reasoning about doctrinal issues. The distinction between using reason and having knowledge is found in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān uses the two terms independently with knowledge referring to content or awareness and intellect or reasoning faculty

[55]The four jurisprudential schools include: The Ḥanafīyah (or Ḥanafī) school founded by Muhammad al-Nu`mān ibn Thābit (80A.H./699C.E.–150A.H./767C.E.), better known as Abū Ḥanīfah, The Mālikīyah (or Mālikī) school founded by Mālik ibn 'Anas (93A.H./715C.E.-179A.H./796C.E.), the Shāfi`īyah (or Shāfi`ī) school founded by Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi`ī (150A.H./767C.E.-240A.H./820C.E.) and the Ḥanābīlah (or Ḥanbalī) school founded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164A.H./780C.E.-241A.H./855C.E.).

denoting an instrument and a process of reasoning.[56] In the narrative collection *al-Maḥāsin*, by Aḥmad ibn Muhammad al-Barqī (d.274A.H./887C.E.), there is a clear distinction between the intellect (*aql*) and knowledge (*ma`rifah*).[57] In the collection known as *al-Kāfī*, compiled by Muhammad ibn Ya`qūb al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī (d.328A.H./939 or 940C.E.), numerous chapters are dedicated to the traditions from Prophet Muhammad and the Imāms of the Shī`ah about the importance of reasoning and the intellect (*aql*) and are distinguishably separate from chapters about knowledge (*`ilm*).[58] Similarly, the tenth century (4th Century A.H.) work titled *Tuḥaf al-`Uqūl `an Āli al-Rasūl* (The Masterpieces of the Intellects from the Progeny of the Messenger) contains narrations ascribed to Prophet Muhammad and the Imāms regarding the intellect and knowledge.[59] In another work dating back to the early eleventh century (5th Century A.H.) known as *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Peak of Eloquence) containing sermons, letters and statements attributed to `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, emphasis on using one's reasoning capabilities and the use of the intellect to understand revelation is clear.[60] The persistence of the statements that are reported from the *Ahlul Bayt* on the subject of the intellect in Shī`ah narrative collections, theological and ethical treatises indicates that reasoning played an important role in regards to answering religious questions among the Shī`ah.[61]

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[56]Derivations of the word '*`aql*' are used in some verses to refer to the act of using the intellect or the reasoning faculty to understand religious doctrine. For example see: Qur'ān 57:17, 2:73. On the other hand, derivations of the word '*`ilm*' are used to refer to acquiring, having or not having knowledge. As an example see: Qur'ān 12:68.

[57]Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khālid al-Barqī, *Al-Maḥāsin* (Qom: Dar al-Kitāb al-Islāmīyah, 1371A.H.), vol.1, 191-199.

[58]Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī* , vol.1, 10-72. The section titled *Kitāb al-`Aql wa al-Jahl* (Book of the Intellect and Ignorance) includes statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and the Imāms of the Shī`ah about the position of the intellect and the virtue of using it. The section titled *Kitāb Faḍl al-`Ilm* (The Excellence of Knowledge) deals with the merits of acquiring knowledge, scholars, the relationship of teachers and students and other such topics.

[59]Ḥasan ibn Shu`bah al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-`Uqūl*, (Qom: Enteshārāt Jame`ah Mudarresīn, 1404 A.H.), 28-29, 45,46,54,55, 383-403. There are other parts of the book where knowledge alone is discussed and there may well be more narrations that I did not come across about the intellect.

[60]For example see: Muhammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Rāḍī al-Mūsawī, *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Qom: Enteshārāt Dār al-Hijrah), 42, Sermon 1, 153, Sermon 106, 281, Sermon 190, 485, Saying 98. Thinking and understanding and judging through the reasoning faculty feature in these narrations.

[61]Among these works is the collection of ethical and moral statements compiled by the famous Shī`ī theologian and jurisprudent Muhammad ibn `Alī ibn Bābawayh al-Qommī (305?A.H./918C.E.-

In addition, reasoning is a noticeable feature in chapters dedicated to the tenets of religion in the Shī`ah narrative collections. Such chapters are comprised of arguments attributed to the *Ahlul Bayt* that reason for the existence and attributes of God, prophethood and divine leadership, resurrection and judgement and so forth.[62]

A differentiation between reason or the reasoning capability of human beings and knowledge is not found among the main Sunnī narrative collections.[63] More correctly, there is no discussion of the intellect (*`aql*) in the main Sunnī narrative traditions and this could be because early Sunnī thought did not consider reason as playing a major role in acquiring knowledge (or at least, knowledge of principal Islamic beliefs). In other words, early Sunnī thought was not interested in reasoning for the principal articles of faith. Even later Sunnī theologians like Muhammad Ibn al-Ghazzālī (450A.H./1058C.E.-505A.H./1111C.E.), who in their works divided the faculty of understanding to include the intellect, provided statements of Prophet Muhammad taken mostly from sources that are considered to be weak or are likely to be from Shī`ah sources.[64] In regards to doctrinal issues, the Sunnī narrative collections seem to be limited to statements and decrees regarding the principal

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381A.H./991C.E.). See: Al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Khiṣāl* (Qom: Enteshārāt Jame`ah Mudarresīn, 1403A.H.), 158-159.

[62]For example, see: Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1 and vol.2.

[63]These collections include: *al-Muwaṭṭa* by Mālik ibn 'Anas (93A.H./715C.E.-179A.H./796C.E.), *al-Jāmi` al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (known also as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*) by Muhammad ibn Ismā`īl Bukhārī (194A.H./810C.E.-256A.H./870C.E.), *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* compiled by Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj al-Qushayrī al-Nayshābūrī (206A.H./821C.E.-261A.H./875C.E.), *Sunan Abu Dāwūd* by Sulaymān ibn Ash`ath al-Azadī al-Sijistānī (202A.H./817C.E.-275A.H./888C.E.), *Jami` Tirmidhī* or *Sunan Tirmidhī* by Muhammad ibn `Īsā al-Tirmidhī (209A.H./824C.E.-279A.H./892C.E.) and *al-Sunan al-Ṣughrā* or Sunan *al-Nasāī* by Aḥmad ibn Shu`ayb al-Nasāī (214A.H./829C.E.-303A.H./915C.E.).

[64]See: Al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā al-`Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rifah, 1982), vol.1, 83. In the Book of Knowledge under the section titled 'On the Intellect, its Noble Nature, its Definition, and its Divisions', al-Ghazzālī uses two main narrations about the intellect without referencing them to a particular collection. Al-Ghazzālī himself does not provide any references for these narrations. Later commentators have provided references. Both these narrations are considered to be weak by Sunnī scholars. The first narration is recorded in the *Musnad* of Hārith ibn Abī Usāmah. The second narration is recorded in the book *al-Mu`jam al-Awsaṭ* by Sulaymān bin Ahmad al-Ṭabarānī (260A.H./874C.E.-360A.H./971C.E.). This second narration is almost certainly from a Shī`ah source but changed so that the narrator is `Ā'ishah. The narration is reported six different times (some with slight variance) in the chapter on reasoning in *al-Maḥāsin* of Al-Barqī who lived before al-Ṭabarānī and died when Al-Ṭabarānī was 14 years of age, see: Al-Barqī, *Al-Maḥāsin*, vol.1, 192, 194, 196. For al-Ghazzālī's division of the faculty of understanding see: W. H. T. Gairdner, trans., *Al-Ghazzālī's Mishkāt al-Anwār ("The Niche for Lights")* (London: Royal Asiatic Society Monographs XIX, 1924), 144-145.

beliefs accepted by the Sunnī school of thought. There are no reasoned arguments provided for the existence of God or other doctrinal matters. Surprisingly, the collections do not seem to include traces of arguments in the style presented in the Qur'ān even though there are Qur'ānic verses that are used haphazardly in some of the statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.

The aforementioned differences in the narrative collections point to significant dissimilarity in the way each tradition considered the role of reasoning in answering religious questions. The Shī`ah regarded the principles of religion as being accepted through reasoning, a belief that continues until today. The type of questions and answers that were exchanged between the *Imāms* of the Shī`ah and their followers and opponents illustrate that the Shī`ah regarded reason or intellect as the ultimate judge of matters relating to the principal tenets of religion. They consulted their *Imāms* in order to hear the reasoning for those principles. Among one of the most famous narrations attributed to the seventh Imam of the Shī`ah is: "God has provided the people with two kinds of proofs (*ḥujjatayn*), the outward proof and the inner proof. The outward [proofs] are the Messengers, prophets and *Imāms* but the inner [proofs] are the intellects (*`uqūl*)".[65]

The Sunnīs, while being more liberal regarding the interpretation of jurisprudential laws did not hold the intellect in high regard when considering doctrinal matters, a position that was to be the cause of division between the *Mu`tazilah* and the *Ashā`irah*. Before embarking on a discussion about the development of the role of reasoning among the Sunnīs, it is important to analyze the factors that contributed to the shaping of their theological, ethical and legal thought.

Early Sunnīs lacked a doctrinal system as well as a moral and legal theory. To this was added the turmoil of early Islamic history where the ruling governments actively promoted their preferred theological or moral philosophy and persecuted those with opposing views. This was the case both under the Umayyad (661C.E.-750C.E.) and the Abbasid (750-1258C.E.) dynasties. Whether within a dynasty or from one dynasty to another, the political climate decided on the impact and influence of a specific theologian and his theories on the Sunnī community's doctrinal and moral perspectives. This was in contrast to the Tashayyu` theological and moral doctrine. The Shī`ah, from the time of Prophet Muhammad's death looked to their *Imāms* for the explanation of their belief system and their moral and

[65] Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 16; Al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-`Uqūl*, 386.

practical obligations. Each *Imām* would appoint his successor and would therefore ensure the continuity of the theology and the ethical and legal views of the previous *Imām*. The *Imāms* with the exception of the period of the caliphate of `Alī were in constant intellectual opposition to the ruling governments of their time. This meant that the political backing of theologians and legal theorists did not contribute to the makeup of the theological and moral views of those who adhered to Tashayyu` school of thought. Any new idea or theory that was a subject of a debate was referred back to the *Imāms* by the Shī`ah to check for its compatibility with Tashayyu` Islam and that only if it was not already dealt with by the *Imāms* in their sermons, lectures or meetings.

During the Umayyad Dynasty the doctrinal divide between the Shī`ah and the Sunnī increased. A number of different companions and *Tābi`īn* were reporting contradictory narrations attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. The contrast between the narrations was sharply along schismatic lines. There was the well-known difference regarding divine leadership that the Shī`ah reserved for their *Imāms*. However, the divide also included ideological differences regarding other principles of the Islamic religion. To mention a few examples, take the point of contention relating to the attributes of God. The Shī`ah regarded anthropomorphism as being against the uniqueness and unicity of God, while the Umayyad court was openly promoting it.[66] There was also the issue of God's attribute of justice. The Shī`ah believed that it is the actions of an individual which determines his fate in the hereafter and considered this to be an example of God's attribute of justice. A degree of free will and responsibility for one's actions necessarily followed from God's attribute of justice as far as the Tashayyu` School was concerned. Among other beliefs of the Shī`ah was that God's attributes were not distinct from God (i.e., in philosophical parlance, from his essence) as separate entities and that the Qur'ān was created. Early Shī`ah narrative collections indicate their position regarding these theological subjects.[67]

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[66]Most statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad in Sunnī narrative collections that are of anthropomorphic nature are narrated on the authority of such individuals as `Abdul Raḥmān ibn Ṣakhr al-Adhdī (nicknamed as Abū Hurayrah or father of a cat), well-known for their associated with the Umayyad court.

[67]For examples of the rejection of anthropomorphism regarding God see: Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 104-106; Al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, trans. Muhammad Ali Sultani (Tehran: Armaghān Ṭūbā, 1384 H.S), 116-127 (Arabic text with Persian translation). For examples of the Qur'ān being created see: Al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, 334-343. For examples of God's attribute of Justice see: Al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, 114-115.

The Errors of the Orientalists – the Doctrine of Anthropomorphism

It is worth mentioning at this point that most Orientalists and Western historians have ignored the Tashayyu` position regarding such theological questions as those mentioned above and have attributed the beginning of belief in a non-anthropomorphic God, human free will, discussions relating to the attributes of God and use of reasoning for answering ideological questions to the Mu`tazilah.[68] In turn the underlying premises and procedure that led to the beliefs of the later Mu`tazilah theologians are sometimes traced back to the Greek philosophers. This is despite the available evidence from the narrative collections of the Shī`ah that trace back their beliefs regarding principal theological positions to before the beginning of the translation of Greek philosophical material. The Mu`tazilah too had begun to engage in this discussion prior to the influence of Greek philosophical thought.

Both from the perspective of narrative evidence and chronological order, it is implausible that these ideas originated from the Mu`tazilah and then found their way into Tashayyu` doctrine. The Mu`tazilah came after the Imāms of the Shī`ah had already instituted the theological doctrine of the Tashayyu` creed and established the role of reason in deciding religious questions. Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Ṣādiq (80A.H./701C.E.-148A.H./765C.E.), the sixth Imām of the Shī`ah and the one renowned to have established, with his father Muhammad ibn `Alī al-Bāqir (57A.H./676C.E.-114A.H./ 733C.E.), the Tashayyu` theological and jurisprudential school of thought is well-known for his theological views and theological discussions.[69] Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Ṣādiq was a contemporary of Wāṣil

[68]The discussion that follows is mainly regarding the treatment of the Twelver or Imāmī Shī`ah theology in Western scholarship not for example the Ismā`īlī or Zaydīyah branch.

[69]Josef van Ess in his *Theologie und Gesellschaft* claims that reports of the debates of `Alī ibn al-Mūsā al-Riḍā (148A.H./765C.E.-203A.H./818C.E.), the eighth Imām of the Shī`ah and the grandson of Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Ṣādiq, was due to the intervention of his transmitters because his statements in those debates contained a condensed speculative theology that can only be from the Mu`tazilah school of thought; see: Josef Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), vol.3, 156-157. Van Ess has assumed that speculative theology can only be found in the works of the Mu`tazilah and has not considered the position that such theological discussions could have taken place by others. There are a great number of books that have transmitted such reports, many of them written by respected scholars of the Shī`ah creed who claim to have investigated the reports and the biographies of the transmitters who were responsible for those reports. Two such scholars are Al-Kulaynī and Muhammad ibn `Alī ibn Bābawayh (311A.H./923C.E.-381A.H./991C.E.), known better as the Sheikh al-Ṣadūq who are considered by the Shī`ah as an authority on reports from the Prophet Muhammad and the Shī`ah Imāms. Al-Kulaynī (d.328 or 329A.H.) lived less than a hundred years after al-Riḍā's death (d.203A.H.) and al-

ibn `Atā (80A.H./699C.E.-131A.H./748C.E.), the founder of the Mu`tazilah school of theology.[70] Even though Wāṣil ibn `Atā is regarded as the founder of the Mu`tazilah school of thought, much of what distinguished the school of thought was not formulated until later generations. The Mu`tazilah themselves claimed to have derived some of their beliefs about the unicity and uniqueness of God from `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib through his son Muhammad ibn Ḥanafīyah and the Shī`ah also trace their beliefs back to `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.[71] It is unlikely that the Mu`tazilah would claim that their ideas came from `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib only to establish some kind of an authority for them. Wāṣil ibn `Atā lived during the time of the Umayyad caliphs and died before the Abbasids came to power. The well-known enmity of the Umayyad towards `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib would have created a hostile ground for anyone trying to associate themselves to `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib or his family and successors.

This is not to deny the later influence of Hellenistic works on both the Shī`ah and the Mu`tazilah philosophical works but only that this influence is not as has been popularly assumed. Rather, the available evidence points to the influence of the Tashayyu` school on the Mu`tazilah theological thought.

The popular opinion in Western scholarship that Tashayyu` theology, or more specifically Imāmī theology, resulted from or was an adaptation of the Mu`tazilah thinking could be based on several factors. The most important of these factors is a reliance on Sunnī heresiographies and polemical attacks against the Tashayyu` school to gain an understanding of the beliefs of early Shī`ah theologians. Wilferd Madelung, for example, in his essay titled *The Shiite and Khārijite Contribution to Pre-Ash`arite Kalām* states that early Imāmī Shī`ah theologians believed that God exists in space, moves and is a body (*jism*)–though not like any other body.[72] He gives as an example the theologian known as

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Ṣadūq (306-381 A.H.) lived a little more than a hundred years after. Furthermore, there is no basis for van Ess' claim when considering such factors as the fact that the kind of 'speculative theology' referred to by van Ess can be found in the Qur'ān and that al-Riḍā's grandfather Ja`far ibn Muhammad was the teacher of the founder of Mu`tazilah school and acknowledged by all major creeds associated with Islam as an expert in theology and jurisprudence.

[70]Wāṣil might have been a student of al-Ṣādiq.

[71]Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 381-382.

[72]Wilferd Madelung, "The Shiite and Khārijite Contribution to Pre-Ash`arite Kalām," in *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 122.

Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam (d.198A.H./814C.E.) and also states that the word *mawjūd* (being) used by early theologians indicates God having a body. Madelung's source is the *Maqālāt* of Abul Ḥasan ibn Ismā`īl al-'Ash`arī (d.324A.H. /936C.E.).[73] Madelung also states that it is likely that early Shī`ah theologians defined God as a body in the sense that God is existent (*mawjūd*).[74]

Binyamin Abrahamov quotes the Mu`tazilah Abdul Raḥīm al-Khayyāt (d.300A.H./913C.E.) as claiming that there was no Imāmī Shī`ī, other than those who subscribed to the Mu`tazilah theology, that did not believe in *tashbīh* (i.e., God having human form or characteristics).[75] Abrahamov goes on to cite the contradictory accounts given of the beliefs of early Shī`ah theologians.[76] He states that even though the writings of these theologians seemed to be against anthropomorphism, there are also accounts of them having such beliefs. He nevertheless concludes:

> Al-'Ash`arī, however, seems to be right in stating that early *Rāfiḍite* adhered to *tashbih*, whereas the later ones rejected it.[77]

Abrahamov does not provide evidence for why he believes that al-'Ash`arī seems to be right. Abrahamov's and Madelung's sources for the claim that early Shī`ah theologians

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[73]The full title of al-'Ash`arī`s work is *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn Wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*. Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash`arī's ancestry went back to Abū Mūsā al-'Ash`arī, a companion of Prophet Muhammad who had been favoured by the first two caliphs but had opposed `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. For his ancestry see: Muhammad ibn Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma`rifaḥ, 1404A.H.), vol.1, 94.

[74]Op. Cit.

[75]Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qur'ān in the Theology of al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm: Kitāb al-Mustarshid*, trans. and ed. Binyamin Abrahamov (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 3. Al-Khayyāt's claim is mentioned in footnote 18. Montgomery Watt also uses al-Khayyāt's work titled *Kitāb al-Intisār*. Watt gives comments regarding early Shī`ah theological thought by comparing between *al-Intisār* and *Maqālāt*. See: Montgomery W. Watt, "The Rāfiḍites: A Preliminary Study," *Oriens* 16 (1963): 115. Watt does this despite acknowledging the shortcomings of such works.

[76]The text itself uses the term *Rāfiḍī* which usually refers to the Imāmī Shī`ah rather than the Zaydīyah Shī`ah. Al-'Ash`arī would have used the term *Rāfiḍī* as a derogatory term as it is well-known among anyone familiar with Islamic history and it seems that Abrahamov decided to also use the same term when referring to the Shī`ah.

[77]Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, 3-4.

believed in anthropomorphism are either Sunnī (either orthodox or Mu`tazilah) or are polemical attacks of other schools of thought against the Imāmī Shī`ah. These sources include works by al-'Ash`arī, Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymīyah al-Ḥarrānī (661A.H./1263C.E.-728A.H./1328C.E.) and the Zaydī theologian al-Qāsim ibn Ibrahīm (169A.H./785C.E.-246A.H./860C.E.).[78]

Among the Imāmīs themselves there are a large number of sources that mention the non-anthropomorphic beliefs of early Shī`ah Imāms and Imāmī Shī`ah theologians including Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam.[79] Furthermore, some of the narrations attributed to Shī`ah Imāms correspond to early non-Imāmī sources such as, for example, Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī's (d.322A.H./933C.E.) quotation from Ja`far al-Ṣādiq found *Kitāb al-Zīnah* and a remark about narrations attributed to `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in the work *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, which describes the Mu`tazilah Abdul Jabbār ibn Aḥmad's (415A.H./1025C.E.) theological views.[80] Those who have quoted some reports that attribute anthropomorphism to a few individuals such as Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam also include contradictory statements and situations where these theologians not only rejected but also reason for a non-anthropomorphic God.[81] The reports that do claim anthropomorphism have been dismissed by Shī`ah sources as either being fabricated or as being misunderstood by the listeners

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[78]Among other sources used is *Kitāb al-Milal wa l-Nihal* by the 'Ash`arīyah theologian known as Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī (479A.H./1086C.E.-548A.H./ 1153C.E.). It is also important to mention that many Zaydīs were also Mu`tazilah.

[79]For example see: `Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim al-Qommī, *Tafsīr al-Qommī* (Qom: Mo`asseseye Dār al-Kitāb, 1404A.H.), vol.1, 20; Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 82-91, 100-107, vol.8, 31. Al-Qommī (c. 3rdA.H./9thC.E.) relates a narration stating that Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam was against anthropomorphism (*bi al-nafy li l-jism*). Note that there were certainly many *Ghulāt* (exaggerators) who also went by the name of Shī`ah that believed in the divinity of one or more of the Imāms of the Shī`ah. These groups were as distinct from the Imāmī Shī`ah school of thought as were the Sunnī school. Nevertheless, there were many polemic works against the Shī`ah, especially from the orthodox Sunnī school that attempted to group the Imāmīs and the *Ghulāt* together.

[80]Abī Ḥātim Aḥmad ibn Ḥamdān al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Zīnah* (Ṣan`ā: Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth al-Yamanī, 1994), 135-136. Al-Rāzī quotes a narration from Ja`far al-Ṣādiq rejecting the idea that God has limitation or anthropomorphic features. Also: Abdul Jabbār ibn Aḥmad, *Sharḥ al-'Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, ed. Abdul Karīm `Uthmān (Cairo: Wahbah Library, 1996), 268. In *Sharḥ al-'Uṣūl al-Khamsah* the claim is made that there are numerous narrations from `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib that reject the idea that a person is capable of seeing God.

[81]For example of Hishām's rejection of anthropomorphism see: Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 80-81, 83-85. These narrations have been transmitted by `Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim al-Qommī who is considered by the Shī`ah as a trustworthy narrator.

because of their inadequate knowledge of the type of discursive terminology that was used by such individuals.[82]

Al-'Ash`arī and al-Khayyāt's claims can be rejected entirely based on the fact that in such early works among others as *Tafsīr al-Qommī* of al-Qommī, *al-Kāfī* of Al-Kulaynī, *al-Yāqūt* of Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Nawbakht (c.3rd A.H./8th C.E.-4th A.H./9th C.E. Century) and *al-Tawḥīd* of al- Ṣadūq, the Imāmī Shī`ah theologians and traditionists who lived before or contemporary to them rejected anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*), the attribution of a body (*jism*) to God, spatial presence of God and movement to God.[83] Among both such works and older works such as *al-Maḥāsin* by al-Barqī, the ability for a creature of God to have a vision of God is also rejected.[84] Both these traditionists and subsequent traditionists of the ninth and tenth century (3rd and 4th Century A.H.) rejected the accusation of their opponents regarding early Shī`ah theologians.

As an example of narrations rejecting anthropomorphism in the Shī`ah narrative tradition is a rather long dialogue attributed to al-Ṣādiq by Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam in the book *al-Kāfī* and narrated on the authority of al-Qommī (the author of *Tafsīr al-Qommī*). The following points, among others, are clearly emphasized in the narration:

- God is completely different from everything else (*bi-khilāf al-ashyā'*) and is not comparable to anything.
- The concept of God has an affirmative meaning (*ithbāt ma`nan*).
- God has an essence (*'inīyah* or *mā'īyah*) and is the one whose reality is identical with His thingness (*shay'un bi-ḥaqiqat-i al-shay'īyah*).
- He is not a body (*lā jism*), has no form (*lā ṣūrah*) and is not contained in anything (*lā yujassu*).
- He cannot be sensed (*lā yuḥassu*), cannot be comprehended by the five senses (*lā yudraku bi-al-ḥawāssi al-khams*) or the imaginative faculty (*lā tudrikuhu al-awhām*) because anything that can be comprehended is delineated (literally: limited) and God is beyond delineation (or limitation).
- Passing of time does not cause wear in God and He does not change (*lā tunqiṣuhu al-duhūr wa lā tughayyiruhu al-zamān*).

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[82] Or it could have been statements of a particular individual before his conversion to the Imāmī brand of Shī`ah Islam since conversions from one theological school to another was not uncommon at the time. An example is 'Ash`arī who converted away from the Mu`tazilah theological school of thought.

[83] See for example: Al-Qommī, *Tafsīr al-Qommī*, vol.1, 20, vol.2, 448; Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 82-91, 100-107, v.8, 31; Al-Hillī, *'Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, 128-14, Aim 5; Al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, 34-89, 116-153.

[84] Al-Barqī, *Al-Maḥāsin*, vol.1, 239.

- God has knowledge of His creation through Himself (*bi-nafsihi*).
- God's essence cannot be known.
- The affirmation of the existence of a thing is not in itself limiting that thing since there is no midway between affirmation and negation. Hence, affirming God's existence is not to limit Him.[85]

Furthermore, al-'Ash`arī attributes the belief of God having a body to a sect known as al-Hishāmīyah, who claimed to have been followers of Hishām.[86] As it was the case at the time, many minor sects would develop from the major Islamic creeds and would go on to attributing themselves to a Shī`ah Imām or one of their followers in order to acquire a wider following. Al-'Ash`arī then goes on to claim that Hishām also held such a belief on the report that had reached him from Abū Hudhayl al-Allāf (d.c. 235A.H./846C.E.), the Mu`tazilah theologian known for his hostility to Hishām.[87]

Al-'Ash`arī was at first a Mu`tazilah and was trained in their theological views and historical accounts. It was only later that he split from the group and developed his own school of thought. Therefore, he might be regarded as an authoritative figure concerning the Mu`tazilah theology and theological history. There is, on the other hand, no reason to accept him as an authority on Shī`ah theology or theological history. For the reasons given above, al-'Ash`arī's account of the Shī`ah should be dismissed unless it can be verified independently.[88]

No attention should be paid to Ibn Taymīyah's claims both because he was renowned for his enmity towards the Shī`ah and that his work is too distant from the time of early Shī`ah theologians for him to be able to describe early Shī`ah thought. His sources would have been well-known heresiographies such as those by Al-'Ash`arī and there is no

[85]Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 83-85.

[86]Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash`arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, edit. Muhammad Muhyī al-Dīn Abdul Ḥamīd (Cairo:Nihḍah al-Misrīyah, 1950), vol.1, 102.

[87]Ibid., p.103. The Mu`tazilah theologians' hostility towards Hishām is clear from the sheer number of works that were written against him personally. Ibn Nadīm records at least five of the early Mu`tazilah having written books dedicated solely to the refutation of Hishām. See: Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 357, 388, 391, 414, 422.

[88]One might argue that even his account of the Mu`tazilah might have been subject to bias due to his later hostility towards the group.

evidence to the contrary. Therefore, there is no reason for using Ibn Taymīyah as an independent source for the claims about what constituted early Shī`ah beliefs about God.[89]

Madelung's reasoning that early Shī`ah believed God was a body on the basis of the word *mawjūd* (existent) is an 'Ash`arī interpretation of the word and not a Shī`ah one. 'Ash`arīs believed that for something to exist, it must have a body. Hence, an existent being (*mawjūd*) is a body. Shī`ah, with the exception of Ghulāt (exaggerators), did not have this belief. According to Shī`ah something that exists is a being (*mawjūd*) but does not necessarily have a body. Hence God, for example, exists but is not limited by having a body. The spirit exists, is contingent and limited but does not have a body and so forth.[90]

Admittedly, Madelung does attempt to some degree to use Shī`ah sources for understanding the views of early Shī`ah in the notes of his essay.[91] He quotes the hermeneutic work of the ninth century (3rd Century A.H.) theologians Alī ibn Ibrahīm al-Qommī. He fails to mention that the same quote also rejects the claims that Hishām believed God was a body.[92] The quote, which is a discussion between the eighth Imām of the Shī`ah and another individual called Aḥmad about the al-Hishāmīyah sect, states that Hishām speaks against God having a body. Aḥmad states, "Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam rejected the attribution of body (to God)" (*qāla Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam bi al-nafy li l-jism*). Madelung does quote this but not to point to Hishām's rejection of God being a body but for his rejection of God having human appearances. He also claims that al-Qommī's statements show that he accepts *ru'yah* (a term used by Madelung to refer to the visual comprehension of God). The word *ru'yah* in the way used by al-Qommī means to see or view. There is no evidence that al-Qommī was referring to seeing God. In fact, al-Qommī's commentary on the verse that Madelung uses to suggest he believed in *ru'yah*

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[89]Given the reasons for why he could not be used as an independent source and that Ibn Taymīyah's position regarding the Shī`ah is well-documented, it is strange why anyone would refer to his work for defining the beliefs of the Shī`ah.

[90]See for example: Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, 100. The text refers to God as a non-changing being (*al-thābit al-mawjūd*).

[91]Madelung, *The Shiite and Khārijite Contribution to Pre-Ash`arite Kalām*, 129-130.

[92]Al-Qommī, *Tafsīr al-Qommī*, vol.1, 20. Al-Qommī's comments for verse 103, in chapter al-An`ām (6), also shows that Madelung's claim is false. The verse states, "Vision comprehends him not, and he comprehends (all) vision…" Al-Qommī states that the meaning of "Vision comprehends him not" is that God cannot be viewed. See: Al-Qommī, *Tafsīr al-Qommī*, v.1, 212.

states that the Prophet Muhammad saw the *waḥy* or signs (i.e., proofs from God) in a place known as *sidrat al-muntahā* located in paradise.

In his commentary on the verse, al-Qommī attempts to bring proof against those who deny the 'ascension' of the Prophet Muhammad to such a place.[93] Al-Qommī's own opinion is clear based on his comments for the Qur'ānic verse 103, in chapter al-An`ām (6). The verse states, "Vision comprehends him not, and he comprehends (all) vision…" Al-Qommī states that the meaning of "Vision comprehends him not" is that God cannot be viewed.[94] Madelung seems to have limited himself to the reading of al-Qommī's introduction rather than his commentary of the verses in the exegesis.[95]

Around 11th century (late 4th and 5th Century A.H.) important changes occurred to the methodologies that the Tashayyu` school employed in their jurisprudential procedures and analysis of their narrative heritage. These changes entailed a reform of the way laws were being deduced from the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* for Islamic jurisprudential decisions. The prominent personalities responsible for this reform were Muhammad ibn al-Nu`mān al-`Ukbari al-Baghdadi (336A.H./948C.E.-413A.H./1022C.E.), known as Sheikh al-Mufīd and his student `Alī ibn al-Husayn al-Ṭāhir (355A.H./965C.E.-436A.H./1044C.E.), best known as Sharīf Sayyid Murtaḍā or `Alam al-Hudā. Al-Mufīd's work *al-Tadhkirah bi al-Uṣūl al-Fiqh* and Sayyid Murtaḍā's work *al-Dharīyah ilā Uṣūl al-Sharī`ah* can easily be distinguished from the works of their predecessors written a century before in that they employed rational analysis of the methods of deducing legal opinions from the Qur'ān and the narrations of the *Ahlul Bayt*. These changes seem to be have been interpreted by modern Western scholars as representing a reformulation of the Tashayyu` approach to theology. This assumption could be rooted in the belief that one can compare the shift in Tashayyu` jurisprudence to the original cause of the orthodox Sunnī and the Mu`tazilah divide. The orthodox Sunnī and the Mu`tazilah divide was rooted in differences that occurred in jurisprudential matters. This is because among the traditional Sunnīs, the issue

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[93]For al-Qommī's discussions on *sidrat al-muntahā* see: Al-Qommī, *Tafsīr al-Qommī*, vol.1, 20-21, 95, vol.2, 10, 12, 243-244, 334-337.

[94]Al-Qommī, *Tafsīr al-Qommī*. vol.1, 212.

[95]It should be noted that serious doubts have been raised about whether or not al-Qommī is the author of the entire hermeneutic work attributed to him. See: Aghā Bozurg Muhammad al-Tehrānī, *Al-Dharī`ah ilā Taṣānīf al-Shī`ah* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwa', 1403A.H.), vol.4, 308. It is very likely that the introduction referred to by Madelung was not written by al-Qommī and he is only the author of the interpretation of the abovementioned verse.

of the principal articles of faith was considered to be intermingled if not part of jurisprudence. The Shī`ah, however, had always separated the discussion of the issues of the principal tenets of religion (*uṣūl*, *aqā`id* or *`itiqād*) from that of the *Sharī`ah* Law (i.e., the Islamic legal system).[96]

The assumption is also based on the interpretation of the history of the political activity of the Muslim world during the tenth and eleventh century. The Būyīds entered Baghdad in 946 (344A.H.) and reduced the role of the Abbasid dynasty to that of a figurehead. What is known is that they were Shī`ah (or at least very much inclined towards them) and tolerant of the Mu`tazilah who at the time due to the persecution they had received from the time of al-Mutawakkil ibn al-Mu`tasim (205A.H./821 C.E.-247A.H./861C.E.) onwards had lost influence and power. The tolerance of the Būyīds in general created a atmosphere of learning in cities like Baghdad where intellectuals of different sects could meet and engage in polemics and discuss theological, jurisprudential, ethical and other issues. Now, a number of historians have suggested that this atmosphere contributed to the adoption of the Mu`tazilah rational thinking and theological views by the Imāmī Shī'ah. Some have even suggested that before this period there did not exist a real system of Shī`ah theology.[97]

Not much will be said here on the issue for fear of straying away from the main topic of discussion, but a few points will be made. The fact that the Shī`ah already had a well defined theological doctrine is attested to by the innumerable books that are extant today and which are dated prior to the Būyīd's influence in Baghdad.[98] The various different descriptions, however inaccurate, and polemical attacks on the theology of Imāmī Shī`ah on

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[96]An example of this is the eighth century (4th Century A.H.) narrative collection *al-Kāfī*. This collection is divided into three different areas of narrative study, namely, principal beliefs (*'Uṣūl*), practice (*Furū*) and miscellaneous. Also Ibn al-Nadīm has listed a number of Shī`ah theologians, some from the middle of the second century of the Islamic calendar (8th Century C.E.), and their works in his *al-Fihrist*. See: Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 381-382. Undoubtedly, the principal tenets of faith would ultimately have an impact on the legal system employed by a particular creed but this does not mean the two fields of study are not separately considered by that creed.

[97]See for example: Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam (Translated From German)*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh and D. S. Margoliouth (Patna: The Jubilee Printing & Publishing House, 1937), 62. The work is really an example of an extraordinary lack of knowledge about historical Shī`ah communities and theological views. Also see: Heinz Halm, Janet C. E. Watson and Marian Hill, *Shi'ism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 48-56; Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: their religious beliefs and practices*, (Milton Park: Routledge, 2005), 130-131.

[98]See above discussion regarding such books.

the part of the Mu`tazilah and al-'Ash`arī are additional evidence for a Shī`ah theology pre-dating the Būyīd dynasty. The intellect's role in religious learning is an integral part of the narrative collections mentioned above, all of which are dated before the time under consideration. Finally, there is no reason to believe that influence in the intellectual atmosphere provided during the reign of the Būyīds was one way (i.e., the Mu`tazilah influencing the Shī`ah rather than the other way around or both).

Some scholars have suggested that the theological works of al-Mufīd shows a substantial change from traditional narration based thinking to a more Mu`tazilah inclined rational exposition of principal tenets of faith.[99] An often cited work in this regard is al-Mufīd's critical commentary known *Taṣḥiḥ I`tiqādāt al-Imāmīyah* on his teacher al-Ṣadūq's work titled *I`tiqādāt al-'Imāmīyah*. For example, Sajjad Rizvi in the *The Developed Kalām Tradition*, writes:

> The traditionalists had acquired a reputation for believing in determinism, literalism and anthropomorphism: al-Mufīd's Correction of the Treatise on Beliefs (*Taṣḥīḥ al-i'tiqādāt*) of his teacher al-Ṣadūq is a significant attempt to distance Twelver theology from such forms of irrationalism.[100]

However, al-Ṣadūq's work *I`tiqādāt al-Imāmīyah* already contained an elaborate rejection of anthropomorphism.[101] In fact, there is no suggestion of anthropomorphism in any of al-Ṣadūq's works. Al-Ṣadūq himself had compiled a number of narrative works such as *al-Tawḥīd* that provided statements of the *Ahlul Bayt* against anthropomorphism. Al-Mufīd's commentary on al-Ṣadūq's work is only a difference of opinion on how to interpret certain Qur'ānic verses while both al-Ṣadūq's interpretation and al-Mufīd's is against anthropomorphism. Hence, there is no reason to think that Al-Mufīd's commentary was anything more than a different exegetical opinion regarding Qur'ānic verses.

In my opinion, there is no evidence that al-Mufīd's work represents a significant shift in doctrinal or even methodological thinking in regards to theological issues when many other

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[99]Rippin, *Muslims: their religious beliefs and practices*, 130-131; Halm, *Shi'ism*, 48-56.

[100]Oliver Leaman and Sajjad Rizvi, "The Developed Kalām Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim J. Winter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92.

[101]Al-Ṣadūq, *A Shī'ite Creed*, 27-32, 44-45.

works produced before him and al-Ṣadūq's era such as, for example, Nawbakht's theological discourse *al-Yāqūt* or even the use of argument that is contained in the Imāmī Shī`ah narrative collections, are considered. The work *Taṣḥiḥ I`tiqādāt al-Imāmīyah* is a typical theological criticism on issues to do with the chain of transmission of narrations, interpretation of Qur'ānic verses and doctrinal issues. Even if some of al-Mufīd's opinions in the work correspond with the Mu`tazilah thinking, that is not, on its own, an indication that there was a significant shift towards the Mu`tazilah method of appealing to reason. To confirm such a conclusion several steps have to be taken. First, theological opinions of al-Mufīd have to be separated from the methodology he employs to analyze those opinions. Second, it has to be shown that such methodologies were used by the Mu`tazilah before the Imāmī Shī`ah or any other Shī`ah and this has to be done by not relying only on anti-Shī`ah polemics and heresiographies. Third, it has to be shown that the Imāmī Shī`ah did not use rational methods, even if different from the Mu`tazilah, before al-Mufīd. Only then can the conclusion be drawn that previous to al-Mufīd the Imāmī Shī`ah did not employ rational means to verify their tenets of faith. The analysis we gave above, on the other hand, as indicated from the number of works by the Imāmī Shī`ah scholars and the methodologies used in those works, shows that rational methodology was used extensively among them.

A third factor that could have contributed to the popular position regarding the origin of Tashayyu` theology could have been the confusion between the use of reasoning in explaining theological issues and the explication and elucidation of narrations that reason for principal beliefs. It can be said with some certainty that before the theologian al-Mufīd and after the Imāms, there were many (although not all) among the Imāmī Shī`ah theologians who used to mainly narrate the words of the *Ahlul Bayt* when defending their principal religious beliefs. This approach, however, is not the same as the traditional Sunnī method of dealing with theological questions. Such Shī`ah traditionists saw no need to go beyond the reasoning and explanations given in the statement of their Imāms.

The difference is a subtle but a significant one and lies in distinguishing between giving the reasoning contained in a narration as evidence for accepting a principle and giving the authority of the originator of the narration (i.e., one of the members of the *Ahlul Bayt*) as reason for accepting that principle. To further clarify the issue, take Jack who wants to convince John to accept the Theory of General Relativity. In one version of the Jack-John debate, Jack tells John that he should accept the Theory of General Relativity because Albert Einstein, an expert physicist, has proclaimed it to be true and Einstein is an authority

on the matter. In another version Jack attempts to convince John of the truth of the Theory of General Relativity by taking John through the working just as Einstein gave it as proof for the theory. Similar to the latter case, the Shī`ah traditionists did not see a need to go beyond the proofs already given by the Qur'ān and the *Ahlul Bayt* when reasoning for the principal tenets of faith. The reason for such a belief was that they saw their religion as being complete and therefore covering everything needed by any individual for their doctrinal and practical needs.

Even today, most Shī`ah theologians are of the belief that the complex philosophical and theological discussions that they give to accompany various different proofs for the principal tenets of faith either serves to clarify the fallacy of new objections that are raised or are simply a more comprehensive explanation of that given by the Qur'ān and the *Ahlul Bayt*. The issue can be clarified further by considering how the Qur'ān presents the reasoning contained in its verses and at times the arguments of the Qur'ānic prophets as 'proof' or 'demonstration' from God to the people. In the same way, some Shī`ah traditionists before the theologian al-Mufīd and after the Imāms believed that the reasoning contained in the Qur'ān and the traditions of the *Ahlul Bayt* were sufficient as rational proofs that confirmed their beliefs. This is not the same as believing that a statement is proof for a principal tenet of belief solely on the basis that it is in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* as it was the belief of the orthodox Sunnī theologians.

It is also important to note that expertise and field of activity of each scholar was different, with some specialising in the science of tradition while others were more inclined towards theology.[102] The atmosphere and politics of the time would have also affected the dominant specialization as the religious leaders of a community might feel more need for one field over another. Hence, at one time concentration might be placed on narrations and narrative evidence while at the same time theological discourses using reason is conducted on a smaller scale. Whereas other times due to the political or theological climate more concentration is placed on theological reasoning with the concentration on narrative evidence taking a less prominent role. However, in both of the aforementioned cases reasoning, as far as the Shī`ah theologians were concerned, played an important role in theological discourse.

[102]Science of tradition is the study of the authenticity of narrations describing the Prophet Muhammad's and in the case of the Shī`ah, the *Ahlul Bayt*'s statements, actions and inactions.

After al-Mufīd, both the transformation of the Arabic language and the introduction of new terminologies and ideas meant that Shī`ah theologians had to explain the narrations they had inherited in a way that would fit the language of the day and would overcome challenges posed by those new terminologies and ideas. When taking these different considerations into account it becomes clear that the use of reasoning was an important feature of the Tashayyu` school of thought before al-Mufīd. Moreover, by referring back to the Shī`ah narrative collection, it can be concluded that the premises for and the content of their principal beliefs–such as the unlimitedness and justice of God as opposed to anthropomorphism and free will of humans as opposed to predestination–already existed in their theology and was not derived from the Mu`tazilah.

The formation of theological schools of thought in Islam

The notion of individuals being accountable for their action was not an attractive idea for the Umayyad rulers. The Umayyad rulers were staunch opponents of Prophet Muhammad. Abū Sufyān and his son Mu`āwīyah had only converted to Islam after Prophet Muhammad's conquest of Mecca.[103] Mu`āwīyah's mother Hind bint `Utbah was responsible for killing Prophet Muhammad's uncle and loyal supporter Hamzah ibn `Abdul Muṭṭalib.[104] Under the reign of the first two caliphs Mu`āwīyah established a power base for himself in *Shām* (historic Greater Syria). The second caliph had appointed Mu`āwīyah as the governor of Syria.[105] His clansmen were placed in positions of power in various different parts of the empire during the reign of the third caliph `Uthmān.[106] After the uprising against `Uthmān and his subsequent killing by the dissatisfied Muslims,

[103]Balādhurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, 60-66; Al-Mas`ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol.2, 255; Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.1, 418.

[104]Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Foundation of the Community (VII)*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt and M. V. McDonald (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 107, 121-122.

[105]Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate (Volume XV)*, 73.

[106]`Uthmān, like Mu`āwīyah, belonged to the Umayyad clan. During his reign he placed members of his clan as governors and government officials of the different regions of the Islamic empire. These officials along with `Uthmān were known for their cruelty, corruption, unrestricted use of the treasury funds and other social ills as viewed by Muslims. This eventually led to the uprising of the dissatisfied population and the killing of `Uthmān in 35A.H. (656C.E.).

Mu`āwīyah did not pay allegiance to `Alī using `Uthmān's killing–first employed by `Ā'ishah to justify her uprising against `Alī–as a pretence for rebellion.[107] In reality, `Ā'ishah and Mu`āwīyah, independently of each other, had aspired to take over the Islamic Empire and the removal of `Alī as its caliph. Their enmity towards `Alī is well documented. `Ā'ishah was not fond of `Uthmān and in fact had spoken against him during his reign and it made no sense for her to want to begin a war solely on the basis of bringing to justice `Uthmān's killers.[108] Mu`āwīyah too was more concerned about keeping his rule over the region of *Shām* (Greater Syria) and if he could, extend it to include the entire Islamic Empire rather than any serious desire to avenge `Uthmān's killing. This is especially the case since Mu`āwīyah had not sent military assistance in time to help `Uthmān quell the uprising.

The first two Umayyad rulers, Mu`āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān and his son Yazīd, were engaged in wars with `Alī and his two sons and the grandchildren of Prophet Muhammad, al-Ḥasan (3A.H./625C.E.-50A.H./670C.E.) and al-Ḥusayn (4A.H./626C.E.-10A.H./680C.E.). Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are considered by the Shī`ah as their second and third Imām successively.[109] At first Mu`āwīyah signed a treaty with al-Ḥasan ibn `Alī.[110] However,

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[107]Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah*, 5-6.

[108]For `Āishah speaking against `Uthmān but then rallying against `Alī see: Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The community divided*, trans. Adrian Brockett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 52-53.

[109]For the Shī`ah, the Prophet Muhammad appointed them to successively be the leader (Imām) of the Muslim community after `Alī.

[110]The claim in the Sunnī polemical historical accounts that al-Ḥasan wanted to only keep his wealth in place of abdicating the caliphate to Mu`āwīyah does not match the circumstances and statements of al-Ḥasan before and after the signing of the treaty. Al-Ṭabarī gives such an interpretation in his historical work. Signs of fabrication and Sunnī polemics are quite apparent in al-Ṭabarī's account, especially when considering his description of al-Ḥasan's uncharacteristic tone of reply to his brother al-Ḥusayn and the idea that Mu`āwīyah refused to uphold the treaty solely on the basis that al-Ḥasan increased his demand (although not mentioning what those demands were). However, when describing the circumstances that led to al-Ḥasan to conclude a treaty with Mu`āwīyah, al-Ṭabarī quotes al-Ḥasan's dissatisfaction with the lack of support he received from the people of Iraq. The eloquence of al-Ḥasan's reply to Mu`āwīyah's failure to respect the treaty is further evidence that his aims were more than mere wealth. The later actions of al-Ḥasan's brother al-Ḥusayn and the previous actions of his father `Alī, in addition to al-Ḥasan's own statements and conduct reveals that the treaty must have been concluded due to a lack of support rather than al-Ḥasan's desire for wealth. In fact, all accounts of al-Ḥasan's life shows that he was charitable and lived a simple life before and after making the treaty. For al-Ṭabarī's interpretation of the reasons for al-Ḥasan concluding a peace treaty with Mu`āwīyah and al-Ḥasan's statements regarding his dissatisfaction with the people of Iraq see: Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: Between Civil Wars (XVIII)*, trans. Michael G. Morony (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 2-12.

after taking full control of the Islamic Empire he decided to remove a potential threat to his dynasty's rule by poisoning al-Ḥasan.[111] Mu`āwīyah's son Yazīd attempted to extract the oath of allegiance from al-Ḥusayn ibn `Alī. Al-Ḥusayn, taking a moral stance against Yazīd's rule, refused to pay the oath of allegiance and was forced to confront Yazīd's army in Karbala. Yazīd's army comprised of soldiers in their thousands whereas Ḥusayn had only a hundred or so men with him. In a battle that lasted for half a day, the Umayyad army viciously massacred al-Ḥusayn's men carrying their heads on spears back to Damascus. The few family members and companions that were accompanying him were taken captive.[112] After the battle, Yazīd went on to quell the different uprisings against his rule that led to the massacre of many companions of Prophet Muhammad and the burning of Ka`bah, one of Islam's holiest sites.[113]

Thereafter, the Umayyad dynasty ruled ferociously over their subjects remunerating those associated with the court and disenfranchising others. Added to this the behaviour of the clan was openly against the Islamic etiquette alienating the regime from the Muslim population. Hence, accountability meant that the Muslim community had to make judgements regarding the characters and actions of the Umayyad leadership. Determinism and predestination (*jabr*) in relation to human decision making and the idea that an individual's actions do not determine whether he or she is tormented or rewarded in the afterlife was much more appealing to the ruling Umayyad regime. These striking differences between the two creeds of Shī`ah and Sunnī at such an early stage of Islamic history are indicative of the type of disagreements and ideological debates that were prominent at the time.

The period of Umayyad rule was marked by the emergence of several different theological schools within the Sunnī community. Prior to the first Umayyad Caliph, the Muslim community had already split into three different groups. The Shī`ah and Sunnī division occurred early on after the death of Prophet Muhammad. As already mentioned, the main issue of contention was the leadership of the Muslim community. However, the

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[111]Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 154; Al-Mas`ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol.3, 5-7; Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: Biographies of the Prophet's Companions and their Successors (Volume XXXIX)*, trans. Ella Landau-Tasseron (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 39.

[112]Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 178-182; Al-Mas`ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol.3, 56-64.

[113]Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 194; Al-Mas`ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol.3, 73-74.

disagreement was not only mere political ambitions. It included disagreements regarding many ideological, ethical and legal issues. Another group had broken off from the ranks of the Shī`ah during the conflict of *Ṣiffīn* between `Alī and Mu`āwīyah.[114] This group were known by other Muslims as the Khawārij (those who exited from religion).

Under the reign of the later Umayyad rulers, the Sunnī community became divided on a number of theological disagreements related to membership in the Islamic community, predestination versus free will and issues to do with the uniqueness, unicity and attributes of God. These disagreements led to the foundation of the Murji`ah, Mujabbirah or Jabrīyah and the Qadarīyah tendencies towards theological issues. The Murji`ah or 'those who postponed', advocated the view that a person is a virtuous believer (*mu`min*) if he or she is an adherent of Islam.[115] The person's actions have no bearing on whether he or she is a believing Muslim. This view was in contrast to orthodox Islam as there is definite evidence from the Qur'ān that a Muslim is not necessarily a believer without first meeting certain conditions of virtuousness.[116] The Murji`ah standpoint meant that an uprising against an unjust, corrupt and tyrannical ruler was not justified if that ruler proclaimed adherence to

[114]*Siffīn* is an area located on the banks of Euphrates River in present day Syria. Mu`āwīyah using `Uthmān's killing as a political weapon against `Alī marched his army towards the region that was under the control of `Alī. After a defeat by `Alī's army, Mu`āwīyah told his soldiers to place animal hide containing the verses of the Qur`an on their spears so that `Alī's soldiers abstain from attacking them on account of their religion. He further instigated some of the members of the tribal elite in `Alī's army to mutiny. This eventually led to those who mutinied to choose Abū Mūsā al-Asha`rī to engage in arbitration with a representative of Mu`āwīyah known by the name `Amr ibn al-`Ās. `Alī himself refused to acknowledge Abū Mūsā al-Asha`rī as his representative. The event eventually led to the mutineers to abandon `Alī and later engage him in an area known as *Nahriwān*.

[115]Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,* vol.1, 380; Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah,* 6; al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal,* vol.1, 136. Also for a detailed description of the beliefs of the Murji`ah see: Al-'Ash`arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn,* vol.1, 197-215. I have translated the word *Mu`min* to mean a 'virtuous believer' even though the literal translation of the word means only a 'believer'. In most works on the subject the word is loosely translated as being synonymous with being a Muslim or having 'faith' in the religion of Islam. The word itself is a derivative of the word *`amin* constructed from the root letters *alif*, *mīm* and *nūn* and which means to be convinced. The word *īmān* translated into English as 'faith' is also a derivative of the same word. Having faith or genuine belief in the religion of Islam is not the same as being a Muslim or only declaring belief in the religion. The distinction between having faith and being only a Muslim is clearly stated in the Qur'ān. See: Qur'ān 49:14. The verse states: "The Arabs say, 'We believe (*āmannā*).' Say, 'You do not believe (*lam tu`minū*) and instead say 'we submit (*aslamnā*).' And Faith has not entered your hearts…" Hence, being a Muslim is not sufficient for being a *mu`min* (believer) according to the Qur'ān. To be a *mu`min* or a believing Muslim, an individual has to meet certain criteria of virtuous behaviour that are stated in other parts of the Qur'ān. For examples of the criteria see: Qur'ān 9:71, 33:35. Hence, the word has to be translated in a way to reflect this meaning.

[116]Op. Cit.

Islam. This was especially attractive to the Umayyad rulers who did not have a reputation of being virtuous and were criticised for their past conflict with members of the Prophet Muhammad's family.

Little is known about how the Murji`ah school of thought originated or what was the cause of their inclusive position. It seems that the Murji`ah were eventually incorporated into both the Mujabbirah and the Qadarīyah theological schools.[117] Abū Ḥanīfah, the founder of the Hanafīyah jurisprudential school, also seems to have been a Murji`ah.[118] If it is the case that Abū Ḥanīfah belonged to this school, then the influence of the Murji`ah on the role of reasoning can be considered from the perspective of the role Abū Ḥanīfah played in introducing the idea of jurisprudential analogy (*qīyās*) and personal opinion (*ray'*) into legal decision making of the Sunnī school of jurisprudence.[119] Traditionally, the sources of Islamic law for the Shī`ah and the Sunnī had been the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.[120] Abū Ḥanīfah moved away from this traditional prescription of deriving Islamic law. *Ray'* is the personal opinion of a jurist for establishing Islamic law even when that law is not specifically found in the two main traditional sources. According to Abū Ḥanīfah when a jurist could not find a ruling for an act in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah he would compare rulings that might exist for another act which has some similarity with the act in question and would then derive a legal ruling from his own opinion.

Other prominent jurisprudents attempted, with some success, to reduce the role of personal opinion and use of analogy and move more towards establishing the text (*naṣṣ*) of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* as basis for legal rulings. These jurisprudents included Mālik ibn 'Anas, a contemporary of Abū Ḥanīfah, Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Shafi`ī and Aḥmad ibn

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[117] Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol.1, 136.

[118] Al-'Ash`arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn*, vol. 1, 202; Muhammad ibn Yūsuf Khawārazmī, *Mafātīḥ al-`Ulūm*, trans. Husayn Khadivjam. Tehran: Enteshārāt Elmī wa Farhangī, 1383H.S., 33. (Persian translation). Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Yūsuf Khawārazmī lists the followers of Abū Ḥanīfah as *Aṣḥāb al-Ray* (People of opinion) and as belonging to the Murji`ah school of thought. Also see: Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah*, 6-7 and 14.

[119] The term *qīyās* is used both in Islamic jurisprudence and logic. The term is used differently in the two fields. In logic and theology the term refers to syllogism whereas in jurisprudence the term is usually used to mean a conclusion reached by way of analogy.

[120] *Sunnah*: The actions (including implicit or silent approval) and statements of the Prophet Muhammad and in the case of the Shī`ah, the *Ahlul Bayt*. Although as mentioned above the Sunnī have followed the rulings of certain companions of Prophet Muhammad when it comes to a number of actions.

Ḥanbal. They were known as *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth* (or *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, literally companion or people of narration) while Abū Ḥanīfah's school of jurisprudence and his students became known as *Aṣḥāb al-Ray'* (or *Ahl al-Ray'*, meaning companion or people of opinion).[121]

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is of particular importance in the history of Sunnī theology as he vehemently defended the literal reading of the verses of the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition, a tendency that was to also be the trademark of the Ẓāhirīyah school of thought and later the theological school founded by al-'Ash`arī.[122] The position of Ibn Ḥanbal is quite often referred to as preferring text (i.e., Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition) over reason. This view, however, contains the underlying assumption that every Qur'ānic verse should be literally understood as opposed to its figurative meaning and that the prophetic traditions accepted by Ibn Ḥanbal represents the Prophet Muhammad's life and statements. In reality, there is definite evidence that many expressions used in the Qur'ān were used metaphorically in the language of the Arabs in the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Furthermore, metaphoric statements in the Qur'ān can clearly be identified in numerous places in the Qur'ān from the way a certain verse is presented. As for the prophetic traditions, different schools of thought had their own unique set of statements and biographies in this regard. For this reason, Ibn Ḥanbal's position should actually be defined as preferring the 'literal' reading of the Qur'ān and the Sunnī prophetic tradition over reason.[123]

The Umayyad leadership also encouraged the theological concept of predestination and determinism (*jabr*). The school of thought upholding this position was known as Mujabbirah and its roots and the support that Umayyad rulers lent it can be traced back to before the Murji`ah. The Mujabbirah professed the view that a person does not have free

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[121]For *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth* see: Khawārazmī, *Mafātīḥ al-`Ulūm*, 32; Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah*, 7; Muhammad ibn Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma`rifaḥ, 1404A.H.), vol.1, 206. For *Aṣḥāb al-Ray* see: Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol.1, 207. For *Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth* see: Khawārazmī, *Mafātīḥ al-`Ulūm*, 33.

[122]Al-Ẓahirīyah was a school founded by Dawūd ibn Khalaf Isbahānī (d.270A.H./884C.E.) and like ibn Ḥanbal advocated the literal interpretation of the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions.

[123]This definition of Ibn Ḥanbal's view is preferable even if it is for the sole reason of avoiding unfounded assumptions that the Qur'ān does not contain figurative or metonymical speech and that Sunnī sources of prophetic tradition are a representative of Prophet Muhammad's life and statements. There are definite verses that Qur'ān itself presents as figurative, such as Qur'ān 24:35. In another verse the Qur'ān states that there are two kinds of Qur'ānic verses, *muḥkamāt* (clear or decisive) and *mutashābihāt* (allegorical), see: Qur'ān 3:7.

will. Every action is created by God and therefore predestined to occur. In opposition to this school was the school of Qadarīyah. The Qadarīyah believed that an individual has free will and power over his own actions. The Mujabbirah believed that every action of human beings was created by God and predestined to occur. Through the doctrine of predestination the Umayyad could justify their actions as having been preordained by God. Indeed, from early on the Umayyad rulers were attempting to establish this doctrine. The governor of Kufah, `Ubaydallah ibn Zīyād was proclaiming that his killing of al-Husayn ibn `Alī (Prophet Muhammad's grandson) was ordained by God. When addressing the family of al-Husayn ibn `Alī after his death in Karbala, Ibn Zīyād proclaimed:

> Praise be to God, Who has disgraced you, killed you and revealed the false nature of your claims.[124]

Al-Husayn's sister and Prophet Muhammad's granddaughter, Zaynab bint `Alī, responded with the following eloquent and decisive reply:

> Praise be to God, who has favoured us with Muhammad and has purified us completely from sin. It is not as you say, for He only disgraces the great sinner and reveals the false nature of the profligate.[125]

The aforementioned event continues with Ibn Zīyād's subsequent attempts to prove, rather unsuccessfully, that their attack on Husayn, his kinsmen and companions was the will of God. Such historical occurrences indicates the political and ideological origins of the kind of debates that later transformed into doctrinal differences which included among other things issues related to monotheism, leadership of the Muslim community and more relevant to our current discussion, the issue of free will and predestination.

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[124] Al-Ṭabarī. *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Mu`āwiyah (Volume XIX)*, trans. I.K.A. Howard (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

[125] Ibid.

The concept of free will and its impact on the Islamic intellectual tradition

By the middle of the eighth century (2nd Century A.H.), the issues of predestination (*jabr*) and free will (*ikhtīyār*) were passionately being debated in Baghdad. Among the earlier Qadarīyah are such names as Ma`bad ibn Khalid al-Juhannī (d.80A.H./699C.E.) and Ghaylān ibn Muslim al-Dimashqī (d. A.H./ C.E.).[126] Ghaylān was eventually executed by the Umayyad for his propagation of free will. Among the notable Mujabbirah were individuals such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21A.H./642C.E.-110A.H./728C.E.), Jahm ibn Safwān (d.128A.H./746 C.E.) and Abdul Raḥmān ibn Amr al-Awza`ī (d.157A.H. /774 C.E.).[127] Al-Awza`ī was a court jurist of the Umayyad and was implicated in the execution of Ghaylān. Among these names, al-Baṣrī is a central figure in the creation of the Mu`tazilah. Several different stories exist about the origins of the Mu`tazilah sect. The most likely of these stories presents Wāṣil ibn `Atā as the founder of the sect.[128]

Wāṣil is said to have been a student of al-Baṣrī. In one of the lectures of al-Baṣrī a man asked his opinion about the status of a sinful Muslim (*fāsiq*) who commits major sins (*kabā`ir*). The Murji`ah believed that such a person is a believer (*mu`min*). The Khawārij called a Muslim who commits a major sin an infidel (*kāfir*).[129] Before al-Baṣrī could reply to the question of the man, Wāṣil proclaimed that such a Muslim is neither a believer nor an infidel and occupies a position in the middle (*manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*, literally: the

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[126]For Ma`bad ibn Khalid al-Juhannī as a Qadarīyah see: Al-Baghdādī, *Al-Firaq Bayn al-Firaq*, 18, 117; Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhhīb Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā al-Rijāl*, ed. Mas`ad Kāmil and Ayman Salāmah (Hada`iq: Fārūq al-Hadīthah, 2004), vol.9, 47-49; Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 381. For a discussion on Ghaylān see: Steven C. Judd, "Ghaylan al-Dimashqi: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (1999): 160-184. (Cambridge University Press). Also see: Al-Baghdādī, *Al-Firaq Bayn al-Firaq*,19.

[127]Ibn al-Nadīm's includes a book refuting the Qadarīyah position among the works of al-Basrī. See: Ibn al-Nadīm. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 383. Although for some reason al-Nadīm does not list him under the Mujabbirah. There are differences of opinion as to whether al-Baṣrī was a Mujabbirah.

[128]Some sources have traced the origin of the Mu`tazilah as beginning with such individuals as Sa`d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (d.55A.H./674C.E.), `Abdullah ibn `Umar (the son of the second caliph), Muhammad ibn Muslimah Anṣārī and Usāmah ibn Zayd ibn Harith Kalbī, all of whom did not pay allegiance to `Alī during his caliphate but did not fight him either. Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī`ah*, 5; Qommi, *Tārīkh `Aqāyid wa Madhāhib Shī`ah*, 57. However, the report given here is concerned with the beginning of the Mu`tazilah as having a distinct theological position regarding various number of theological issues. From such a perspective Wāṣil ibn `Atā can be considered as the founder of the Mu`tazilah.

[129]Ibn al-Nadīm. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 380.

position between the two positions). Wāṣil then left al-Baṣrī's circle at which point al-Baṣrī announced, "He has departed (*i`tazala*) from us."[130] Later the Mu`tazilah also went by the name of *Ahl al-Tawḥid wa l-`Adl* (people of God's unicity and justice).[131]

The doctrinal differences between Wāṣil's followers and that of orthodox Sunnīs eventually led to the development of the two distinct 'Ash`arī and Mu`tazilah schools that were also sharply divided on the position of the human intellect. The Mu`tazilah inherited the doctrine of free will from the Qadarīyah and as a result gave great importance to the role of reasoning.[132] The Mu`tazilah defined having free will as being an autonomous acting agent completely independent of God. Hence, not only does God not create the actions of the individuals but He has no power over them either.[133] Furthermore, God's attribute of justness and the free will of the individual can only be reconciled if she is equipped with the necessary tools to be able to make decisions in regards to every religious matter. For this reason, intellect played an important part in deciding on the answers to religious questions within the Mu`tazilah epistemology. The Mu`tazilah stressed the priority of the intellect both in answering doctrinal questions and ones concerning ethics and practice. They advocated the view that actions are intrinsically good or evil. In this sense, the intellect could deduce everything that was doctrinally correct and discover what is intrinsically moral (*ḥusn*) or abhorrent (*qubḥ*) in actions.[134]

The distinguishing factor of the Mu`tazilah was their formulation of the doctrine of free will. The Mu`tazilah formulation was different to both the Shī`ah and the orthodox Sunnī belief. The Qur'ān has verses that indicate both accountability for undertaking an act and

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[130]For the origin of Mu`tazilah see: Al-Baghdādī, *Al-Firaq Bayn al-Firaq*, 20-21; Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa l-Nihal*, vol.1, 48. According to another account Qatādah ibn `Azīz (679C.E.- 735C.E.) took over the position of al-Baṣrī after the latter's death. `Amr ibn `Ubayd then left the circle of Qatādah. Qatādah then called the group that left with `Amr, the *Mu`tazilah* (the separatists). `Amr is said to have accepted the title. See: Ibn al-Nadīm. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 381. Whether or not Wāṣil was the founder, it can be said with some kind of certainty that the theological views of the Mu`tazilah began from around that period.

[131]Al-Shahrastānī. *Al-Milal wa l-Nihal*, vol.1, 48; Khawārazmī, *Mafātīḥ al-`Ulūm*, 30.

[132]Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa l-Nihal*, vol.1, 47.

[133]For a description of the belief of the Mu`tazilah regarding predestination, free will and related issues see: Al-'Ash`arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn*, vol.1, 251-253, vol.2, 205-211; Al-Baghdādī, *Al-Firaq Bayn al-Firaq*, 14-15; Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa l-Nihal*, 43, 45. Both al-Baghdādī and al-Shahrastānī go on to explain the different ways that the Mu`tazilah viewed free will.

[134]Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa l-Nihal*, vol.1, 42.

the absolute dependency of creation on God. There are numerous verses that speak about fate and destiny and other verses that speak of human acts as their own doing.[135] Different theological schools took different positions in regards to such verses.

The Mujabbirah position that every human action and belief is preordained by God and is destined to occur represented the orthodox Sunnī position. The Mu`tazilah and the Mujabbirah positions were clearly distinct on the position of free will and the role of intellect. The Imāmī Shī`ah had always upheld the notion of free will and the idea that an individual is accountable for his own actions. The human rational faculty played an important role in Shī`ah thinking precisely because of the way an individual's role was conceived in deciding his future situation in both his worldly life and the life after death. The Imāmī Shī`ah, similar to the Mu`tazilah also believed that the intellect could to a certain extent discover what is intrinsically morally good (*ḥusn*) or abhorrent (*qubḥ*) in actions. What distinguished the Shī`ah from the Mu`tazilah was the matter of the dependency of an individual's will and actions on God. The main point of contention was whether or not a person's will was created by God. A second distinct, but related issue asked the question: is the individual the cause of his actions or is it God?

The Mu`tazilah maintained that an individual has power and authority over her will and actions and God has no power over them. A person's will and action is caused by her and not God. Consequently, the individual is independent of God both in her will and action. The Imāmī Shī`ah were opposed to this complete independence from God asserting that such a view leads to entities and effects that are independent of God. But the Shī`ah were also against the idea of predestination which would ultimately mean that God was unjust for rewarding or punishing an individual if it was He who compelled them to a certain act in the first place.[136] The Shī`ah point of view was known as the path between the two paths

[135]For examples of Qur'ānic verses that indicate, or rather assert, man's free will and accountability see: Qur'ān 2:79, 6:148, 8:53, 53:39, 13:11, 43:20-21, 99:7-8, 81:28, 18:22, 93:93, 76:3, 24:55. For examples of verses that assert dependence of creation on God and God's absolute authority over creation see: Qur'ān 35:15, 5:120, 17:111. For examples of verses that assert fate and destiny see: Qur'ān 54:49, 65:3. For examples of the kind of verses used by the proponents of determinism see: Qur'ān 81:29, 2:6-7. For a counter argument that the meaning of such verses does not refer to determinism see: Qur'ān 59:19. That is in the former verse, God is meant to have set a 'seal' upon the disbeliever's heart. Whereas in the latter verse, it is indicated that God only made the unbeliever forsake his own soul because of his unbelief. (i.e., unbelief came first after which God made him forsake his soul).

[136]A similar controversy can be found in the Christian tradition in the difference between the teachings of the Pelagius who advocated the doctrine of free will and that of Augustine of Hippo who insisted on the necessity of divine grace for willing and acting. See: John Norman Davidson

(*al-amr bayna l-amrayn*).[137] According to the Imāms and the theologians of the Shī`ah, an individual is the cause of her will and actions but not independently of God. The choice is with the individual but the power to make that choice is given to her by God. In other words, the power to have free will is the creation of God and individuals use that power to make decisions. Free will, itself, is the power given to individuals and that power is dependent on God. Similarly, the individual is the cause of her actions but the power to carry out the action is given by God and He has power over them.[138] Subsequent effects of one's actions are also maintained by God. The Shī`ah maintained that if God has no power over the actions of the individual then prayer and providence would have no meaning which is a claim that does not correspond with Islamic belief. In this way, the Shī`ah defended their position as both asserting free will and absolute dependency on God.[139]

The Mu`tazilah doctrinal views were well-received by the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn ibn Hārūn (d.218A.H./833C.E.) and adopted as the court creed. Al-Maʾmūn vehemently enforced the beliefs of the Mu`tazilah by introducing a process of questioning jurisprudents and theologians about their belief, a process that was later labelled *miḥnah* (ordeal) and lasted until the reign of al-Mutawakkil ibn al-Mu`taṣim.[140] Those who did not proclaim the beliefs of the court were punished in different ways with some being lashed and others

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Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 357-366.

[137]Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 155-160; Al-Sadūq, *al-Tawḥīd*, 556-563; Al-Ṣadūq, *A Shī'ite Creed*, 33.

[138]Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 155-160, narrations 1, 3, 5, 6, 12. These are some of the numerous narrations that clearly state that the power (*quwwa*) to do good or evil is given to a person by God but the decision is from the person himself. This is the position between the claim that a person has free will independent of God and that she is predestined to do good or evil. Some scholars have confused the Shī`ah position that the power of 'free will' is created by God which man uses to choose his actions with the al-'Ash`arī's position that the actual decision to act in a certain way is created by God. However, the two positions are quite distinct.

[139]For a detailed explanation of free will and how it is brought about in Tashayyu` theology see: Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, "Treatise on Determinism and Necessity," in *The Metaphysics of Tusi*, trans. Parviz Morewedge (New York/Tehran: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1992), 1-46. Also see: Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 155-162.

[140]For al-Maʾmūn's enforcement of Mu`tazilah theology see: Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 491; Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), vol.3, 49, Chapter 6, Section 14. Ibn Khaldūn does not give the name of al-Maʾmūn. For al-Mutawakkil's revoking of al-Maʾmūn's verdict see: Ya`qūbī, *Tārīkh Ya`qūbī*, vol.2, 513.

imprisoned. Al-Ma'mūn's backing of the Mu`tazilah ensured that the sect would ultimately affect the course of theology in the Islamic world as well as give it a place in history.

The introduction of Hellenistic ideas in the Islamic intellectual tradition

Early theologians from the Mu`tazilah, Mujabbirah and the Shī`ah schools of thought were known by the title *Mutikallimūn* and their study was known as *`Ilm al-Kalām* or *`Ilm al-Uṣūl al-Dīn*.[141] The *Mutikallimūn* had the task of defending principal doctrinal beliefs of their school of thought. The topics they discussed included a wide variety of doctrinal issues such as the unicity and uniqueness of God, leadership of the community, predestination and free will, the nature of God's attributes and other related subjects. Other topics such as the nature of bodies, atomism, the nature of the five senses, movement and so forth were also part of *`Ilm al-Kalām.*

The impact al-Ma'mūn's rule was not limited to the political power that he put at the disposal of the Mu`tazilah. He also began a project of translating Greek and Hellenistic philosophical works. Al-Ma'mūn was not the initiator of the translation movement. The translation movement had begun during the Umayyad period. Historical documents show that during that period most of the works being translated were texts on medicine, astronomy and astrology, alchemy and bookkeeping.[142] By the time al-Ma'mūn assumed power, at least some Hellenistic works on logic and medicine had also been translated from

[141]Whether or not *`Ilm al-Kalām* can also be called *`Ilm al-'Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Study of the principals of faith) depends on how the former is defined. *`Ilm Al-Kalām* has been defined differently by the various *Mutikallimūn* throughout the ages from its conception to present day discussion of the subject. However, it was quite common to refer to *`Ilm al-Kalām* as *`Ilm al-'Uṣūl* during the earlier periods by many theologians. A difference between the two can be that in *`Ilm al-'Uṣūl al-Dīn*, the principal articles of faith and their proofs are discussed and many underlying metaphysical principles for those proofs are taken for granted while in *`Ilm al-Kalām* those underlying principles are also discussed.

[142]Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.2, 581-583, 850-851. Khālid Ibn Yazīd ibn Mu`āwīyah (d.85A.H./704C.E.) is said to have initiated the translation movement through his correspondence with Morienus, the Byzantine Hermit, by translating Greek texts on alchemy. A Latin translation of their correspondence has been attributed to Robert of Chester, see: Lee A. Stavenhagen, trans., *A Testament of Alchemy being the Revelations of Morienus, Ancient Adept and Hermit of Jerusalem to Khalid ibn Yazid ibn Muawiyya, King of the Arabs of the Divine Secrets of the Magisterium and Accomplishment of the Alchemical Art* (Hanover: University Press of New England for the Brandeis University, 1974).

Persian by such notable individuals as `Abdullāh ibn al-Muqaffa` (d. c. 139A.H./756C.E.).[143] Works on logic prior to the translation movement of al-Ma'mūn have been attributed to Muslim scientists such as the Shī`ī companion of Ja`far al-Ṣādiq, Jābir Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 803 C.E., known by his Latin name as Geber).[144] Al-Ma'mūn was, on the other hand, responsible for Hellenistic and Greek works becoming widespread. Ibn Nadīm describes al-Ma'mūn's initial decision to seek out knowledge of the ancients as such:

> One of the reasons for this was that al-Ma'mūn saw in a dream the likeness of a man white in colour, with a ruddy complexion, broad forehead, joined eyebrows, bald head, bloodshot eyes, and good qualities sitting on his bed. Al-Ma'mūn related, "It was as though I was in front of him, filled with fear of him. Then I said, 'Who are you?' he replied, 'Aristotle.' Then I was delighted with him and said, 'O sage, may I ask you a question?' He said, 'Ask it.' Then I asked, 'What is good?' He replied, 'What is good in the mind.' I said again, 'Then what is next?' He answered, 'What is good in the law.' I said, 'Then what next?' He replied, 'What is good with the public.' I said, 'Then what more?' He answered, 'More? There is no more.'"[145]

The dream seems to conveniently include conditions from the Mu`tazilah theology for answering doctrinal questions combined with conditions of orthodox Sunnī jurisprudence for deducing religious laws.[146] It is not very hard to identify this story as being of later making, probably not too distant from Ibn Nadīm's own time. Aristotle did not have such a prominent status among the Muslims at the time of al-Ma'mūn's reign even if some of his works had already been translated. It was only after a large number of Hellenistic works

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[143]Ibn al-Nadīm. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.2, 581. `Abdullāh ibn al-Muqaffa` (known also as Rozbeh) was Persian convert to Islam. He was executed by Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Mansūr (d.158A.H./775C.E.) on charges of heresy.

[144]Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.2, 854. Also see: Syed Nomanul Haq, *Names, Natures and Things: The Alchemist Jābir ibn Ḥayyān and his Kitāb al-Aḥjār (Book of Stones)* (Dordrecht: Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, 158/Kluwar Academic Publishers, 1994), 90-91. In Haq's there is a quote by Jābir's in which he refers to his commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* (known in Latin as *De Interpretatione*). There are numerous other places in the work that refers to works on logic but I did not find it necessary to reference here.

[145]Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.2, 583.

[146]In my view, the mind in al-Ma'mūn's dream was meant to represent intellectual reasoning while the law was the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and what is good with the public was *ijmā`* (consensus).

had been translated into Arabic and had become popular among Muslim philosophers that Aristotle became the 'first teacher' for the Muslim philosophers.

In reality it was probably the challenges from Muslim and non-Muslim theologians that prompted al-Ma'mūn to seek out an intellectual weapon to defend his dynasty's rule. There were also sects forming in the different parts of the Muslim empire and already there were a number of different theological and legal viewpoints (i.e., different branches of the Shī`ah and the Sunnī creeds) in the main centres of learning. Al-Ma'mūn and his successors needed a different kind of weapon against their opponents, namely, that of Hellenistic philosophy. Moreover, the empire had now incorporated regions that had centuries of philosophical and theological traditions attached to them.[147] The Abbasid needed to both understand and incorporate these traditions so as to use them to counter the ideological challenges they and the opposing Muslim creeds were posing.[148] It is also likely that the Mu`tazilah with the intention of overcoming other schools of theology persuaded al-Ma'mūn to seek out new theological tools to use against their opponents as well as consolidate his power. For this purpose al-Ma'mūn created the House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Ḥikmah*), where Greek, Syrian and Persian texts were being translated into Arabic by mostly Christian translators.

Al-Ma'mūn was on a campaign to introduce Greek thought into a traditional Muslim society. By doing so, they hoped to gain intellectual dominance over the different Muslim creeds as well as their new subjects from other religions. To do this they employed the skills of such individuals as Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and Ya`qūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī. Al-Kindī is said to have been the first Arab philosopher (*faylasūf*).[149] He was appointed as the head of a team of translators under the reign of al-Ma'mūn.[150] He did not know Greek and relied on translators for his knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy. He nevertheless produced numerous philosophical works infused with Neoplatonic and Aristotelian thought. Al-

[147]Ibn al-Nadīm. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 41-47, vol.2, 745-843.

[148]For example, al-Kindī used Greek philosophy in his arguments against other religions as well as settling disputes with Muslim theologians. See: Peter Adamson, *Al-Kindī* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 41-45.

[149]Ibn al-Nadīm. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.2, 615. Although the Abbasid translations movement had begun before al-Kindī.

[150]For more detail see: Gerhard Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī: Early Arabic translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy," in *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism*, ed. Gerhard Endress and Remke Kruk (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1997), 43-76.

Kindī's occupation seems to have been straightforward. He was to present Greek philosophy in a manner that would be acceptable to the Muslim intelligentsia.

With the introduction of Hellenistic philosophy, Muslim theologians of every creed were now facing a new era. Hellenistic thought brought new ideas and methodology for analysing theological subjects. Aristotelian logic was to have an influence on the curriculum of the theologians of every major Muslim creed. Philosophical reasoning was to be so well integrated within the Islamic tradition that it would have a lasting effect on most theological schools of thought. On the other hand, Greek thought also brought with it ideas that were not entirely compatible with traditional Islamic belief. At its advent this incompatibility was not easily recognised. Al-Kindī had presented Hellenistic philosophy in a way that incorporated such basic Islamic beliefs as the creation of the world *ex nihilo* and the temporality of the world. He, for example, avoided mentioning Aristotle's doctrine of the eternality of the material substance in favour of a traditional Islamic belief in creation. He seems to have wanted to put forward the view that philosophy, as he presented it, was universally recognised by all 'wise' men.[151]

As Hellenistic philosophical works became more widespread and more people became interested in Hellenistic thought, philosophers started to incorporate ideas that were no longer compatible with traditional Islamic belief. Philosophers such as Muhammad ibn Zakarīyā` al-Rāzī (250A.H./864C.E.-313 A.H./925C.E. or 320A.H./932C.E.) were producing theories that were nothing short of heresy as far as traditional Islamic belief was concerned.[152] Different Muslim creeds had their own share of disagreements with philosophers.

[151]Refer to the discussion by Adamson about how al-Kindī tried to integrate Hellenistic philosophy into Islamic intellectual circles: Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 38-45.

[152]He promoted the idea of five eternal entities existing together. Hence, according to al-Rāzī, along with God there existed the Soul, matter, time and space. His cosmology describes the interaction of the Soul with matter and God's intervention to rectify the consequences of that interaction. See: Lenn E. Goodman, "Rāzī's Myth of the Fall of Soul: Its Function in his Philosophy," in *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science*, ed. George Fadlo Hourani (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 25-40; Mehdi Mohaghegh, "Razī's Kitāb al-Ilm al-Ilāhī and the Five Eternals," *Abr-Nahrayn* 13 (1972-1973): 16-23.

The theological school of al-'Ash`arī

Around the year 300 (912 or 913C.E.) Abu al-Hasan al-'Ash`arī announced his conversion from the Mu`tazilah to the orthodox Sunnī doctrine. He was next in line to succeed Abū `Alī al-Jubbā`ī (d.303A.H./915C.E.) as the head of the Mu`tazilah in Basra. He was in a good position politically to do so as the Abbasid had moved towards orthodox Sunni position regarding theological and legal matters. Al-Mutawakkil had rescinded the verdicts of al-Ma'mūn during the period of *miḥnah* and instead had begun persecuting anyone who supported beliefs against Sunnī orthodoxy. Al-'Ash`arī, tried to revive the position of the orthodox Sunnī regarding attributes of God, predestination, the Qur'ān and many other similar doctrinal matters.

The advocators of predestination had difficulty reconciling God's attribute of justness with their deterministic theory. They faced the predicament that if an individual's action is not the result of his will and is instead preordained by God then God is unjust for promising reward and punishment in the hereafter. In other words, on what basis does God punish an individual whom he destines to commit sins? The same can also be said about rewarding a person who is destined to be virtuous. Punishing an individual after having forced him to commit sins is an abhorrent act and a just, gracious and merciful God is not supposed to do evil. To solve the problem of predestination and its conclusion regarding God's justice, the proponents of predestination denied the intellect's ability to comprehend what is intrinsically good (*ḥusn*) and abhorrent (*qubḥ*). Human beings, they claimed, cannot know what is intrinsically good or bad. In fact, they claimed, there are no intrinsically good or abhorrent actions. A Muslim must believe that every one of God's acts is good even if he punishes the virtuous and rewards the sinful.[153] In regards to individuals, their acts are good if it has been ordained by religion and evil if it goes against religious commandment.

The problem with such a view was that religious commandments, whether doctrinal or practical, were different from one school of thought to another and usually the differences between these schools of thought had exactly to do with what actions were good and abhorrent and what constituted the principal Islamic beliefs. This was especially the case with regards to the main Shī`ah, Sunnī and Khawārij divide whose main point of contention

[153]See for example al-Baghdādī's discussion about God punishing babies in: Al-Baghdādī, *Al-Firaq Bayn al-Firaq*, 158. Al-Baghdādī does not see a problem with God punishing babies. Also see: Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol.1, 42.

was the actions of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. By advocating the view that human intellect is incapable of knowing good and bad actions, the proponents of predestination were also establishing the basis for refusing to engage in a rational dialogue that takes as its principle the view that there are intrinsically moral and wicked actions and that human intellect is capable of knowing them.

The conclusion of such a theory is without a doubt devastating to any religious doctrine that advocates belief in prophets and messengers as warners and requires its adherents to follow a set of binding commandments.[154] There is no need for individuals to adhere to the divine commandments brought to them by a prophet or a messenger if they are destined to be virtuous or immoral. Because the view presented a general lack of ability to know the moral and ethical nature of actions, it also fitted well with what was becoming known as the traditional Sunnī view regarding the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. According to this view, every companion of the Prophet Muhammad had a special moral and judicial position. The actions of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad were without exception considered as good even if they differed among themselves and their differences led to military conflict. On the Day of Judgment, when individuals are judged by God, those companions who acted correctly would be rewarded twice as much as the companions who acted improperly but both actions were supposed to have been ultimately 'good'. Since it is God who decides what actions are ethically correct and which ones are wicked then, there is no conflict between differing opinions between the companions of the Prophet Muhammad for the reason that God had already decided that their every action is morally good.

For al-'Ash`arī to agree with the orthodox Sunnī belief in predestination and not face the problems that accompanied it, he needed to reformulate the concept of preordination so that it includes at least the appearance of responsibility. He also needed to establish on some kind of discursive grounds the traditional Sunnī belief in anthropomorphism (i.e., God having a face, hands, legs and doing such acts as sitting, rising and so on) and the possibility of seeing God in the hereafter. The Shī`ah rejected anthropomorphism and a person's ability to see God on the basis of both reason and their own narrative evidences. The Mu`tazilah too rejected on the basis of reason the anthropomorphic notions of attributing human qualities to God and the idea that God can be seen in the afterlife. Al-

[154]See for example: Qur'ān 57:25, 21:47.

’Ash`arī would not have been as much concerned with Shī`ah narrative tradition as he would have been with the polemic put forward by both schools of thought.

The main concern was regarding the interpretation of such Qur’ānic verses as, “In your hand is the good” and, “And wait patiently for the judgment of your lord, for surely you are before our eyes”.[155] A further problem for the Sunnīs was that in their collections of statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad there were definitive references to God as having human qualities and they lacked authoritative narrations that rejected such anthropomorphism in regards to God. The Shī`ah and the Mu`tazilah considered such Qur’ānic verses as being figurative and did not allow a literal interpretation.[156] The orthodox Sunnīs on the other hand were adamant that God does have such qualities.[157]

The way al-’Ash`arī attempted to solve such problems as predestination and anthropomorphism concurred with the traditional Sunnī approach. He discarded rational reasoning in favour of Sunnī orthodoxy. Al-’Ash`arī’s position like Ibn Ḥanbal’s is sometimes said to be that of preferring revelation or text over reason. But as it was stated above, such a description relies on the notion that revelation is against reason and that it is in harmony with the orthodox Sunnī position. A rather better description of al-’Ash`arī’s position would be that he preferred the theological views of orthodox Sunnīs over reason.

In regard to the attribution of anthropomorphic feature to God, al-’Ash`arī argued that the verses or prophetic narrations that seem to be talking about God’s limbs or face or other

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[155]Qur’ān 3:26, 52:48. There are a number of other verses of this nature. These are sufficient to give an overview of what was the subject of debate. Note also that to fully grasp the metaphorical nature of such verses, a comprehensive understanding of the use of metaphors, similes and other literary expressions in the language of the Arabs of the time of the Prophet Muhammad is required. Modern scholars have been quick in quoting the Qur’ān in discussions regarding early debates about hermeneutics without seriously taking the aforementioned points into consideration.

[156]For example, “for surely you are before our eyes” is interpreted as meaning that God has knowledge of every event. The statement “In your hand is the good” does not refer to an actual hand but that the benefit of every person and thing ultimately goes back to God. It is not very difficult to see the metaphorical and figurative meaning of these statements but the orthodox Sunnī needed a way to reconcile their narrative tradition with the Qur’ān.

[157]There were many differences in the theological beliefs of the Shī`ah, the Mu`tazilah and the traditional Sunnīs. The Shī`ah and the Mu`tazilah, for example, believed that the attributes of God were one with his essence while traditional Sunnīs believed in the eternal existence of such attributes independent of God’s essence but alongside God. A discussion of these differences requires a separate work. Here I am only discussing theological opinions that to some degree affected the way these schools of thought viewed human intellectual ability.

similar features should be taken literally but as an incomprehensible fact.[158] Human reason was simply incapable of grasping such attributes of God. God had hands, eyes and literally sat on his throne but the nature of God's hands, eyes and the act of sitting was not something human intellect could fathom.

Al-'Ash`arī seems to have conflated, maybe even intentionally, the issue of the rational incomprehensibility of God with the rational objection against God having limiting attributes. Although it can be reasoned on rational grounds that the limited human mind cannot comprehend God's essence and attributes, the same reasoning cannot be used to assert any kind of attribute for God. Those arguing against God having anthropomorphic features reasoned that it is impossible to fathom God but claiming limbs or other limiting qualities for him would be to consider him as a limited being.

Regarding predestination, al-'Ash`arī proposed an independent theory that became known as the 'Ash`arī or 'Ash`arīyah (plural: 'Ashā`irah) position. According to al-'Ash`arī, God creates both the particular will of the individual, a term which al-'Ash`arī uses to mean the decision made by the individual, the power to carry out that decision and the resulting action of the individual. Hence according to al-'Ash`arī, God creates in an individual the will to commit murder.[159] The individual, therefore, has the will to commit murder. God then, creates the power for that individual to carry out his will. Finally, God creates the act of murdering. This process of acquiring from God the will and power to carry out an act was termed *kasb* or *iktisāb* (acquisition).[160]

Al-'Ash`arī's subscription to determinism was in essence not much different to the position of the Mujabbirah. The subtle difference laid in the added concept that the action

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[158]His famous statement is that such attributes should be accepted without asking how (*bi-la kayf*) or drawing comparison with creation. See for examples of al-'Ash`arī's anthropomorphism: Al-'Ash`arī, *Al-Ibānah `an 'Uṣūl al-Dīyānah*, ed. Fuqīyah Husayn Maḥmūd (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1397A.H.), 21-22, 105-119; 124-140; Al-'Ash`arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn*, vol.1, 265; 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar Baydawi, *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam: 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar Baydawi's Text, Tawali' al-anwar min matali' al-anzar, along with Mahmud Isfahani's commentary, Matali'al-anzar sharh Tawali' al-anwar*, ed. Edwin Elliott Calverley and James Wilson Pollock (Leiden: Brill, 2002), vol.2, 890-891, Book 2, Section 2, Chapter 2.

[159]Note that this is not the same as creating the power of free will in individuals as the Shī`ah believed. The Shī`ah position is that God creates the actual power of free will (i.e., the ability to will and choose). The individual is the one that ultimately uses that power to choose.

[160]For al-'Ash`arī's view of predestination see: Al-'Ash`arī, *Al-Ibānah `an 'Uṣūl al-Dīyānah*, 23-24 and 181-224, Book nine; Al-'Ash`arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn*, vol.2, 196; Baydawi, *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, vol.2, 915-956, Section 3.

of the individual is the result of her own will. In spite of the fact that the will itself was created by God, it was nevertheless still, according to al-'Ash`arī, the will of the individual. For Al-'Ash`arī his restatement of predestination was sufficient to account for God's justice. God, says Al-'Ash`arī, does not do injustice to men but He does will so that they do injustice to each other.[161] Since the action of the individual was the result of her will then, as far as al-'Ash`arī was concerned, there is no reason why God punishing or rewarding that individual would be considered as an abhorrent act. As far as al-'Ash`arī is concerned this is all the explanation he needs to give regarding this matter.

Al-'Ash`arī's position is also clearly presented in the writings of the theologian al-Ghazzālī, a vehement and probably the most successful defender of his theology. Al-Ghazzālī in his book *Iḥyā` al-Ulūm al-Dīn* rejects the idea of free will and claims that the concept of a person having a choice to act is an illusion. Instead he claims that the act of a person and the will to act is created and determined by God. Al-Ghazzālī then asks on behalf of his opponents whether reward and punishment from God has any meaning if every action and the will to act is determined by God. He brushes off the question by stating that everything is written and must come to pass, referring to the will of God which according to al-Ghazzālī must take place.[162]

Regardless of what al-'Ash`arī believed he had achieved, his reformulation of the Mujabbirah position was not sufficient to overcome the kind of objections raised against preordination and its compatibility with God's justice. The issue of responsibility is not whether or not the will to act is from the individual but whether the individual freely could decide between several choices, including the simple choice of whether to act or not to act. The key concept under consideration is choice (*ikhtīyār*) or more accurately the ability to have a choice. Later Ashā`irah, revised al-'Ash`arī's doctrine of predestination to a certain extent to address some of these issues but al-'Ash`arī's position came to ultimately dominate Sunnī thought regarding human free will.[163]

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[161]Al-'Ash`arī, "Luma` fī al-Radd `alā Ahl al-Zīgh wa al-bida'," in *The theology of al-Ash'arī: the Arabic texts of al-Ash'arī's Kitāb al-Luma' and Risālat Istiḥsān al-Khawḍ fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*, ed. and trans. Richard J. McCarthy (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953), 40, 63, 67-68; Al-'Ash`arī, *Al-Ibānah*, 187, Book nine.

[162]Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā` al-Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rafah, 1982), vol.4, 247-258.

[163]For a comprehensive discussion of al-'Ash`arī's position and the later Sunnī theologians who succeeded him see: Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, 601-719.

Al-'Ash`arī had nevertheless changed the way religious tenets where being discussed in traditional Sunnī circles by adding the element of speculative argumentation. He himself produced a number of speculative works of theological nature against atheists and other religions and creeds.[164] The element of speculative reasoning became the distinguishing feature that separated 'Ash`arī theologians like al-Ghazzālī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543A.H./1149C.E.-606A.H./1209C.E.) and others from the literalist theologians among the orthodox Sunnī tradition. Unlike their literalist predecessors, these theologians found speculative reasoning as an integral part of doctrinal discourse.

The theological school of al-Māturīdī

Contemporary to al-'Ash`arī was another theologian that became an influential character in Sunnī theology. Muhammad al-Samarqandī al-Māturīdī al-Ḥanafī (d.333A.H./945C.E.) flourished as the lead Sunnī theologian of the Samanid court in Central Asia. Māturīdī adhered to the Ḥanafī School of jurisprudence. In theology there are many similarities between the views of Māturīdī and the position of al-'Ash`arī. There are, however, a number of significant differences. Māturīdī regarded intellect as being necessary for examining a number of theological issues such as the existence of God and His unicity. In regards to the debate about free will versus predestination, Māturīdī like al-'Ash`arī maintained that human act is acquired from God. However, unlike al-'Ash`arī, Māturīdī asserted that the choice to carry out the act comes before the act and from the individual.[165]

Māturīdī's theological school became known as the Māturīdīyah School of Theology. His works seems to have had little effect on later theologians as it would be expected since he advocated orthodox Sunnī thought that could already be traced back to jurists and theologians before him. Although overshadowed by the 'Ash`arīyah theological school of thought it later became widespread through the areas under the control of the Seljuq and Ottoman dynasties.

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[164]For example, his *Al-Ibānah `an 'Uṣūl al-Dīyānah* and his *Luma` fī al-Radd `alā Ahl al-Zīgh wa al-bida'*, among others.

[165]For Māturīdī's opinion regarding free will and predestination see: Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Fatḥallah Khulayf (Alexandria: Dār al-Jāmi`āt al-Miṣrīyah, n.d.), 256-263.

Hellenistic Philosophy and the Shī`ah thinkers

While Sunnī orthodoxy was struggling to present its doctrinal beliefs as rationally acceptable, Hellenistic philosophy was gaining momentum among the adherents of other schools of thought. Among al-Kindī's student was the Shī`ah philosopher and scientist Abu Zayd Ahmad Ibn Sahl al-Balkhī (235A.H./849C.E.-322A.H./934C.E.) who on one of his travels met al-Kindī and studied philosophy under him.[166] Al-Balkhī was of the opinion that God made human beings rational so that they can know what benefits and harms them. An individual can gain prosperity in the world and the afterlife by knowing what is good or harmful for her soul and body and by applying that knowledge to coordinate one's actions towards virtuous behaviour.[167] Al-Balkhī was one of the very few philosophers of his time who undertook both the study of philosophy while also engaging in Islamic scholarship as is apparent from his works.[168] Al-Balkhī's significance in regards to the role of philosophy in religious discussions is more apparent in the influence he had on his student Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-`Āmirī (d.381A.H./992C.E.).

Al-`Āmirī attempted to reconcile religion with philosophy by arguing that a theological conclusion that is reached through a philosophically correct procedure is the same as that dictated by the religion of Islam. In fact, Al-`Āmirī claimed, philosophy itself can be traced

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[166]For a brief and only biography of al-Balkhī, including his religious beliefs and how he met al-Kindī refer to the Greek Muslim biographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī's (d.626A.H./1229C.E.) work *Mu`jam al-Odabā*: D. S. Margoliouth, ed., *The Irshád al-Aríb ila Ma'rifat al-Adíb or Dictionary of Learned Men of Yáqút*, (Leyden: Brill, 1907), vol.1, 141-152. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī describes al-Balkhī as an Imāmī Shī`ah. There is no reason to believe, as some scholars have suggested, that al-Balkhī abandoned his Tashayyu` creed later in his life. Such a suggestion is only found in the work of the Sunnī traditionist Ibn Ḥajar al-`Asqalānī's (d. 852A.H./1448C.E.) *Lisān al-Mīzān*. However, there is no reason to prefer al-`Asqalānī's account over that of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's much earlier work. An earlier work known as *al-Imtā` wa al-Muwānasah* by the philosopher Abī Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (414A.H./1023A.H.) suggests that al-Balkhī was apparently a Zaydī Shī`ah, although it seems al-Tawḥīdī was unsure of al-Balkhī's religious affiliation. See: Abī Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtā` wa al-Muwānasah*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn (Dār al-Maktabah al-Ḥayāt, n.d. or p.), 15. Although it seems that Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī had more information on al-Balkhī. In either case both Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī and al-Tawḥīdī record al-Balkhī as having been a Shī`ah.

[167]Hence, for example, accepting the truth is virtuous and therefore accepting true belief arrived at through reasoning is a virtuous act.

[168]Margoliouth, *The Irshád al-Aríb*, vol.1, 141-152; Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 303-304.

back to revelation because the sages of philosophy were inheritors to the prophetic traditions.[169] He, however, considered revelation to have a superior status to philosophy and other secular sciences. Like his teacher he believed that beneficial knowledge is only that knowledge which ends in action, which was a common theme in the Shī`ah narrative tradition.[170] Al-`Āmirī and his teacher al-Balkhī did not seem to have a major impact on the course of Islamic philosophy as they were overshadowed by Ibn Sīnā's philosophical tradition. Their main contribution to Islamic philosophy should be seen from the perspective that they represented the type of transition that was taking place including philosophical discussions when considering theological problems. Al-Balkhī was a contemporary of al-Fārābī but with Kindīan inclinations. Al-`Āmirī continued the tradition of his teacher and ignored al-Fārābī's less conservative philosophical works.

The influence of scientific methods in the Islamic intellectual tradition

The period between eighth and eleventh century also saw the pioneering of scientific methodology by such Shī`ah thinkers as Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (c. 2nd A.H./8th C.E. Century), known also by his Latin name Geber, Abū `Alī Ḥasan ibn al-Haytham (354A.H./965C.E.-432A.H./1040C.E.), known by his Latin name as Alhazen, and Abū Rayḥān Muhammad ibn

[169]He gives an account of prominent philosophers such as Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as being students and inheritors of Luqmān and Solomon considered as a sage and a Prophet in Islam. See: Tom Gaskill, "Al-'Amīrī, Abu'l Hasan Muhammad ibn Yusuf," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Taylor & Francis, 1998), vol.1, 208.

[170]For Shī`ah narrative tradition that the benefit of knowledge is achieved only if it is applied in practice see: Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 44-46. Al-`Āmirī was certainly influenced by Shī`ah thought as is evidenced by the fact that his teacher was a Shī`ah and he believed in the doctrine of the path between the two paths regarding predestination and free will. In his essay on al-`Āmirī, Everett Rowson incorrectly attributes the doctrine of the path between the two paths to Abū Ḥanīfah. This is while al-`Āmirī quotes the tradition which he analyses for the doctrine of the path between the two paths from Ja`far ibn Muhammad, the sixth Shī`ah Imām and actually dedicates the chapter to his statement. Rowson's claim that al-`Āmirī was an adherent of the Māturīdīyah school because he attacks the Mu`tazilah by name and the 'Ash`arī by doctrine can also be criticised on the basis that such a thing would have been common for the philosophers of the time or the adherents of the Shī`ah schools of thought. For Rowson's claim see: Everett K. Rowson, "Al-`Āmirī," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1996), vol.1, 219.

Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (362A.H./973C.E.-440A.H./1048C.E.).[171] These individuals criticized the traditional Hellenistic style of establishing facts about the physical world and distinguished between metaphysical enquiries and the methodology involved in conducting scientific research. Great emphasis was placed by these thinkers on the use of empirical experimentation and observation in regards to scientific enquiries. Ibn Ḥayyān or the field of study that began with him began to modernize the field of alchemy into what is now known as the science of chemistry. The mathematician and scientist Ibn al-Haytham, well-known for his extraordinary works on optics and vision, criticized the blind emulation of Greek scientists and transformed the use of induction in scientific enquiries.[172]

The distinction between metaphysical enquiry and scientific enquiry is probably best noticed in the debate between al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Sīnā. Al-Bīrūnī criticizes the Aristotelian physical theories and distinguishes between the metaphysical and the scientific methodology of proving a hypothesis.[173] Al-Bīrūnī was a polymath who, in addition to

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[171]For Jābir ibn Ḥayyān's religious affiliations see: Haq, *Names, Natures and Things*, 14-20; Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.2, 853-862. There is no doubt that al-Bīrūnī was an Imāmī Shī`ah. In his work *Āthār al-Bāqīyah*, al-Bīrūnī after discussing a particular Jewish sect's concept of a leader of a community being necessarily a descendent of David states: "...just as people relate such things of the prince of the true believers, `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and of those descendents who are qualified for the Imāmah and the rule of the community." See: Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of the Ancient Nations*, 69. Only a Shī`ah considers the descendents of `Alī as being qualified for the position of the Imām. Neither Sunnīs nor the Mu`tazilah held such a view. Furthermore, in the section of his work on Muslim festivals he mentions not only the festivals unique to the Shī`ah, such as the celebration of *Ghadīr* and the *Mubāhilah* and the commemoration of *Ashūrā* (which he narrates along with the events following it with great emphasis), but also the date of birth and death of Shī`ah Imāms and Fāṭimah the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, the death of Abū Ṭālib the father of `Alī (considered only by the Shī`ah as having died a Muslim), the death of Khadījah, the Prophet Muhammad's wife and even the date of the marriage between Fāṭimah and `Alī. He also curses the killer of `Alī while not doing the same for the killers of the first three caliphs. He regards the giving of a ring by `Alī to a beggar while in prayer as being important enough to mention among the festivals. Finally, he rejects a narration attributed to the Prophet Muhammad which calls for fasting on the day of Ashūrā, just as it is rejected by the Shī`ah and continuously praises the Shī`ah Imāms in the way done by their followers. See: Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of the Ancient Nations*, 325-334.

[172]For a description of Ibn Hatham's scientific reform see: Gerhard Endress, "Mathematics and Philosophy in Medieval Islam," in *The Enterprise of Science in Islam*, ed. Jan P. Hogendijk and Abdelhamid I. Sabra (Boston: MIT Press, 2003), 142-148.

[173]For the text of the correspondence between al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Sīnā see: Mehdi Mohaghegh and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed., *Asalah wa al-Ajwabah: Porseshhāye Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī wa Pāsokhhāye Ibn Sīnā* (Tehran: Anjomane Āthār wa Mafākher Farhangī, 1384H.S.). An English translation of the text was published in several parts in *Islam & Science*; see: Rafik Berjak and Muzaffar Iqbal, trans., "Ibn Sina—Al-Biruni Correspondence," *Islam & Science* 1.1 (2003): 91-98, 1.2 (2003): 253-260, 2.1 (2004): 57-62, 2.2 (2004): 181-188, 3.1 (2005): 57-62, 3.2 (2005): 167-170, 4.2 (2006): 197-231, 5.1 (2007): 53-60.

being a mathematician, an astronomer and a mineralogist, also engaged in what would now be called anthropological studies. He travelled extensively to the different parts of the Islamic world and learned the languages, customs and religious beliefs of its inhabitants, writing them down in a number of different works.[174] In his *Āthār al-Bāqīyah*, al-Bīrūnī scrutinizes various different religious beliefs by subjecting them to his mathematical and scientific methods. Al-Bīrūnī for the first time departs from the traditional method of verifying religious beliefs through the examination of texts (either historical or religious) and applies the vigorous method of rejecting or establishing a certain religious belief or history by employing a wide-range of scientific methods. Hence, for example, in some instances al-Bīrūnī first collects historical information about different events and from a variety of sources. He then goes on to assess and compare the information through astronomical calculations before arriving at a conclusion.[175]

In another instance, al-Bīrūnī rejects superstitious beliefs of some of his contemporaries (both Muslims and non-Muslims) in the supernatural powers of some materials such as wood and stones that were found in nature and that were believed to be miraculous due to the strange properties of those objects. Instead, he gives a scientific explanation for the peculiarities of the objects but accepting that there is a design and purpose behind their creation.[176]

The school of al-Fārābī

Although al-Kindī initiated the study of Hellenistic philosophy among the Muslims, it was Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d.339A.H/950 C.E.) who established Islamic philosophy as a distinct tradition. Al-Fārābī began his philosophical career by studying logic under the Baghdad Christian teachers.[177] His works included original commentaries on Aristotle, Plato and

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[174]For example refer to his work on Indian customs and religious beliefs of his day: Edward C. Sachau, trans., *Alberuni's India: An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Laws and Astrology of India* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1910).

[175]For example see: Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of the Ancient Nations*, 326-328.

[176]For example see: Ibid., 292-294.

[177]Namely, Yahunnā ibn Haylān (d.910 C.E.) and Abū Bishr Mattā (d.940 C.E.).

neo-Platonist philosophers as well as significant unique works of his own.[178] He wrote mainly on philosophical logic, philosophy of language and political philosophy.

For al-Fārābī logic and philosophy was a prelude to theology, a 'tool' to analyse and understand the latter. Religion, in al-Fārābī's thought, is dependent on philosophy. If the philosophy behind a religion is dubious and founded on uncertain premises then that religion too will be unreliable.[179] Philosophy is only truly useful if it leads to knowledge and produces certainty for that knowledge. In order to achieve this task, al-Fārābī suggests, one must learn the different 'methods' that people use to acquire conviction about problems. Once having mastered these methods–and presumably the intricacies that accompany them–one can know which method to use in which context so to lead to knowledge of 'beings'.[180] This approach was to become the way that every philosopher after al-Fārābī viewed the study of philosophy. Indeed the concern of Muslim philosophers was to prepare the self, by obtaining the necessary skills for rational thinking, to reach knowledge and conviction regarding religious beliefs and then to impart what they achieved to others.[181] Knowledge of reality and certainty thereof, for the Muslim philosophers, was the aim and the ultimate state of felicity.

Among al-Fārābī's other substantial contributions to Islamic thought was his description of the process of understanding borrowed from the Peripatetic division of the intellect. By doing so he added another dimension to the discussion of the role of reason in Islam. According to al-Fārābī, the human soul is equipped with the three main mental faculties of sensory, representational and rational.[182] At the outset the rational faculty, known as the

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[178]Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.2, 620.

[179]Al-Fārābī, "The Book of Letters," in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Muhammad Ali Khalidi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-3.

[180]Muhsin Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 13-14, Part 1 (The Attainment of Happiness), i.

[181]The goal of Muslim philosophers was to reach certainty regarding religious belief. Even though philosophy among Muslim philosophers, unlike Kalām, aimed to begin from scratch and work its way to truths, it was nevertheless the belief of Muslim philosophers that their religion was in complete harmony with truth. Muslim philosophers as a result always attempted to reconcile their philosophical views with scripture and prophetic (or in the case of the Shī`ah, the *Ahlul Bayt*) tradition.

[182]Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State: Mabādi ārā' ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*, ed. and trans. Richard Walzer (Chicago: Kazi Publications, Great Books of the Islamic World, 1998), 165.

intellect, is only disposed to receive knowledge in the forms of intelligibles. This state of the intellect he labels 'potential intellect' (i.e., not yet intellect but predisposed to be one).[183] Al-Fārābī seems to be propounding the idea that human beings are not born with any innate knowledge. The soul is only equipped with a nutritional faculty until further development gives rise to the sensory faculty.[184] The senses then bring information about the tangible world into the mind. This acquisition of sensory information gives rise to the representational faculty. The representational faculty stores the sensory information for division and composition and later reflection.[185] At this point, the rational faculty arises from the processing of the sensory information by the representational faculty.[186]

Each mental faculty is dependent on the preceding faculty to provide it with the material it needs to exist and to develop once it has come into existence.[187] The rational faculty, however, is the final 'form' and is not the material of any other faculties. For al-Fārābī, simple transference from the representational faculty to the mental faculty is not sufficient for intellection. There needs to be an external cause that illuminates for the intellect what is contained in the representational faculty. This external cause is known as the 'Active Intellect' while the individual's intellect is the 'passive intellect'.[188] This Active Intellect is itself immaterial and "ranks tenth among the separate things below the first cause". The first set of intelligibles that an individual perceives is shared by every person and includes such things as basic logical principles, the ability to know good and bad actions and practical knowledge.[189] Al-Fārābī calls this knowledge primary knowledge and the first

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[183]Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 199.

[184]I believe al-Fārābī did not intend the nutritional faculty to be considered as a mental faculty.

[185]Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 165, 169.

[186]Ibid., 165, 197.

[187]Ibid., 175.

[188]Al-Fārābī gives the example of the way sunlight makes visible the objects of sense perception. Even though both the object of perception and the perceptual tool of sight exist, it cannot be actual sight until the sunlight illuminates the object of perception. In the same way, al-Fārābī is suggesting that the intelligibles contained in the representational faculty and provided by sense perception cannot be perceived by the intellect unless something illuminates them for it. This illuminating cause is the Active Intellect. See: Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 199-203.

[189]Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 203-205. Also see: Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā` al-`Ulūm*, 53-54.

perfection.[190] All other knowledge of an individual is received through reflection, investigation and inference, and instruction and study.[191]

The aforementioned view seems to be al-Fārābī's opinion in *Al-Madīnat al-Fāḍilah*. In his other works he apparently holds the view that there are certain propositions and principles that a person cannot make a mistake regarding them and that are primary. In *Iḥṣā al-`Ulūm*, al-Fārābī states that:

> This is because with some intelligibles it is never the case that a mistake is made regarding them. Those are the very intelligibles that a person can comprehend and have certainty about them through his natural disposition (*fitrah*), such as the whole being bigger than its parts and number three being an odd number.[192]

According to the above passage, it is within the nature of a human being to understand certain primary propositions. Al-Fārābī is following in the Aristotelian foundationalist tradition in asserting that there are at least some axiomatic truths that are known through intuition and which is the primary building blocks and verifiers for other knowledge.[193] Although at first there seems to be an apparent contradiction between the two ideas, in actuality the contradiction can be explained away. It can be the case that the first concepts (or as he would say it, intelligibles) and certain primary propositions and principles are acquired but are known to be true immediately without making a mistake regarding them. This is most probably what al-Fārābī had in mind.

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[190]Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 13; Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 205. Having this knowledge, according to al-Fārābī, is the first step to complete perfection and felicity.

[191]Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 13-14.

[192]Al- Fārābī, Iḥṣā al-`Ulūm. Edited by Osman Amine. Paris: Dar Byblion, 2005, 53. Also see: Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 13.

[193]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. & edit. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 108; Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, edit. Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol.1, 114-117.

The school of Ibn Sīnā

Ibn Sīnā followed in the footsteps of Al-Fārābī by propounding the idea that the immaterial Active Intellect played the role of moving the human material intellect (*aqlan hayūlānīyan*) towards understanding. Ibn Sīnā's articulation sees the Active Intellect not only as an illuminating factor in intellection but also as a preparatory cause. In *al-Ishārāt* Ibn Sīnā writes:

> Of the soul's [intellectual] powers concerning [its] need to transcend its substance [from potential intellect] to the actual intellect are [the following]: First, the power of receptivity (*quwwat isti`dādīyah*) toward intelligibles called by some philosophers the material intellect. This is the niche (*mishkāh*) [of lights]. Next to this, is another power obtained by the intellect when the primary intelligibles appear in it. The occurrence of these primary intelligibles is the basis on which the secondary intelligibles can be acquired. [This process of acquirement] is brought about either through contemplation, which is [called] the olive tree, if the mind is not sharp-witted enough, or by surmise called fuel [the oil of the olive tree], if the mind is exceedingly shrewd.
>
> [In either case] this power called the habitual intellect is as transparent as a glass.
>
> The extreme nobility of this power is the divine kind whose oil is as if it lights itself up without fire touching it.
>
> Then, there comes to the intellect a power and a perfection: The perfection counts for the ability to acquire the intelligibles in action such that the mind can perceive them as they are pictured in the mind. This is a light upon lights. The power consists in that the mind is in a position that, without any need of new inquiry, it can obtain the previously acquired and presently forgotten intelligible as if perceived, whenever the mind wants to. This is the lighted lamp.
>
> The agent which causes the mind to set out from the habitual intellect to the state of the complete act, and from the material intellect to the habitual intellect, is the Agent Intellect. This is the fire.[194]

[194] Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.2, 411-416, Method 3, Physics. This is a translation by Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, see: Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 193-194, note 16.

Ibn Sīnā's contribution to the nature of the intellect is of less significance than his contribution to the categorization of knowledge and his considerable work on philosophical and formal logic. A comprehensive discussion of Ibn Sīnā's contribution to logic is beyond the scope of this study. In regards to his categorization of knowledge, what is in some way related to the discussion of the reasoning faculty is his theory of the self's comprehension of itself. Ibn Sīnā's treatment of self-knowledge adds a new dimension to the analysis of what kind of concepts are acquired *a priori* and *a posteriori*. His conclusions also contributed to the basis of some of the important features of the Illuminationist Philosophy of Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabash Suhrawardī (549A.H./1154C.E.-587A.H./1191C.E.).

Ibn Sīnā divides the knowledge of a person of what is external to his or her self into two main categories of concepts and propositions. In *al-Ishārāt* Ibn Sīnā states:

> The unknown corresponds to the known. Thus just as a thing may be known as a pure concept, such as our knowledge of the meaning of the word "triangle," or it may be known as a concept accompanied by assent, such as our knowledge that the angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles, so also a thing may be unknown by way of conception, so that its meaning is not conceived until one learns such [other] concepts, as "the binomial," "the disconnected," and others.
>
> Or it may be unknown as an assent until one learns [another assent], such as that the square on the diagonal is equal to the square of the sides of the right angle which it subtends. Thus our path of inquiry concerning the sciences and related studies either is directed toward a concept sought for realization or is directed toward an assent sought for realization.[195]

But Ibn Sīnā claims there is another kind of knowledge. A person's knowledge of himself, as far as Ibn Sīnā is concerned, does not fall under the categories of concept and assent. That is, the person does not know herself through the mediation of a concept and even less so, through assent. Ibn Sīnā takes up the topic of self knowledge in the third part of *`Ilm al-Ṭabī`ah* (Physics) in *al-Ishārāt*. Knowledge of the self, Ibn Sīnā asserts, is without intermediaries and is somehow the very being of the individual. An individual knows herself because the individual is herself. The very nature of existing as a conscious

[195]Shams Innati, *Ibn Sīnā Remarks and admonitions: part one: logic* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 49. By assent, Ibn Sīnā actually means knowledge of the truth-value of the statement "the angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles".

being means that one is self-aware. According to Ibn Sīnā, if it was possible for an individual to doubt her existence (which Ibn Sīnā does not believe such doubt is truly possible), it would be impossible for her to prove to herself her own existence through her thoughts and actions. An individual who does not know that she exists has no way of knowing that an act that proceeds from her is her own. She can only assume that an act has come to be from an agent who carried out the act. To know that a thought or an act is hers, she needs to first have knowledge of herself.[196] Hence, Ibn Sīnā states:

> It can be that you say that I know myself through my act...if you present your act as an absolute act (*fi`lan mutlaqan*), without relation to yourself [or eliminate the relation between yourself and the act], you have only proved an absolute agent of the act (*fā`ilan mutlaqā*) and not a particular agent which is your essence. And if you stipulated it [i.e., the act], in the sense that it is your act, you have failed to prove your essence [i.e., your existence] since your essence has been included with the meaning of the act from the perspective that it is your act…Therefore [it becomes necessary that], that part of the meaning of your act that is your essence should be known not through your act but rather through something else.[197]

By adding the premise that one is aware of one's self without any intermediaries–especially through sensory and a posteriori methods–Ibn Sīnā provided a fundamental premise for any theistic argument that requires no knowledge other than knowledge of

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[196]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa l-Tanbīhāt*, vol.2, 344-354, Method 3, Physics.

[197]Ibid., 353. In this sense, Descartes' famous method of proving the existence of the self by reasoning for the impossibility of denying the existence of a thinking self would have been circular for Ibn Sīnā. Either the thinking self or the 'I' that comes before the act of 'thinking' is known to the agent who thinks or it is not. If it is known, as Descartes intended it, then it is circular to say that the act of thinking (i.e., *cogito*) is a proof for the existence of the thinking self. If it is not known, then there is no way for the agent to say that the thinking self or the 'I' is referring to him. It is important to understand that unlike Descartes, Ibn Sīnā was not trying to prove the existence of the thinking self. As far as Ibn Sīnā was concerned, such proof is not possible and would always be circular. This is an important point that is overlooked by many scholars. Ibn Sīnā's flying man argument, for example, did not aim to prove the existence of the self. Instead, the flying man argument is an argument for the duality of the body and the soul which relies on the premise that a person has immediate knowledge of herself. After Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī makes a distinction between the universal concept of 'I' as a pronoun that refers to one's self and the knowledge of the self as two different things. A similar objection to Descartes's argument for the existence of the self seems to have been raised by the eighteenth century German scientist Georg Lichtenberg (1742C.E. –1799C.E.). For Lichtenberg's argument see: John Henry McDowell, *Mind, value, and reality* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 365-366.

one's own contingency and basic *a priori* logical propositions. In addition, unmediated self-awareness can be used to reason for the apriority of logical propositions based on the corollaries that follow from knowledge of one's own existence. For example, one knows through primary knowledge that conjunction of contradictories is impossible. A person knows that something which exists cannot both exist and not exist because she is immediately acquainted with the idea of existence and non-existence through her own being. That is, she has knowledge of existence through her own existence and therefore also knows what it means to not exist.

Hence, Ibn Sīnā develops the idea of having knowledge through intuition. According to Ibn Sīnā, the meaning of some concepts is known in a primary manner. These include the meaning of concepts such as existence, thing, necessity, possibility and impossibility. There will be more discussion in this regard in the chapter on the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. However, Ibn Sīnā goes beyond the reasoning faculty's natural ability to know such meanings. In the section on logic in *al-Shifā*, Ibn Sīnā describes his definition of that which is known through the *fitrah* (nature). He begins by categorizing axiomatic propositions into external (*ẓāhirī*) and internal (*bāṭinī*) axioms. An external axiomatic proposition, according to him, is that confirmed through the senses, experience and experimentation or through information received from others in a way that leaves no room for doubt.[198] An internal axiomatic proposition is that which is either known through the reasoning faculty or some other faculty of the human mind. Those internal axiomatic propositions which are known through the reasoning faculty are either known only through the reasoning faculty or are known through the reasoning faculty with the help of something else. Ibn Sīnā states that primary propositions such as: "the whole is bigger than its parts," are those internal axiomatic propositions that are known, or as Ibn Sīnā puts it 'acquire their evidentness', only through the reasoning faculty.[199]

Propositions that are known through the reasoning faculty and something else are divided into two groups. Either such propositions are known through the reasoning faculty naturally (*gharīzah*, literally: instinctively) in the sense that it is present (*ḥāḍiran*) before the intellect or it is not known through the reasoning faculty naturally. If a proposition is

[198]Ibn Sīnā uses the term *mutawātirāt* which means information that is related by so many people in a way that there is not a chance or very little chance of them having collaborated in fabricating it.

[199]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shīfā (Burhān)*, ed. Abul `Alā Afīfī (Qom: Library of Ayatollah Mar`ashī, 1404 A.H.), 63-64, Method 5, Book 1, Chapter 4.

not known through the reasoning faculty naturally it must be acquired through reasoning which means the proposition is not axiomatic. On the other hand, a proposition is known through the reasoning faculty naturally because the middle term exists in a person's nature (*fitrah*) and is present before her mind. That is, once a person comes to know the major and the minor terms of the syllogism, he knows the middle term without the need to acquire it. Ibn Sīnā gives the example of evenness in regards to the number four. He states:

> Whoever understands [the meaning of the number] four and [the concept of] evenness will [naturally] infer that [the number] four is even and at the same time will infer that it can be divided into two [equal] parts. And also when four and two are present in the mind [*dhihn*] it is [naturally] inferred that four is twice as [much] as two because of the middle term [which is clearly present before the mind]. However, if in its [i.e., four] place [the number] thirty six or some other number [is considered] the mind [in order to prove evenness] looks for a middle term.[200]

After Ibn Sīnā, Muhammad ibn Rushd (520A.H./1126C.E.-595A.H./1198C.E., known in Latin as *Averroes*), a committed Aristotelian, also put forward the idea of knowing through the Active Intellect. Unlike al-Fārābī, however, Ibn Rushd did not see the Active Intellect as only an illuminating cause. Rather, Ibn Rushd proposed that knowledge takes place when the human intellect, which he called possible intellect, unites with the eternal Active Intellect. The human intellect is the 'matter' of this intellection while the Active Intellect is the 'form'. The union between the form and matter brings about knowledge by transforming the human material intellect.[201]

Philosophical Foundations of Mysticism

Of significance is al-Fārābī's theory of Active Intellect as an illuminating factor for knowledge and Ibn Rushd's idea of union between the human intellect and the eternal intellect. This is due to the way these concepts were used by later philosophers promoting mysticism (*irfān*). Quite early in Islamic history a trend was established among some

[200]Ibid., 64.

[201]Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*,17-19.

Muslims who would dedicate their life to worship and asceticism. From the ninth century (2nd Century A.H.) onwards the Muslims came into contact with a number of mystic and Gnostic cultures from the Christian, Jewish, Indian and other traditions. The mystical ideas and practices of these traditions ultimately influenced some of the Muslims that had become acquainted with them. Eventually, the influence of these traditions was incorporated into a religious framework that distinguished itself from the other traditions as a Muslim mystical movement. The members of this movement formed groups and orders and became known as the Ṣūfī (*Ṣūfīyīn* in the plural) and their beliefs and practices as *Taṣawwuf*. Among some distinguishing beliefs of the Ṣūfī were their esoteric interpretation of the Qur'ān and the idea of becoming one with the deity.

It is difficult to trace the exact origin of Ṣūfī doctrinal beliefs and no attempt will be made to do so as it is not the purpose of this work. But there is some evidence that the Ṣūfī movement adopted beliefs and practices from a wide range of traditions which included Indian, Greek and Judeo-Christian beliefs and practices. The word Ṣūfī itself is said to indicate the wearing of woollen garments (*ṣūf*) common to the early Ṣūfīs.[202] The practice of wearing wool was common among some of the Eastern Christians. Ṣūfī ideas of ascending and uniting with a deity can also be traced back to both Neoplatonic and Vedantic Indian philosophies.

Whatever was the origins of the Ṣūfī movements, it produced such influential figures in the history of Islamic intellectual thought as al-Ghazzālī and Muhammad ibn `Arabī al-Hātimī al-Ṭā`ī (560A.H./1165C.E.- 638A.H./1240C.E., known better as Ibn `Arabī). The impact of al-Ghazzālī's writings is sometimes exaggerated as reforming *Taṣawwuf* and suppressing philosophical thought in the Muslim world. This view is mostly due to his influence being taken out of context. His influence on the Western world could have also contributed to the misconception among Western scholars about his influence on philosophical studies in the Islamic world. Al-Ghazzālī was from the orthodox Sunnī tradition, a tradition that was already somewhat hostile towards philosophy. Those outside of this tradition in the Muslim world paid little attention to al-Ghazzālī's criticisms of philosophers. Many philosophers such as Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā were not from the orthodox Sunnī tradition to

[202]Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, ed. and trans., *The Kitáb al-Luma' Fi 'l-Tasawwuf of Abú Nasr 'Abdallah b. 'Alí al-Sarráj al-Ṭúsí: Edited for the first time, with critical notes, abstract of contents, glossary and indices* (Leyden: Brill, 1914), 20-21. (In the Arabic text).

begin with and al-Ghazzālī's influence was mostly limited to that branch of *Taṣawwuf* that was leaned towards Sunnī orthodoxy.[203]

If taken in context al-Ghazzālī did leave a lasting impression. His reform of *Taṣawwuf* made Ṣūfī thoughts and practices more acceptable to traditional Sunnīs. He encouraged the use of reasoning in theological debates to a limited degree and attempted to put forward what he believed to be rational interpretations of narrations attributed to the Prophet Muhammad in the Sunnī collections that implied anthropomorphism.[204] For example, al-Ghazzālī like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, was of the opinion that the reasoning faculty has the function of knowing some things naturally (*gharīzī*, literally: instinctively). According to al-Ghazzālī, the reasoning faculty is responsible for understanding the theoretical sciences naturally.[205] Through this function of the reasoning faculty, an individual intuitively knows axiomatic truths and understands relations between concepts and propositions.

Ibn `Arabī is most famous for his methodical approach to Ṣūfī mystical philosophy. He is in particular renowned for introducing into Arab and Persian philosophy the notion that became known as the 'Unity of Existence' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[206] This notion became the trademark of most mystic philosophers of every tradition that came after him. The notion of the Unity of Existence expounds the view that there is only one true existence which is unlimited and divine. This one true existence is God. The multitudes of entities are illusions in the sense that they lack existence of their own but are manifestation of that one

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[203]Ahmad ibn Muhammad Miskawayh (d.421A.H./1030C.E.) for example was a librarian and a treasurer at the Shī`ah affiliated Būyīd court. `Ali ibn Muhammad Abū Hayyān al-Tawḥīdī was also under the patronage of the Būyīd court at the beginning. Muhammad ibn Masarrah (b.269A.H./883C.E.) and `Abdul Ḥaqq ibn Ibrahīm (614A.H./1217C.E.-669A.H./1270C.E., known as Ibn Sab`īn) were Ṣūfīs with the former having Mu`tazilah tendencies. Others, such as Muhammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Sāyigh (d.533A.H./1139C.E., known as Ibn Bājjah), Muhammad ibn Ṭufayl al-Qaysī al-Andalusī (d.581A.H./ 1185C.E.) and Ibn Rushd were liberal philosophers from the Andalusian philosophical tradition. Other philosophers included either those who did not adhere to any particular school of thought, at least not strictly, or the later philosophers such as Suhrawardī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who were Shī`ah.

[204]Gairdner, *Al-Ghazzālī's Mishkāt al-Anwār*, 134-136.

[205]Al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā al-`Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol.1, 85. Also see: Al-Ghazzālī, *Mīzān al-`Ilm: Tarāzūye Kerdār*, trans. AliAkbar Kasmāyī (Tehran: Sorūsh, 1374H.S.), 123. (Persian translation).

[206]This term was applied to Ibn `Arabī's philosophy by later philosophers and theologians. The term most certainly fits with his philosophy. See, for example, one of his discussions in: Ibn `Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. Abul`alā Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, n.d.), 187-191. See also: William C. Chittick, *The Sufi path of knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's metaphysics of imagination* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), 68-70, 79-143.

divine reality. Things differ with God in their essence (*māhīyah*) but their existence and God's existence is one. In other words, everything that is perceived as existing in reality shares its existence with God.

In general, the Ṣūfī and the mystical approach to knowledge promotes a type of esoteric knowledge that can be known through practical purification of the self culminating in some kind of 'presence' in or unification with God. In this way, the Ṣūfī discovers or unveils (*kashf*) and the mystic becomes acquainted with the secrets (*asrār*) of the Divine. The process of unification or annihilation (*fanā'*) with the Divine is sometimes expounded through the idea of the self joining with God by transcending the physical world.[207] This transcendence takes place through the spiritual self. The spiritual self, according to the Ṣūfī, is capable of knowing in two different ways. The term 'intellect' applies to the process of gaining knowledge through intuition, sensory perception and reflection whereas the 'spiritual heart' refers to the knowledge or rather the state of knowing achieved through unveiling. Unveiling is a kind of knowledge which is given to a person directly from God which results in the witnessing of (*shuhūd*) and becoming one with God (*fanā'*). A person, claims the Ṣūfī, is only capable of truly knowing God through unveiling.[208] Hence, the mystics often employed the notion of the Active Intellect to explain the transcendence of the human intellect and its subsequent unification with God.

Mystic ideas such as the ones mentioned above were condemned by both orthodox Shī`ah and Sunnī theologians alike. Pantheistic or panentheistic (depending on the particular mystical interpretation) ideas such as that of creation sharing its existence with God were against the most principal belief in Islam, namely, that of *tawḥīd* or the unicity and uniqueness of God. Despite various works from prominent philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā, the mystic and Ṣūfī traditions did not have a strong theoretical basis for their beliefs and many of them, especially among the Ṣūfī, criticised the rational approach of philosophers towards acquiring 'knowledge' of God. There was, however, one mystic philosopher by the name of Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī who attempted to build his gnostic philosophy on a rational foundation. His gnostic ideas certainly shaped the future of

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[207] Nicholson, *The Kitáb al-Luma' Fi 'l-Tasawwuf*, 23-24, 28-41. (In the Arabic text); Abdul Raḥmān al-Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns Min Hazarāt al-Quds* (Cairo: Al-Azhar al-Sharīf, 1989) 12-19; Chittick, *The Sufi path of knowledge*, 3, 72-73.

[208] For a detailed description in the context of *Ibn al-'Arabi's* philosophy see: Chittick, *The Sufi path of knowledge*, 147-189.

mysticism in later philosophy among the Shī`ah philosophers, especially in the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā. However, his contribution to philosophy was no less important and it was adopted by later theologians and philosophers alike.

The Illuminationist school of philosophy

Suhrawardī had a solid background in philosophy and logic which he took from Majd al-Dīn al-Jīlī, Fakhr al-Dīn Mārdīnī, Zahīr al-Fārisī and `Umar ibn Sahlan al-Sāwī.[209] During his earlier years he was trained in the Peripatetic tradition but his later position was highly critical of Peripatetic epistemology and logic. He proposed an intuitionist epistemology based on an unmediated awareness of the self.[210] He was also an advocate of the real existence of Platonic forms.[211]

For Suhrawardī whatever is alive is self-conscious, a property only applicable to pure light as opposed to accidental physical light. Non-living things that are not self-conscious are dusky and not luminous like living things. Luminosity represents perfection. The more luminous a living being, the more perfect in its state of being a light. Hence, entities seek to be more luminous in order to evolve into higher beings.[212]

Self-consciousness is an important part of Suhrawardī philosophy and like Ibn Sīnā he reasons that one cannot know one's own existence through a concept or a notion. While an individual's reality is particular, the concept of 'I' is universal in the sense that it can be applied to more than one individual. For example, individuals use the term 'I' to refer to themselves and they also know what another person means when applying the concept 'I' to refer to their selves. Consequently, the reality of the individual is not the same as the

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[209]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, xv; W. M. Thackson, ed. and trans., *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (London: Octogon Press, 1982), 1; Hossein Ziai, "Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi: founder of the illuminationist school," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1996), vol.1, 434-435. Ziai emphasizes the influence of al-Sāwī on Suhrawardī's three-part division of logic into semantic, formal and material rather than the prior nine-part division. Al-Sāwī was among the first to employ a two-part division of semantics and proof theory.

[210]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 82-83, Part 2, First Discourse.

[211]Ibid., 65-67, Part 1, Third Discourse.

[212]Ibid., 141-142, Part 2, Fifth Discourse.

concept 'I'. Rather, the 'I' is a concept that an individual employs to refer to his very being and reality and which other individuals use to refer to their very being and reality. Therefore, the individual must already know his reality through some other means to apply the concept of 'I' to it.[213] An individual can also conceptualize his selfhood. By knowing the self by direct acquaintance an individual is able to produce in his mind a concept representing that self and to distinguish that concept from the actual self. However, true knowledge of the self is not the concept that was abstracted from the self, it is the very state of being (or presence in) oneself.[214] Hence Suhrawardī argues:

> If its knowledge is by an image and if the image of its ego is not the ego itself, the image of the ego would be an "it" in relation to the ego. In that case, that which was apprehended would be the image. Thus, it follows that while the apprehension of its ego is precisely its apprehension of what it is in itself, its apprehension of its essence would also be the apprehension of something else-which is absurd. This is not the case with externals, since the image and its subject are each an "it."[215]

Suhrawardī then goes on to give the same argument that was first given by Ibn Sīnā. If the individual does not know that the concept representing him was a concept of him, then it cannot know it was a concept of him after perceiving the concept. If it did know, then it must have known itself before knowing the concept. In other words, Suhrawardī claims, something cannot know itself through something which is superadded to it (i.e., the concept of itself or the attribute of knowing).[216]

Rather, the knowledge of the self, as Suhrawardī expounds it, is the result of simply existing as a conscious thinking being.[217] Knowledge is a mode of being a light. Light is able to make known things other than light by illuminating them. Knowledge of the self on the other hand is being light itself. He labels this knowledge *al-`ilm al-ḥuḍūrī* (knowledge

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[213]Suhrawardī, *Al-Mashāri` wa al-Muṭāriḥāt*, ed. and trans. Ṣadr al-Dīn Ṭāhirī (Tehran: Chāpkhāneye Majles-e Shurāye Islāmī, 1385H.S.), 519, Part 7. (Persian translation).

[214]Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*, 23-25.

[215]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 80, Part 2, First Discourse.

[216]Ibid.

[217]In other words, knowledge of self equals as existing as oneself.

by presence). The faculty that is responsible for perceiving and the act of knowing is termed by Suhrawardī the 'commanding light' (i.e., the intellect). Suhrawardī discards the idea of his predecessors that the Active Intellect illuminates the intelligibles for the agent of perception. Instead, it is the living agent who is a 'light in itself' and sheds light on what it perceives.[218]

Before an individual can acquire knowledge of anything other than the self, whether through thought or sensation, she must first have knowledge of herself. It is only through direct knowledge of the self that an individual can know other things.[219] Hence everything that is known must be ultimately known through knowledge by presence. An individual knows something other than herself when the thing's essence is illuminated for her. After the process of illumination the thing's essence is available to her through presence. The knower and what is known (i.e., the concept that corresponds with actual reality) are thus existentially one.[220]

Suhrawardī presents his theory of knowledge in response to the Peripatetic claims that knowledge can only be obtained through definition. The Peripatetic philosophers, according to Suhrawardī, claim that a thing is known through its genus and its specific differentia. In order to know something a person must refer to a definition constructed from things that are known. However, argues Suhrawardī, it is always possible that some essential constituents are not included in a definition because they might not be evident to the person giving the definition. For Suhrawardī, there is no way to be sure that there is not some other essential constituent of a thing which is not known when giving a definition. Moreover, it can be the case that a thing's essential constituents include a property that is not shared by other things and therefore cannot be defined by referring to what is already known. According to the Peripatetic philosopher, however, the reality of a thing is only known if all its essential constituents are included in its definition. Hence, if one limited oneself to the requirements of the Peripatetic philosophers it would be impossible to

[218]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 81-82, Part 2, First Discourse, 136, Part 2, Fourth Discourse.

[219]Ibid., 79-82, Part 2, First Discourse.

[220]Suhrawardī, *Al-Mashāri` wa al-Muṭāriḥāt*, 522, Part 7.

construct an essential definition because there is always the possibility that some essential constituent is left out.[221]

Furthermore, there are also cases, for example in regard to colour, where a thing's genus and differentia are one and the same thing and therefore cannot be defined through the Peripatetic method. Such things can only be known through themselves. Therefore, definition is only possible if it is admitted that there are some things that are evident through the senses or through some other way. Hence, Suhrawardī bases his Illuminationist theory of knowledge on the idea that there are some things that are intuitively known and that are evident without needing a definition or an explanation.[222]

Later philosophers argued that what is known through knowledge by presence without acquisition also includes–in addition to knowledge of the self–the accompanying concepts of existence and knowledge.[223] A few centuries later Mullā Sadrā will develop Suhrawardī's theory by stating that knowledge of objects takes place by incorporating its essence into one's own existence.[224]

Suhrawardī's theory of knowledge by presence was not only adopted and improved upon by philosophers but it was also approved, though for many free of its mystical inclinations, by later theologians and logicians within the Shī`ah tradition. Hence, later Shī`ah philosophers and theologians classified knowledge into two main categories of knowledge by presence and acquired knowledge (*al-`ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*). Knowledge by presence includes knowledge of one's self, knowledge of reality and existence (the two being synonymous for later Ṣadrian philosophers) and knowledge of knowledge (i.e., what it means to have knowledge).[225] Acquired knowledge is divided into conceptual

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[221]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 10-11, Part 1, First Discourse.

[222]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 76, Part 2, First Discourse.

[223]Ibn Sīnā seems to have also held this view as it was mentioned above and will be discussed in chapter 3.

[224]For a comprehensive discussion about *al-`ilm al-ḥuḍūrī* and its comparison with similar theories in post-twentieth century Western philosophy see: Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*, 5-103. There will be further discussion of its transformation by Mullā Sadrā below.

[225]An individual knows himself and therefore is acquainted with one real entity. Hence, she knows the meaning of what it means to be real by being real. She knows what it means to have knowledge because she has at the least knowledge of herself and reality and knows that truth must correspond to reality rather than her imagination.

(*taṣawwur*) knowledge and propositional (*taṣdīq*) knowledge.[226] Both conceptual knowledge and propositional knowledge is then categorized into primary (*awwalī*), self-evident (*badihī*, literally: evident) and theoretical. Primary conceptual and propositional knowledge are known necessarily and a person must be aware of their truth even if he does not believe in it.[227] For example, a person necessarily knows that conjunction and negation of contradictories is impossible.[228] It is impossible to prove the truth or falseness of primary propositions because any attempt to do so assumes their truth and would therefore be circular.[229] Primary propositions cannot be defined and in cases where an individual

[226]Alternatively, *taṣdīq* can be translated as judgement.

[227]Two examples of primary conceptual knowledge is knowledge of the colour red or what sour tastes like. In both cases if the sensory faculty is functioning correctly nothing other than the experience of red or the sour taste is required to have knowledge of their concepts.

Muslim philosophers distinguish between belief and knowledge. Although one might be aware of the truth of a proposition, he might not believe it or have faith in its truth. According to them reasoning capability can be divided into two faculties. First, there is the theoretical reason which is responsible for confirming the truth of propositions. Second, there is the practical reason which is responsible for belief or faith in the truth of that proposition. Hence, even though a person knows without doubt that he exists he may not believe or have faith in such a fact, for example, in the case of a person who is sceptical of his own existence.

[228]It is important to understand that the term 'contradictory' is used here in its logical sense as different to 'contrary'. Conjunction of contradictories is exemplified in the statement "It is the case that A is existent and non-existent (with everything else being equal)" or "It is the case that A is true and false (with everything else being equal)". Negation of contradictories is exemplified by "It is the case that A is not existent and not non-existent (with everything else being equal)" or "It is the case that A is not true and not false (with everything else being equal)". Hence, something cannot be both existent and non-existent at the same time or non-existence and not non-existent at the same time but must either exist or not exist.

[229]Take the principle that "Given all else is equal something cannot be both true and false". The truth of any argument relies on its premises necessarily being true and therefore necessarily not being false (which is the same as saying it is necessarily true). Even scientific findings assume that the finding of a particular scientific discovery is true and cannot be true and false at the same time. May be it will be suggested that the principle that something cannot be both true and false (given all else is equal) is both true and false (i.e., the principle is both true and false). That is, it is true in regards to some things and false in regards to others. The fallacy of such an assertion can be shown. Take *A* as representing the aforementioned principle. The statement can then be made that "*A* does not apply in context *B*". Either A does apply in context *B* or it does not. If *A* does not apply in context *B* then it cannot be the case that *A* does apply in context *B*. However, *A* is applied in context *B* when one considers the fact that *A* necessarily does not apply in context *B* and it is not the case that *A* applies in context *B*. Hence, by assuming that *A* does not apply in context *B* one is assuming that A does apply in context *B*. But originally it was stated that in context *B* it is not the case that *A* does not apply. Therefore, denial of the fact that principle *A* is necessarily true also proves its truth.

Some dialetheists have assumed that given all else is equal principle *A* can both apply and not apply to a certain context *B*. This claim also implicitly assumes that principle *A* necessarily applies in context *B* and that it is not the case that it both applies and does not apply in context *B*. Either it

neglects its truth all that is required is to direct his attention to it rather than reason for it.[230] Primary concepts can further be divided into that which is not acquired through the senses and that which is acquired through the senses.[231]

Self-evident knowledge is that the truth of which is known but can also be demonstrated if needed. An example of such knowledge is the principle that a possible being necessarily needs a cause in order to exist and which will be discussed in further detail in the chapter about The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. Theoretical knowledge is that which does not fall under the above categories and an individual cannot know it without reasoning.

Through his philosophy, Suhrawardī saw himself as the true heir to 'Eastern Philosophy'. His philosophy became known as *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* or the Philosophy of Illumination and he himself was given the honorific title Sheikh al-Ishrāq (Master of Illumination). His works had relatively little influence on European philosophy. This lack of influence could probably be attributed to two factors. First, it could have been Suhrawardī's early death at the age of thirty eight before he had a chance to establish himself or his philosophy taking root among the broader Muslim intelligentsia. Second, his philosophical school was mainly adopted and developed by later Iranian philosophers and theologians in areas that in terms of exchange of ideas had little contact with Europe. Nevertheless, Suhrawardī left a lasting impression on later Iranian philosophy.

Among the most influential aspects of Suhrawardī's philosophy was what later became known as the 'Primacy of Essences' (*aṣālat al-māhīyah*). Suhrawardī had argued that what is real and outside of the mind is the essence of a thing not something called its existence. For example, when talking about a table outside of the mind, it is the essence of the table that one refers to and not something called the existence of the table. This does not mean that he rejected the idea that things are real but that real things outside of the mind were

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is the case that *A* both applies and does not apply in context *B* or its contradiction is true (i.e., that it is not the case that *A* both applies and does not apply in context *B*). This, however, confirms that principle *A* (i.e., all else equal something cannot be both true and false) does apply in context *B* (because it must be the case that A both applies and does not apply and cannot be the case that it does not both apply and not apply) and the original claim is falsified.

[230]For a general description of the categorization of different kinds of knowledge in Islamic philosophy and the distinction between knowledge and faith see: Jawādī Āmulī, *Tabyīn Barāhīn Ethbāt-e Khodā* (Qom: ISRA Publication Center, 1996), 75-79.

[231]For example, the concept of the colour red is acquired through the senses but is primary knowledge.

essences not existences. Prior to Suhrawardī there was no question of what constitutes reality outside of the mind. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā had simply assumed that what has reality in the actual world are the existent beings. For Ibn Sīnā, as it will be seen in the next chapter, the distinction between essence and existence was intensional. Suhrawardī, however, argued that existence was just a mental concept which is abstracted from real essences outside of the mind. According to Suhrawardī, concepts such as existence, necessity, possibility and relations such as brotherhood are all mental abstracts and secondary intelligibles that do not correspond to anything outside of the mind. He calls such concepts 'beings of reason' (*al-i`tibārāt al-`aqlīyah*).[232]

The philosopher-theologian who eventually managed to challenge the Illuminationist notion of the primacy of the essence and influence the course of Islamic philosophy was the Muslim existentialist Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (c.979A.H./1571C.E.-1050A.H./1640C.E.), known more famously as Mullā Ṣadrā.[233] Mullā Ṣadrā argued that what is outside of the mind is the existence of a thing. The essence of a thing is what is abstracted from the limitation of that existence. In order to clarify, again take the example of a table. What is real and outside of the mind, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, is the existence of the table. The mind abstracts from the contours of the existence of the table its essence. The essence of the table is therefore a mental concept. Mullā Ṣadrā's position became known as the 'Primacy of Existence' (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). There will be more discussion of the two positions below when discussing Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical theories and in the chapter about the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible.

Rejection of philosophical methods in latter Sunnī theology

Although al-Ghazzālī led a campaign against philosophers, it was Ibn Taymīyah who attacked the very basis of rational reasoning in Sunnī theological discourses on the grounds that it was based on heretical Greek thought. In his treatise *al-Radd `alā al-Mantiqīyīn,* Ibn

[232]Suhrawardī. *The Philosophy of Illumination,* 45-51, Part 1, Third Discourse.

[233]Existentialism in Islamic philosophy differs to the philosophical school with the same name in the Western philosophical tradition. There will be further discussion on Islamic existentialism in chapter four.

Taymīyah attempts to undermine the very foundation of logical reasoning.[234] In his attack against what he called Greek logic–despite the fact that by his time logic had gone through a considerable transformation and was very different to its Greek origins –Ibn Taymīyah presented a crude empirical account of knowledge. His ideas, however, should not be confused with an epistemological theory. His intention in attacking logic was not to establish a theory of knowledge but to establish what he saw as Sunnī orthodoxy. The conclusion he wanted his readers to accept is that the basis of all knowledge is either sense perception or religious text. The intellect, he asserts at one point, is subordinate to sense perception because knowledge derived from the former is dependent on what is acquired through the latter.[235] He also expounds a relativist theory of knowledge where even knowledge of axioms could differ from one person to another.[236]

Some of the essential features of Ibn Taymīyah's arguments in *al-Radd* can be found among the works of his predecessors.[237] Many of his arguments had been issues raised by

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[234]For an English translation of the work see: Wael B. Hallaq, ed. and trans., *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 159-160. Hallaq translates the title as 'Against the Greek logicians', while the actual title is 'Against the logicians'. The alternative title of the same work also reads *Naṣīḥat Ahl al-Īmān fī al-Radd `alā Manṭiq al-Yūnān* which means 'The Advice of the People of Faith in Refuting Greek logic', hinting at Ibn Taymīyah's opinion that logic was Greek. Ibn Taymīyah never suggests that his work is against Greek logicians but rather that it is against Muslim philosophers and logicians who use what he sees as a Greek science.

[235]Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 159-160. He states, "This is why sound-minded people hold that the intellect is subordinate to sense perception, for while sense perception apprehends particulars, the intellect arrives through them at a common, universal factor. Universals occur in the mind only after comprehending concrete particulars. Thus the knowledge of concrete particulars is one of the most important means to knowledge of universals...The essence of the intellect is this, to apprehend universals through apprehending particulars." The reason Ibn Taymīyah sees the intellect as 'subordinate' could be due to his general view that particulars represent reality while universals are conventional. Hence a tool that perceives reality is superior to that which only aids in acquiring conventional knowledge.

[236]Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 31-32.

[237]Ibn Taymīyah names several theologians from the orthodox Sunnī, Mu`tazilah and Shī`ah schools of thought who had been critics of philosophers and at least some parts of Aristotelian logic. He gives a lengthy quotation from the work *al-Ārā` wa l-Dīyānat* by the Shī`ah scholar al-Hasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d.300A.H./913C.E.). See: Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 154-155. Suhrawardī's influence is also evident. For example Suhrawardī reasons against Peripatetic philosophers that if an individual has no knowledge of the specific essential constituent found only in the concept being defined then, he cannot know a concept through a definition that uses that essential part. He can only know the concept through sense experience or some other way. Ibn Taymīyah tried to argue along the same lines saying that if the words that are used to define a concept are already known then the concept is already known and there is no need for a definition. Ibn Taymīyah's argument, unlike that of Suhrawardī, is flawed because he fails to

the philosophers themselves. Ibn Taymīyah, however, breaks with his predecessors by discarding the use of logical procedures altogether. He attempts to show that the theologians that preceded him were in agreement with him regarding the frivolous nature of logical procedures. In reality, some of the works he used or quoted from in most cases criticised features of Aristotelian logic and Hellenistic philosophy but never denied the usefulness of logical procedures.[238]

He regularly presents straw men and misquotes the positions of the philosophers and logicians so that their opinions are presented as circular or defective. Take for example the way Ibn Taymīyah begins his discourse in *al-Radd*. He maintains that logicians and philosophers claim that all concepts can be known only through definitions. He then draws the obvious conclusion that such a claim entails circularity and regress since one has to know at least some concepts to be able to construct a definition.[239] Most Muslim philosophers and logicians, at least in his time, were of the opinion that concepts can be known innately and through sensory perception, mental construction and revelation.[240] This included the well-known philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī. Some even believed in acquiring concepts through mystical experiences. Hence, the criticism and any case Ibn Taymīyah builds on it fails.

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restrict the words describing the concept as being only the features of the concept. Hence, words denoting a variety of different concepts or features found in other concepts can be used to describe the specific combination of those features in the concept being defined. See: Suhrawardī. *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 10-11; Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 9-10.

[238]An example is his quotation from the treatise *al-Ārā` wa l-Dīyānat* by the Shī`ah scholar al-Nawbakhtī. Even though the work of al-Nawbakhtī is no longer extant, it is clear both from his quotation and the description of his writings in al-Nadim's *al-Fihrist* that he was not against the use of logical reasoning but only criticised some Aristotelian principles. In the quotation provided by Ibn Taymīyah, al-Nawbakhtī argues that an argument does not need to have two premises and a conclusion but can be one premise and a conclusion. For a description of al-Nawbakhtī's works see: Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol.1, 441.

[239]Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 6-7. Here again he seems to be emulating Suhrawardī.

[240]See: Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 165-175; Al-Farabi, *The Book of Letters*, 7; Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 13; Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā` al-`Ulūm*, 53. Ibn Sīnā's views regarding primary knowledge will be discussed in the chapter about the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. Suhrawardī's position was discussed above. Ibn Taymīyah himself admits further into the discussions that philosophers and logicians do believe that some self-evident concepts are known without a definition, see: Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 11.

Ibn Taymīyah's discussions betray a lack of comprehensive knowledge regarding both the study of philosophy and logic. He is mostly familiar with superficial descriptions of logical principles and philosophical theories. His ultimate goal seems to have been to replace logical methods with analogical reasoning, which was a popular method of reasoning used by Sunnī jurist to arrive at religious laws.[241] He seems to have viewed analogical reasoning as being the true form of rational reasoning.[242]

Ibn Taymīyah's epistemological views did not have as much impact on later Sunnī thought as did his theological works. The eighteenth century Wahhābī movement and its modern day members are the inheritors of Ibn Taymīyah's theological school.[243] The Wahhābī movement has campaigned for a return to what they presume to be the beliefs and practices of early years of Islam as taught by the orthodox Sunnī literature. Their position on reasoning and intellect is the same as that of Ibn Taymīyah but probably more on a theological basis rather than theoretical one.[244]

Among the Sunnīs, there seems to have been a general decline in philosophical thought after the Mongol invasion and its resulting effects on the Muslim world. Around the nineteenth century, there began a modern revivalist movement to interpret religious text according to newly discovered scientific discoveries. The al-Azhar scholar Muhammad `Abduh (1265A.H./1849C.E.-1323A.H./1905C.E.) could be considered as the founder of this revivalism.[245] Figures in such movements were also exponents of a return to the orthodox

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[241]Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 44-46; 159-164.

[242]Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 164. Ibn Taymīyah states, "We mean to say that the rational Balance, as God has mentioned in His Book, is the truth, and is not limited to Greek logic. The Balance is the sound inference which encompasses equating two similar things and differentiating between two dissimilar things, whether the form of that inference is a categorical syllogism or an analogy. But the forms of analogy are the source, and they are more perfect [than the syllogism]. The balance is the common factor, namely, the middle term (*jāmi'*)."

[243]The founder of the Wahhābī sect was Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhāb al-Tamīmī (1703C.E.–1792C.E.). Initially the adherents of the movement were confined to some parts of what is today known as Saudi Arabia and had little influence outside their own tribal affiliation. It was only after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War 1 and the establishment of Saudi Arabia with the help of the British by the Saudi family in 1932 in addition to subsequent discoveries of oil that they managed to mass export the ideas of the movement abroad.

[244]There does not seem to be any work of the sort Ibn Taymīyah produced against logic among the followers of the Wahhābī movement.

[245]The movement is sometimes referred to as the Salafī movement, a term used now mostly to refer to the Wahhābī school. The beginning of the movement is sometimes attributed to Abduh's teacher Jamal al-Din Asadābādī.

Sunnī position on theological issues and practice. The exponents of this new trend wanted to incorporate the scientific achievements of the Western world into a traditional religious framework. They saw the scientific achievement of the West as being independent of their systems of belief and practice. The twentieth century also saw such notable Western educated Sunnī philosophers as Muhammad Iqbal (1877C.E.-1938C.E.). Currently, some traditional Sunnī seminaries such as Al-Azhar teach papers in Islamic philosophy and the subject can be taken in secular universities.[246] Generally speaking, the issue of the role of reasoning among the Sunnī theological circles have remained mainly along the lines of the al-Asha`rī, al-Māturīdī and Ibn Taymīyah schools of thought. Al-Ghazzālī's influence can be seen among more Ṣūfī oriented adherents of the Sunnī faith.

It seemed that among the orthodox Sunnī theologians the role of reason and the use of philosophy were intermingled. Hence, accepting or rejecting philosophy was also a way of showing approval and disapproval for using reason in answering theological questions. The reason behind such a view could have been because rational reasoning was thought to have originated in Greek thought, namely, the tradition of logic. This could also be the reason behind the misconception of modern Western scholars who trace the origin of rational thought in Islam to Greek philosophy.

Philosophical methods in latter Shī`ah theology

Among the Shī`ah, on the other hand, there was less concern with the role of reason than that of the role of philosophy. Using reason to answer theological questions was an integral part of Shī`ah thinking. At least some of the methodology used in philosophy, such as logic, was not only adopted but improved upon by Shī`ah theologians and philosophers. A philosophical approach was well-received by many Shī`ah theologians. Khāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Muhammad Ṭūsī (597A.H./1201C.E.-672A.H./1274C.E.), an Imāmī Shī`ah theologian, philosopher and scientist, had been an influential figure in incorporating many of Ibn Sīnian philosophical views and approaches into the Imāmī Shī`ah theological approach to doctrinal questions. He produced many works in fields of theology, philosophy, logic,

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[246]Philosophy was reinstated in Al-Azhar in the late nineteenth century through the efforts of the supposedly Shī`ah political activist Jamal al-Din al-Afghani Asadābādī (1254A.H./1838C.E.-1314A.H./1897C.E.).

ethics, astronomy and mathematics. He defended Ibn Sīnā's philosophical ideas against his adversaries through such works as his commentary on the *al-Ishārāt* and *Masāri` al-Masāri`*.[247] But Ṭūsī was not an imitator and on many occasions differed with Ibn Sīnā's views. Indeed by around the seventeenth century, philosophy or philosophically oriented *Kalām* had become part of the curriculum of Shī`ī theological studies. Shī`ah theologians had taken philosophy and adapted it in order to use it in defence of their doctrinal views.

In 1501 C.E., the charismatic Isma`īl Ṣafavī (or Ṣafawī) captured Tabriz, the north-western city of Iran. Soon after he declared himself *Shāh* (king) and established the Ṣafavīyah dynasty. The Ṣafavīyah dynasty saw the rise of a new age for Shī`ah scientific, theological and philosophical activities in Iran. As part of what is sometimes referred to as the Iranian cultural renaissance was the establishment of institutions of higher learning across the new empire. Among these was the famous college in Isfahan where topics like mathematics, architecture, theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, arts and other subjects were being taught by some of the top intellectuals of that era. Their intellectual achievements especially in the field of philosophy became known as the 'School of *Eṣfahan*' (*Maktab-e Esfahān*). Some of the notable names among the intellectuals of this school were Bahā` al-Dīn Muhammad `Āmilī (953A.H./1546C.E.-1030A.H./1621C.E.), known as Sheikh Bahā'ī, and philosophers Muhammad Bāqir ibn Muhammad Astarābādī (d.1041A.H./1631C.E.), known more famously as Mīr Dāmād, and Muhammad ibn al-Qawāmī al-Shīrāzī (980A.H./1572C.E.-1050A.H./1641C..E.), known by his various honorific titles as Ṣadr Dīn, Mullā Ṣadrā, Ṣadr al-Muta`allihīn and Akhūnd.[248]

One of the distinguishing marks of the philosophical school of *Eṣfahan* was that it brought together the various Peripatetic, Neoplatonic, Illuminationist, mystical and Eastern philosophical traditions. But it was not just its synthesis of these various different philosophies that separated the school of *Eṣfahan* from its predecessors. It was also its highly rational approach to the various different philosophical subjects in a formal scholarly

[247]See: Op. Cit.; Khawjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Maṣāri` al-Muṣāra`*, trans., Sayyed Mohsen Mīrī (Tehran: Enteshārāt Ḥekmat, 1380H.S.). (Persian translation). In his work *Masāri` al-Masāri`*, Ṭūsī defends Ibn Sīnā against al-Shahrastānī demonstrating the latter's lack of knowledge and methodological skills in regards to philosophy and *Kalām*.

[248]Shaykh Bahā'ī is most famous for his work in the field of principles of jurisprudence and various scientific and architectural achievements. He is famous for a number of architectural masterpieces (some in existence today) which included a large public bathhouse that was said to be kept warm with a single candle sized flame.

setting. In the school of *Eṣfahan*, theologians, jurisprudents, philosophers and mystics could gather in an academic setting to learn and impart their teachings to others.

The most influential figure of this school, in the field of philosophy, was Mullā Ṣadrā. Mullā Ṣadrā brought together the ideas of various different Hellenic, Islamic and mystic thinkers and philosophers into a comprehensive and intricate philosophical system which he called 'Transcendental Wisdom' (*Ḥikmat Muta`ālīyah*). Mullā Ṣadrā, like a number of his predecessors, saw the concept of existence to be indefinable and knowable without any intermediaries.[249] An individual knows the concept of existence from the first moment of existing as a conscious being for the reason that her consciousness is her very existence. However, in Mullā Ṣadrā's opinion the reality of existence is not known immediately but rather through 'illuminative presence', a kind of knowledge by presence that requires intellectual and spiritual (which includes ethical) discipline.[250] He changed the course of philosophical thinking of his time by reasoning that contrary to what Illuminationist philosophers, namely, Suhrawardī and his successors, had expounded it was existence (*wujūd*) not essences (*māhīyah*) that had reality outside of the mind.[251]

The essence (*māhīyah*) of a thing, in Islamic philosophy, is its what-is-itness.[252] Suhrawardī, as was mentioned above, had criticized what he called Peripatetic philosophers and had argued for the primacy of essences. He maintained that in the reality outside of the mind, there were essences and existence was only a mental concept. Mullā Ṣadrā's most influential impact on Islamic philosophy was his arguments against the primacy of essences. He argued that existence is primary and therefore when referring to an entity that exists outside of a person's mind, it is its existence that is being referred to and not the essence of that existent entity. In other words, it is not the case that the essence of a thing has reality outside of the mind and then existence is predicated to it. Rather, according to

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[249]Or rather, know it by presence.

[250]Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra (Kitāb al-Mashā`ir)*, trans. Parviz Morewedge (Tehran/New York: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1992), 6, First Prehension, 30, Fourth Prehension.

[251]This view of Mullā Ṣadrā's will be discussed in more detail in the chapter about the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible.

[252]The term *māhiya* which seems to be a compound word constructed from the words *mā* (what) and *hiya* (the feminine form of 'it') could have come from the expressions *mā`īyat* (essence), *mā huwīyat* (what is its identity?) or *mā* (what) *huwa* (the masculine form of 'it').

Mullā Ṣadrā, a thing exists and then from that existence a person abstracts its essence.[253] Essence is nothing in itself. It only becomes a thing when considered in regards to existence, whether that existence is the mental 'existence' of that essence or the actual reality of that essence. A thing is known when its essence is acquired by the mind.

The difference between these two philosophical views has to do with what each of the two sides considers as being the objective reality which is outside of the mind. Apparently, the first person who began to distinguish between the two positions was Mullā Ṣadrā's teacher, Mīr Dāmād.[254] Consideration of things outside of the mind reveals that two aspects can be identified in regards to them. One aspect is its it-is-it-ness (or what-is-it-ness, Arabic: *māhīyah*) which distinguishes it from other existent things. For example, a cup is distinguished from a table based on its it-is-it-ness. This it-is-it-ness is the essence of things outside of the mind. The other aspect which is shared by all existent things is the fact that it has reality outside of the mind rather than being a figment of a person's imagination. This second aspect is the existence of things outside of the mind.

However, a thing does not have two realities outside of the mind (i.e., an essence and an existence). Also it cannot be the case that neither of these two aspects of a thing is instantiated in reality because that would result in total scepticism about reality outside of the mind. That is, one of these two aspects has to correspond to an objective reality outside of the mind. Hence, one of these two aspects must be that which has reality outside of the mind and the other must be an abstract mental concept.[255] Suhrawardī claimed that the essence of a thing is what refers to the thing which is outside of the mind whereas existence is a mental idea abstracted from that essence. Mullā Ṣadrā, on the other hand, claimed that it is the existence of a thing that refers to the reality outside of the mind and the essence is what is abstracted from that existence.[256]

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[253]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 29.

[254]Murtaḍā Mutahharī, *Majmū`ah-ye Āthār: (Jeld Dowwom az Bakhsh Falsafah) 'Uṣūl Falsafah wa Rawesh Realism* (Tehran: Ṣadrā, 1380H.S.), vol.6, 525.

[255]For the difference between the Primacy of Essence and the Primacy of Existence see: Hādī ibn Mahdī Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 32-33; Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tarjome wa Sharḥ Nihāyat al-Ḥikmah*, ed. and trans. Ali Shirwani (Qom: Dār al-Fikr, 2007), vol.1, 77-80.

[256]There will be more discussions about Mullā Ṣadrā's defence of his position in the chapter about the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible.

Based on his Primacy of Existence, Mullā Ṣadrā integrates Ibn `Arabī's concept of 'Unity of Existence' into his ontological and epistemological theories. Like, Ibn `Arabī, Mullā Ṣadrā believed that there is only one sheer existence which all existent things partake in. Existence, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, applies to all existent things univocally. The same meaning of existence is intended when it is said that a chair exists as when it is said that a table exists. The chair is differentiated from the table through the type of existence it has which is represented in the mind as being its essence. Also the same meaning of existence is used when it is said that God exists as when it is said that the creature exists. What differentiates God from His creation is that God is pure (or sheer) and unlimited existence whereas the things other than God are conditioned and limited existences.[257]

Hence, the sheer and absolute existence which is God is unlimited and contains no imperfection. The perfection of this reality is manifested through the multitude of the various different existences that occupy a position in the hierarchal system of beings.[258] Hence, an entity has a specific position in this hierarchal gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) depending on the intensity of its existence. The higher a being is located in this upwards gradational hierarchy the more intense is its existence whereas a being that is on the lower level is weaker in its existential intensity in comparison to those above it.

Mullā Ṣadrā takes his idea of the gradation of existences from a similar notion given by Suhrawardī in regards to the gradation and intensity of lights.[259] Existent entities are distinguished from one another in the degree of intensity in which they share in the ultimate sheer or pure existence. That degree of intensity determines how limited their existence is. An entity's essence is only what a person abstracts from the limitation (i.e., the limitation in the degree of intensity) of its existence. For example, take light. There is the light of the sun and then there is the light of the lamp. Both are just light, or at least it was viewed as such in the mediaeval era. The only difference between the light of the lamp and the sun is the degree of intensity they share in being light. Hence their difference is in their similarity. The light of the candle is weaker than the light of the sun. The same kind of

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[257]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 8-10.

[258]Mulla Sadra, *Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, ed. and trans. James W. Morris (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 100-103, Part 1, Section 4.

[259]See, for example: Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 99-104, Part 2, Second Discourse.

difference is applied to existent beings and in fact should only be applied to existence and not essences like in the case of different kinds of light. A chair and a human being are both existence, since existence is primary. What distinguishes them from one another is the degree of intensity of their existence which in regards to the human being includes his non-corporeal self (i.e., her soul). Their difference is in their similarity, a concept known as *al-ikhtilāf al-tashkīkī li l-wujūd* (difference based on the degree of existence). A human being's existence (which includes her nonmaterial soul) is more intense than a chair and the chair's existence is weaker than that of a human being.[260]

Mullā Ṣadrā's account of human knowledge is very elaborate and detailed and requires more space than is available in this chapter. What is important for our analysis of the role of reasoning in the Islamic tradition is Mullā Ṣadrā's description of knowledge as a state of being. Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge is ultimately connected to another unique aspect of his philosophy known as 'Substantial Motion' (*ḥarakah al-jawharīyah*). Unlike his predecessors in Hellenistic and Islamic philosophy, Mullā Ṣadrā did not believe substances were static. Furthermore, motion for Mullā Ṣadrā was not a series of unconnected instances. Peripatetics believed that change and motion occurs in regards to accidental properties whereas the substance remains the same. Mullā Ṣadrā, however, argues that accidental properties do not have a separate existence of their own.[261] Their existence is the very fact of inhering as a property for substances. Hence, changes in accidental properties are representative of change in substances. When things change, they change in their very being.[262]

The substances of everything are connected together through the fact they partake in the same existence. Substance and essence here refers to the reality of a thing outside of the mind. Hence, Mullā Ṣadrā states:

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[260]Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *Ḥikmat al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-`Aqlīyah al-'Arba`ah* (Qom: Maktabah al-Muṣtafawī, 1368H.S.), vol.1, 426 -446, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage 3, Chapter 5.

[261]Ibn Sīnā was also of the opinion that accidental properties do not have a separate existence of their own.

[262]For a Mullā Ṣadrā's account of Substantial Motion see: Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.3, 217-220, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage 8, Chapter 13.

> The truth is that the reality of existence [with its multiple manifestations] is one and the world in its entirety is [like] a large animal whose parts are connected together with some parts being joined with others. This does not mean that this connection is a quantitative one [in the sense that they are connected by] being on a surface or in close proximity to each other. Rather it means that each degree of existential perfection must be adjacent and connected to the next degree of existential perfection [more perfect than it]. There cannot be any gap between this degree [of existential perfection] and the next degree which [in regards to the] intensity of its existence [one] is higher or lower [than the other].[263]

Hence the world and everything in it is in constant motion from one degree of existence to another all of which is created, maintained and guided by God towards its perfection. God is the most perfect of beings which all other beings rely on for their existence and perfection. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, at the lowest degree of existence there is the prime matter (*hayūlā al-`anāṣur*) before which there is only non-existence. This prime matter contains within it the potential to be other things that are existentially above it in the hierarchy of existence. In fact, it can be said that prime matter is pure potentiality. The first thing the prime matter evolves (*takāmul*) into is a thing with dimensions (i.e., length, width and depth) after which it becomes a body in its most crude form as elements, which Mullā Ṣadrā being a medieval philosopher, believed them to be the four substances (`a*nāṣur al-arba`ah*). After the elemental stage (or rather, the elemental degree of existence) comes the state of having a physical form (*al-ṣūrah al-jamādīyah*). Different physical forms vary in their degree of existential perfection with some being closer to the elemental stage while others are closer to the next stage of existential perfection.[264]

In the next stage of the existential evolution is plant life (*al-nabāt*) which includes in addition to that of the previous degree of existential perfection an extra trait of being able to feed, or grow upwards or towards the surrounding environment. They are also capable of taking from the previous stage the physical material which they need and to transform that material into their own form (i.e., as part of their body) or produce more of themselves. Similar to the physical forms, plants also have varying degrees of perfection with some

[263]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār,* vol.5, 342-343, Journey 3, Physics, Method 4, First Issue, Course 6, Chapter 18.

[264]Ibid., 343-344.

being closer to the stage of the physical form while others are closer to the next stage of existential perfection. Mullā Ṣadrā gives a detailed description of the different abilities of plants in this hierarchical gradation of existence and accordingly categorizes plant life.[265]

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the final stage or degree of existential perfection among plants is where the abilities (or perfections) of the plant is close to that of animals at which point "it has evolved to such a degree that if it goes a little further it will become an animal". It is at this point which Mullā Ṣadrā believes male-female distinctions start to appear among the plants.[266] The next degree of perfection involves movement in order to acquire food and organs to achieve tasks. In the animal stage there are also different degrees of existential perfection which at its lowest point includes motion for the acquisition of food and basic organs for achieving tasks to the stage that it becomes capable of instinctively knowing (*al-shu`ūr*) pleasure and pain. Also at this point Mullā Ṣadrā gives a detailed account of the different abilities of animals and places them in his gradation of existence from insects, at the lowest level, to apes at its highest degree (which Mullā Ṣadrā describes as those animals that imitate human beings without training).[267]

The next degree of existential perfection is at the level of human beings. But Mullā Ṣadrā states that at this level there are different stages of perfection which every human being can go through. At the beginning are the primary stages of humanity where the person develops from a plant like stage into an animal stage and then into a thinking stage. Later stages include the human beings who have developed themselves through spiritual deeds, imagination, reasoning and so forth reaching the stages of sages and prophets.[268]

According to Mullā Ṣadrā's transcendental philosophy when a human being conceives of something outside of the mind, she acquires that thing's essence which becomes one with her existence evolving her existence into a more intense existence. Hence, Mullā Ṣadrā not only talks about the correspondence between mental representations and the realities outside of the mind (or any related discussion), but also the state of the knower once she has, through the act of knowing, acquired the essence of something. Through acquiring understanding of realities and spiritual practices, an individual can ascend

[265]Ibid., 344-345.

[266]Ibid., 345.

[267]Ibid., 245-347.

[268]Ibid., 347.

through the different degrees of existence until he finally reaches the sheer existence. It is at this level, as Mullā Ṣadrā opined, the individual is able to go beyond knowledge of the concept of existence to knowing the One Sheer Existence itself. She is then capable of knowing the inner most secrets of beings and their true realities.

Mullā Ṣadrā describes many of his philosophical principles through the idea of substantial motion. Time, for example, is only that which describes substantial motion. He states:

> This is exactly like what the philosophers said concerning time, when they said that its ipseity was by essence such that it was continually being renewed, elapsing, and flowing. Except that we say that time (instead of having an independent reality) is the measure of this continual renewal and transformation.[269]

Some later Ṣadrian philosophers argued that there is only sheer existence without gradation and that essences are the various different manifestations of the same perfect existence. Mullā Ṣadrā's panentheistic (or pantheistic, depending on the interpretation of his concept of the Unity of Existence) view of God and nature was not received well by his contemporaries and led to a period of quiet life away from the main centres of learning. His philosophical ideas were popularized two centuries later by another philosopher known as Hādī ibn Mahdī Sabzavārī (1212A.H./1797C.E.-1289A.H./1873C.E.), better known as Hakīm Sabzavārī or Hājj Sabzavārī, who revived and developed the Ṣadrian philosophical school.[270]

Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical views were not free from criticism among Shī`ah philosophers and theologians. These criticisms were not mere theological objections as some Ṣadrian philosophers would want us to believe. A number of Muslim philosophers and theologians have and continue to criticize the underlying principles of Mullā Ṣadrā's

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[269]Mulla Sadra, *Wisdom of the Throne*, 122.

[270]He wrote several commentaries (*hawāshī*) on Mullā Ṣadrā's works. His own works include, among others, two major works in the field of philosophy and logic (In the field of philosophy he wrote *Sharḥ Manẓūmah-ye Ḥikmat*, a philosophical work in verse with its commentary titled *Ghurar al-Farāid* and in the field of logic he wrote *Sharḥ Manẓūmah-ye Manṭiq*. His works are still widely studied today with various different commentaries being published on them. His *Sharḥ Manẓūmah-ye Ḥikmat* has also been translated into English as *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*. See: Hādī ibn Mahdī Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977).

transcendental philosophy, especially that of the Unity of Existence and Substantial Motion. There is an inherent contradiction in the claim that the existence of a contingent entity-which according to Mullā Ṣadrā is dependent in its very reality on the Necessary Being for its existence-is the same as the existence of the Necessary Being. Furthermore, intuitively it seems unreasonable to accept that there is only one existence in reality which every being partakes in while still being distinguished from each other. There will be a more detailed discussion of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical views in chapter four where the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible is discussed.

Mullā Ṣadrā's contribution to Islamic thought was not limited to his philosophical views. He also contributed significantly to the field of logic. Regardless of whether his notion of the unity of existence is accepted or not Mullā Ṣadrā's transcendental philosophy, especially his notion of the primacy of existence, changed the course of thinking in the Islamic philosophical tradition and started a new era of Islamic existentialism.

The increase in the intellectual activity of the Ṣafavīyah period, saw a rise in the critical re-examination of the methodology that was being used by Imāmī Shī`ah Muslim jurisprudents in the field of Islamic law. The study of the methodology used in verifying Islamic law is known as *`Ilm al-Uṣūl* (study of principles).[271] Many issues to do with logic and philosophy are discussed in the field of *`Ilm al-Uṣūl* and it has been a major contributor to the advancement on philosophical logic, epistemology and philosophy of language among Shī`ah Muslim thinkers. As was stated above, the field of *`Ilm al-Uṣūl* was established by al-Mufīd about five centuries before the Ṣafavī dynasty but during the period of the Ṣafavīyah rule, there were significant changes being made to procedures in legal decision making. An influential thinker in this field was Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad Ardebīlī (d.993A.H./1585C.E.), known as Muḥaqqiq Ardebīlī. Ardebīlī advocated a strict method of verifying narrative texts attributed to the *Ahlul Bayt*. Hence, Shī`ah jurisprudents that followed the Ardebīlī method disregarded many narrations that were traditionally accepted as legally binding when making legal decisions. A reduced reliance on narrative based texts gave rise to more dependence on the Qur`ān and rational reasoning.

In opposition to the newly established legal procedures a new school of thought began to appear among the Shī`ah that advocated a reduced role for reason and an increased role for narration based evidence. This school advocated the view that reliable sources or proofs

[271] *`Ilm al-Uṣūl* which is the study of the principles of jurisprudence is different to *`Ilm al-Uṣūl al-Dīn* which is the study of the principal tenets of faith.

(*ḥujjah*) for legal decisions are only the Qur'ān and the tradition of the *Ahlul Bayt*. Even the Qur'ān, as propounded by some of the school's thinkers, can only be understood by referring back to the narrations of the *Ahlul Bayt*. During the beginning years of the movement there seems to have also been a general tendency towards empiricism. This school was known as the Akhbārī school of thought (from the root *akhbār* meaning narration). Their opponents, which included both those who followed the view of Ardebīlī and those who did not accept Ardebīlī's strict stance but rejected the Akhbārī's denial of the significant role of reason, became known as the *Uṣūlī* (from the word *uṣūl* meaning principle) school of jurisprudence. A moderate version of the Akhbārī School became dominant for a brief period of a few decades, especially when the Ṣafavīyah dynasty, the traditional backers of the *Uṣūlī* school, was overthrown by the Afghan forces in 1722. Eventually, however, the *Uṣūlī* school under the leadership of an able jurist by the name of Muhammad Bāqir Waḥīd Bahbahānī (d.1205A.H./1790C.E.) overcame the Akhbārī movement to the extent that in later years they no longer had any influence or authority in Shī`ah religious centres.

Despite advocating a reduced role of reasoning in legal decision making the Akhbārī scholars remained faithful to the traditional Shī`ah method of using reason when proving principal religious tenets of faith. Muhammad Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (1007A.H./1598C.E.-1091A.H./1680C.E.), one notable thinker of the moderate Akhbārī school, was a student of Mullā Ṣadrā and used rational arguments along with narrations from the *Ahlul Bayt* (which he also considered to contain rational arguments) when arguing for principal religious beliefs.[272]

Unlike their Sunnī counterparts, the concern of many Shī`ah theologians, was not the use of logic and philosophical approach towards theological issues. Rather, it was the influence that ideas from Greek philosophy and Indian and ancient Persian beliefs, many of which was considered to be heresy, were having on Shī`ah Islamic thought. These ideas included but were not limited to: explaining creation and God's knowledge of the world through emanation, putting forward pantheistic views of the world and the denial of the corporeal resurrection, rewards and punishments in the afterlife. Many of such philosophical claims might not be found in Hellenistic philosophy, or at least not in the same shape and form that was given to them by Muslim philosophers, but they were still

[272]See for example: Muḥsin Kāshānī, *`Ilm al-Yaqīn fī 'Uṣūl al-Dīn*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar (Qom: Enteshārāt Bīdār, 1426A.H.).

considered by many theologians to be the result of moving away from pure Islamic principles towards pagan Greek thought.

Such disagreements rather than suppress rational debate created an intellectual environment in the Shī`ah seminaries of religious learning. Today theologians teach their ideas and refutations alongside those who are in favour of philosophy and mysticism. Subjects relating to philosophy and mysticism constitutes an integral part of the curriculum taught in both the traditional Shī`ah Islamic seminaries (*Ḥawzah*) and Shī`ah oriented modern universities alongside logic, principles of jurisprudence, jurisprudence, linguistics, literature, Qur'ānic exegeses, analysis of narrations, Islamic history and so forth. There are, as it would be the case, differing attitudes towards the contents of a study depending on the preference of the individual. Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, the Illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardī and the Transcendent Wisdom of Mullā Sadrā are actively taught in both seminaries and universities.

Most modern Shī`ah philosophers and theologians, regardless of their inclination towards orthodoxy or otherwise, are well versed not only in logic and Islamic theology, philosophy and mysticism but also in historical and modern Western thought. The philosophical textbooks taught in the traditional Shī`ah institutions of learning include alongside al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ṭūsī and Mullā Sadrā, the names of Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Kripke and many modern Western philosophers. The familiarity with Western philosophy began during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as areas with a large Shī`ah population (i.e., mostly Iran and Iraq) were confronted with colonialism and infiltration of foreign thought into their generally traditional society.[273] To preserve Shī`ah thought and values both traditional theologians and modern educated individuals began to educate themselves in Western thought and produce innumerable number of critiques on Western philosophy. From mid-twentieth century onwards, works of such Shī`ah philosopher-theologians as Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, Murtaḍā Mutahharī and others showed that Shī`ah theologians were not only aware of Western thought but that they had an in-depth knowledge of it.[274] Today, immense

[273]Although Iran was never colonized during this period it did face challenges from a number of kings who attempted to bring about a Western style change in Iranian society through force. This prompted a reaction from Iranian thinkers which included both those who came from a traditional background and those who were Western educated.

[274]Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1281H.S./1901C.E.-1360H.S./1980C.E.) and his student Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1298H.S./1920C.E.-1358H.S./1979C.E.) were 20th Century (13th Century

numbers of works are being produced every year on every philosophical subject of significance.

The role of reasoning and the nature of the intellect in today's philosophical and theological schools of thought in the Muslim world have been without exception influenced by a long history of the Islamic traditions of Qur'ānic studies, narrative studies, jurisprudence, theology, polemics, philosophy, mysticism and scientific endeavours. Distinct historical origins and spiritual figures and in many cases the political influences of a particular period has largely affected how tradition, polemics and philosophy has shaped the doctrine and methodology of a particular school of thought. Only through knowledge of the intricacies of all these factors can a scholar of any subject dealing with the origins of ideas in the Islamic civilization present a comprehensive account of a doctrinal view in or across different Islamic schools of thought.

A.H.) Shī`ī philosophers and theologians. The latter was both a cleric and a university lecturer. They wrote extensively on Islamic theology and philosophy and were well-known for producing comparative studies of Muslim and Western philosophical ideas. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi (d.1378H.S./1999C.E.) was a theologian who had studied both in the traditional seminaries as well as Western universities. In the West he taught in such prominent universities as Yale, Harvard, Oxford, McGill, Toronto, Michigan and Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute of Ethics.

2 Categorization of Theistic Arguments in the Islamic Tradition

Arguments for the existence of God have always been an important feature of the Islamic philosophical and theological tradition. Like every other monotheistic religion, the central belief in the religion of Islam is belief in the one, unique God. For this reason, Muslim philosophers and theologians have presented a wide variety of adopted and original arguments to prove the existence of God. Most of the adopted theistic arguments were acquired from the Hellenistic tradition though in most cases reconstructed to suit Islamic beliefs. For example, arguments that attempted to prove the existence of God from motion originated or were mostly repetitions of Aristotle's argument for the existence of the prime mover. However, there are a number of arguments that have been developed within the Islamic theological and philosophical tradition and which are based on proving the existence of a certain concept of God.

Many Muslim theological and philosophical works on the topic of *Tawḥīd* (i.e., the unicity, uniqueness and unlimitedness of God) make the distinction between proofs for the attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God and proofs for His existence (*wujūd*). In such works, one or more arguments are presented for the existence of God before proceeding to reason for His omnipotence (*Qādir*), omniscience (*`Ālim*) and other attributes.[1] Among the innumerable

[1]Islamic philosophy generally asserts that God's attributes are not separate from God's essence and existence. In other words, God's essence and attributes are said to be the same as God's existence. It will be argued in the next chapter that if a being's attributes are separate from its existence then, that being is comprised of parts and in need of the parts for its existence. Such a being would be needy and therefore have possible existence. The possibility of its existence is due to it being in need of another for its existence. A being that is needy and possible cannot be the God that according to Islamic philosophy has necessity of existence. Islamic philosophers and Shī`ah and Mu`tazilah theologians have defended the view that God's essence and attributes are the same as God's existence and have regarded any contradictory opinions as denying God's unicity and uniqueness. They reason that the distinction between God's attributes and His existence is only a mental construct. The mind extracts from the meaning of the concept of God (or in philosophical parlance the Necessary Being) the existential attributes of perfection, such as living, omniscience, omnipotence, and so forth. However, other than Mu`tazilah, Sunni theological schools such as the

writings that follow this approach to theistic arguments, there are included well known works such as (in chronological order):

- The narrative collection titled *al-Kāfī* by the Shī`ī traditionist Abū Ja`far Muhammad ibn Ya`qūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī (d.328A.H./939 or 940C.E.). Wherein the author has in the book of *Tawḥīd*, first dedicated chapters related to narrations reasoning for the existence of God before including chapters that mention narrations about the divine attributes.[2]
- *Al-Yāqūt* by the Shī`ah theologian Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Nawbakht who lived in the ninth to around the first half of the tenth century (3rd and 4th Century A.H.).[3] Ibn Nawbakht presents arguments for the existence of God first and then arguments for God's attributes.
- *Iḥṣā` al-`Ulūm* by Abū Naṣr Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Fārābī. When discussing the science of theology, al-Fārābī writes that first the existence of God is proven then, the attributes of unicity, uniqueness and other attributes is discussed.[4]
- *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* and *al-Shifā* by Abū `Alī Husayn ibn Abdullāh Ibn Sīnā. In the theology (*Ilāhīyāt*) section of *al-Shifā*, Ibn Sīnā first enquires into the subject of metaphysics (first philosophy) and then presents his proofs for the existence and attributes of God. In the metaphysics (*Ilāhīyāt*) of *al-Ishārāt*, in the chapter on

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Ash`arīyah believe that God's attributes are not one with His essence and have eternal existence alongside God.

[2]Muhammad ibn Ya`qūb al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī* , ed. `Alī Akbar al-Qaffārī (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1383H.S.), vol.1, 72-167. The narrations include arguments presented by the *Ahlul Bayt* for the existence and attributes of God.

[3]Jamāl al-Dīn al-Hillī, *'Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, ed. Alī Akbar Ḍīyāī (Tehran: Al-Hoda, 2007), 95-180, Aims 4 to 7. This work is a commentary by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Hillī (d.726A.H./1325C.E.) on Nawbakht's *al-Yāqūt*. It presents *al-Yāqūt*'s text, accompanied by al-Hillī's commentary. The text of Nawbakht's *al-Yāqūt* is also quoted in another work which is a commentary on al-Hillī's commentary by a student and a relative of the latter known as Sayyid `Amīd al-Dīn al-A`rajī al-Husaynī al-`Ubaydilī (681A.H./1282C.E.-754A.H./1353C.E.). For al-`Ubaydilī's work see: Sayyid `Amīd al-Dīn al-`Ubaydilī, *Ishrāq al-Lāhūt fī Naqd Sharh al-Yāqūt*, ed. Alī Akbar Ḍīyāī (Tehran: Miras-e Maktub, 2002), 149-330, Aim 4 to 7.

[4]Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā` al-`Ulūm*, ed. Osman Amine (Paris: Dar Byblion, 2005), 99-101.

'Being and its Causes' Ibn Sīnā presents his argument for the existence of God before going on to discussing His attributes.[5]

- *Ḥikmat al-'Ishrāq* by the Illuminationist philosopher Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī. Suhrawardī in his philosophy of lights reasons for an incorporeal Light of Lights that is not in need of any other light for its illumination and that it illuminates other lights that are in need of it for their illumination. Subsequently, he reasons that the aforementioned supreme light is living, eternal and has other such attributes of perfection.[6]
- *Tajrīd al-Kalām* by the Shī`ī theologian and philosopher Khāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Ṭūsī.[7]

Ibn Sīnā in *al-Shifā* when discussing the subject of metaphysics writes:

> The inquiry concerning [God] would, then, have two aspects-one [being] an inquiry concerning Him with respect to His existence and the other [an inquiry] with respect to His attributes.[8]

Muslim philosophers and theologians knew well that proving the existence of a grand designer or a powerful being does not without further proof show that such a being is unique and unlimited or even that it has necessary existence in the sense intended by Islamic belief. They could, however, reason that a being that has necessary existence and is the cause of every other existence is necessarily unique, has ordered or designed creation and has the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and other attributes of perfection. Consequently, theistic arguments were divided into the two distinct groups. One group of

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[5]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing: A parallel English-Arabic text*, ed. and trans. Michael E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 29-38, Book 1, Chapter 6 and 7, 270-278, Book 8, Chapters 3 and 4; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt: Ma`a Sharḥ al-Khāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī wa al-Muḥākimāt l-Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, ed. Karīm Fayḍī (Qom: Matbū`āt Dīnī, 1383H.S.), vol.3, 7-80, Method 4, Metaphysics.

[6] Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, ed. and trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 76-89, Part 2, First Discourse.

[7]Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād: Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I`tiqād*, ed. and trans. Abul Hasan Sha`rānī (Tehran: Islāmīyah, 1383H.S.), 389-421. (Persian translation)

[8]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 4, Book 1, Chapter 1.

arguments were intended for proving the Divine Essence (i.e., the existence of a being with necessary existence) and the other for proving the Divine Attributes (i.e., the uniqueness, omnipotence, omniscience and so forth of the Divine Essence). Based on this rationale, arguments such as the Demonstration from Order (*Burhān al-Naẓm* or *Burhān al-Niẓām*), a version of the Argument from Design found in Islamic theological and philosophical discourse, are in most cases not intended to prove the existence of the Divine Essence.[9] Rather their intended purpose is to argue for one or more divine attributes, such the attribute of omniscience or being a designer or a creator (*ṣāniʿ*).[10]

The main concentration of this research is those theistic arguments that have been proposed as proofs for the existence of the Divine Essence which are arguments that have traditionally been considered in Islamic theology and philosophy as proofs for the existence of God.

The second level of classification of theistic arguments (i.e., subcategory of the categorization mentioned above) further divides arguments that intend to prove the existence of the Divine Essence into three different sets of 'demonstrations'-as does the terminology used by the tradition itself.[11] Before beginning any discussions of Islamic theistic arguments a note should be made about the term 'possible being' in Islamic philosophy and theology. The term *mumkin al-wujūd* refers to a being such that existence is neither necessary for it nor impossible, in contrast to the Necessary Being which is a

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[9]*Burhān* means 'demonstration' and *naẓm* means 'order'. An example of an attribute being reasoned for in the Demonstration from Order is the attribute of being a *Nāẓim* or one who designs and gives order in the sense of setting out laws in every level of creation and deciding on the purpose that each thing serves. There are exceptions where some theologians have given different versions of the Argument from Design to prove God's existence.

[10]Sometimes the premises of the Demonstration from Order are combined with the premises of the Demonstration from Origination or the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary to form an argument that is intended to both prove the existence of God and His attributes. These types of arguments are usually common in works intended for the general public or when trying to prove several points in one argument. Without familiarity with this style of writing, one could be confused into thinking that such arguments are proofs for the existence of God based on the premises of order or design.

[11]In my survey of the philosophical and theological works on the subject of theistic arguments, I did not find any specific categorization in regards to arguments for the existence of the Divine Essence. However, in some of these works sets of arguments had been discussed together and the categorization I have presented here reflects that grouping of arguments. There may well be philosophical or theological works that have presented some kind of categorization of arguments for the Divine Essence that I have not come across. In either case, I believe the second level categorization I have presented is appropriate.

being such that existence is necessary for it and it is impossible for it not to exist, and the impossible being, which it is impossible for it to ever exist. In this study, the term 'possible' will be used in the aforementioned sense.

The first set of demonstrations in this category are those that propose to reason from the originated, possible, or needy to the Originator, Necessary or the Free from Need. In other words, such demonstrations argue for the existence of God from a fact about the world as distinct from God. The Demonstration from Origination (*Burhān al-Ḥūdūth*), the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary (*Burhān al-'Imkān wa al-Wujūb*) and the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible (*Burhān al-'Imkān al-Faqrī*) are among this set of arguments.[12] These arguments can be grouped together based on their subject of enquiry and their intended conclusion. The subject of enquiry is to ascertain whether the world can exist by itself or is in need of another for its existence. The intended conclusion is to prove the hypothesis that the world is in need of another for its existence and that the other is not in need of anything for His existence.[13] There is not unanimous agreement among Muslim philosophers and theologians of whether each of these arguments proves what it intends to prove, hence the term 'intended conclusion'.

One of the more well-known disagreements in this regard was between Muslim philosophers and *Mutikallimūn* (people of *Kalām* who comprised of the theologians). The dispute has continued among present day inheritors of those traditions. The defenders of the Demonstration from Origination have usually been the *Mutikallimūn* who have attempted to construct an argument for the origination of the world based on the impossibility of infinite regress. The philosophers have usually favoured the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary or the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible.[14] But many theologians, especially among the Shī`ah, also use the

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[12] *Burhān al-Hūdūth*- It literally means 'Demonstration of Origination' and is more popularly known in Western philosophy as the Kalām Argument or the Cosmological argument.

[13] Note that reference to the World means anything other than God and can include more than one world. Actual multiple worlds (i.e., the physical world, the angelic world and so forth) are an integral part of Islamic theology and reference to them are found in the Qur'an and Islamic narrative collections.

[14] *Burhān al-Imkān al-Faqrī* (Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible) is an extension of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary first presented by the 17th Century (11th Century A.H.) philosopher Ṣadr al-Dīn Mohammad Shīrāzī (more popularly known as Mullā Ṣadrā) in his *al-Ḥikmat al-Muta`ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-`Aqlīyah al-'Arba'ah* or, as is more commonly known, *al-Asfār* (Journeys). Hence, before this reformulation, philosophers opted for the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary.

philosophically oriented theistic arguments. Besides presenting certain criticisms against the Demonstration from Origination, the philosophers have always maintained that the Demonstration from Possible to the Necessary is superior to the Demonstration from Origination because it does not rely on the impossibility of infinite regress.[15]

The reason that *Mutikallimūn* have incorporated the impossibility of infinite regress into their theistic arguments has been to prove that the world is not eternal and is limited in time. However, the reasons presented by the *Mutikallimūn* for the impossibility of infinite regress should, in reality, be presented as a separate argument for proving the temporal nature of the world. If this distinction is made between the Demonstration from Origination as proof for the existence of God and argument from the impossibility of infinite regress as proof for the temporality of the world then, the differences between the *Mutikallimūn* and the philosophers might be only in the degree of detail that is given for why a possibly existent thing needs a cause in order to exist. A more comprehensive discussion of this difference will be found in the next chapter.

The second set of demonstrations includes arguments that intend to reason from the concept of God rather than God's creation. In Western Philosophy, such arguments are more popularly labelled Ontological Arguments. Various forms of the Demonstration of the Veracious (*Burhān al-Ṣiddīqīn*) which mostly constitute arguments from the notions of existence and reality fall under the aforementioned category. The thought that one can prove the existence of God through God alone is present in the Islamic narrative traditions. However, the approach of Muslim philosophers and theologians as to how to go about proving the existence of God through God alone has been diverse.

The most essential element of any ontological argument is what it considers to be the concept of God. The premises of a proof for the existence of God that reasons from nothing other than the concept of God are constructed from that very concept. The concept introduced is also vital for deciding on what it is the argument is reasoning for. Many of the ontological arguments constructed by Muslim philosophers are attempts to prove the existence of God through the consideration of existence *qua* existence. These arguments,

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[15]Muslim philosophers do not deny the impossibility of certain kinds of infinite regress but assert that the Demonstration from Origination leads to a kind of regress, namely, being ordered infinitely in time, which some could argue is not impossible. In addition, they have argued for the superiority of the Demonstration of the Possible to the Necessary on the basis that it does not need to use the impossibility of infinite regress as a premise and as such is not subject to the criticism of those who do not accept such an impossibility.

apart from their other differences, vary in their approaches in a fundamental way. Some reason for a necessarily existent being (i.e., it has not been given existence and has always existed) while others have given 'existence' itself as a concept representing and being identical with God which all other beings partake in.

The promoters of the latter type of argument have usually been adherents of different Gnostic movements and their arguments have been rejected by most traditional philosophers and theologians. The idea of things partaking in the existence of God leads to panentheism (or pantheism depending on the particular philosopher's or Gnostic's view) and refers to an entity that is not considered to be God according to traditional Islamic belief. The advocates of such a concept would always argue that their existence is what others call 'the necessary existent being'. This response is not however sufficient for the traditional theistic philosophers and theologians and would be rejected for various reasons ranging from views regarding the notion of existence (for example, as only asserting the instantiation of a thing outside of the mind rather than being an entity on its own) to issues related to the uniqueness and unicity of God.

The exponents of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary and the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible have also used the notion of existence in the construction of their arguments, though in a different way.[16] These arguments have been constructed using the classification of existent beings into necessary and possible. Ibn Sīnā uses this classification for his version of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary has sometimes been referred to in works on Ibn Sīnā as an ontological argument. Ibn Sīnā himself believed that his argument is one that argues from the concept of God to the existence of God. Two reasons could be given for this confusion. First, it seems that Ibn Sīnā's Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary has been interpreted differently by different thinkers. Second, it could be the case that because Ibn Sīnā has formulated his version of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary on the modal nature of being, then his proof is regarded as an ontological argument by those who are of the opinion that any theistic argument that argues for the existence of God from being alone is an ontological one.

[16]Although Mullā Ṣadrā for the first time defended on a philosophical basis the idea of unity of existence between God and creation, his Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible can be given in a way that avoids such a conclusion.

Nevertheless, the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary is not an ontological argument if an ontological argument is defined as an argument that argues only from the concept of God. Though the proof requires no more than one possible entity to exist–and that one possible entity could be the self–it is nonetheless not an argument that argues from the concept of God alone.[17] In the case of the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible, Mullā Ṣadrā first presented it as a Demonstration of the Veracious and hence as an ontological argument. This argument is also not an ontological one because like the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary it requires that at least one possible being to exist. In terms of Western philosophy, the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary is a cosmological argument because it argues from a fact about the world as distinct from God. However, the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible might or might not be categorized as a cosmological argument depending on how the argument is presented. Mullā Ṣadrā believed that God (i.e., the Necessary Being) and his creation (i.e., possible beings) are united in their existence. God is pure existence whereas beings other than God are dependent and needy on God for their existence. Therefore, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible that is constructed on the notion of existence which is shared between God and his creation is an ontological argument (i.e., a Demonstration of the Veracious). However, it will be seen that the argument is still not an ontological one.

The most influential ontological argument in Islamic philosophy today is a version of the Demonstration from the Veracious that argues from the impossibility of scepticism to the necessary reality of God's existence. The argument is formulated by twentieth century philosopher Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī. Ṭabāṭabā'ī argued that even the denial of everything, when rationally analysed, results in the admission that a necessary reality exists. God is that necessary reality.

The third set of arguments includes arguments that reason for the existence of an unlimited, omnipotent and omniscient creator from the natural tendencies of human beings. These arguments are titled the Demonstration from Natural Tendency (*Burhān al-Fiṭrah* in

[17]Note that the argument is both deductive and *a priori* if that one contingent entity is oneself. However, this does not in any way mean the argument is ontological.

singular form).[18] The most often used exposition of the argument makes use of the human being's tendency to call upon God in time of severe distress and hopelessness. This line of reasoning is derived from Qur'ānic verses and Islamic narrative texts and is among the earliest arguments given for the existence of God in the Islamic tradition.[19]

Its presentation in Islamic philosophy elaborates on the original theological discussion by employing certain philosophical principles to explain the premises of the argument. Its philosophical reconstruction can only be found within the Shī`ah theological and philosophical tradition, though the belief in the human being's natural tendency to believe in the existence of God is agreed upon by all traditional creeds associated with Islam.

A second version of the Demonstration from Natural Tendency uses the human quality of love. The argument uses as its premise the notion of a sense of immeasurable love within an individual that can only be satisfied if it is directed towards God. The concept of love has played an important part in Islamic poetry and mystical beliefs. Certainly, a distinguishing feature of Islamic poetry is the concept of an instinctive immense love a poet claims to have for God. A number of Qur'ānic verses, and numerous traditions, hymns, prayers and supplications found in the Islamic narrative collections speak of love of God above love of other things.[20] There are also verses that speak of creation seeking God.[21] However, the version of the Demonstration from Natural Tendency that uses immeasurable

[18]*Fitrah*-The word literally means nature (i.e., human nature) and hence, the actual title is the Demonstration from (human) Nature. However, I have translated it as 'natural tendency' because the argument refers to both what is in human nature and the tendency of going back to it.

[19]See for example: Qur'ān 10:22-23, 31:31-32, 16:53-54, 29:65, 39:8. Also for the narrative traditions see: Al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, trans. Muhammad Ali Sultani (Tehran: Armaghān Ṭūba, 1384H.S.), 346-347. (Arabic Text with Persian translation). For Qur'ānic verses that talk about belief in God being in every human being's nature see: Qur'ān 30:30, 41:53. For narrative texts that state belief in God is in every human being's nature see: Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khālid Al-Barqī, *Al-Mahāsin* (Qom: Dar al-Kitāb al-Islāmīyah, 1371 A.H.), vol.1, 241; Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ṣaffār, *Basā`ir al-Darajāt* (Qom: Library of Ayatollah Mar`ashī, 1404A.H.), 78; `Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim Al-Qommī, *Tafsīr al-Qommī* (Qom: Mo`asseseye Dār al-Kitāb, 1404A.H.), vol.2, 155; Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī* (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1383H.S.), vol.1, 139; vol.2, 12-13; Al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, 514-519; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad* (Cairo: Mo`assasah Qurṭubah, n.d.), vol.2, 481; Al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā` al-`Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol.1, 94. Also see also al-Ghazzālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field (New York: Cosimo, 2005), 6.

[20]For example see: Qur'ān 2:165.

[21]Qur'ān 55:29.

love as a premise for a theistic argument does not seem to be explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān or the Islamic narrative tradition.[22]

The uniqueness of the set of arguments that claim to argue for the existence of God from the human being's natural tendency to believe in God is that it does not depend only on the premise that human beings have innate knowledge of God. Rather, it argues from the natural tendency of human beings to hope for or love God. Despite its reference to human nature, the argument is not intended to be a subjective method of forming a belief in God. Moreover, it is not asking for belief in God from practical considerations. Instead, the proponents of the argument intended to prove that God's existence can be inferred from the natural tendency of human beings to believe in Him.

Theistic arguments for the existence of God in the Islamic tradition which can be categorized under the above mentioned categories and any arguments that might fall outside such categories are numerous. Most of them, however, are variations of a specific theistic argument.

There is another type of argument found in Islamic tradition that argues for a practical reason to believe in God. The argument is not usually given in Islamic philosophy and theology as proof for the existence of God but rather as a reason for why one should take up the task of intellectual examination of both the issue of the existence of God and identifying the 'true' religion sent by God. A similar argument was given by Blaise Pascal in the seventeenth century. The argument has been recorded in the tenth century (4th Century A.H.) Shī`ah narrative collection *al-Kāfī*. The first instance where the argument is mentioned is a conversation between the sixth Imām of the Shī`ah, Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Ṣādiq (80A.H./701C.E.-148A.H./765C.E.) and an atheist by the name of Ibn Abil `Ūjā'. The entire text of the exchange is lengthy and hence only the part regarding the practical reason for a belief in God will be mentioned. The text is as follows and is said to be the words of Ja`far al-Ṣādiq:

> If what these [people] state is the case and it [i.e., the case] is as they state–referring to the circumambulators [of the Ka`bah]–then, they will be saved [from damnation] and

[22]There have been a number of philosophers and theologians who have attempted to interpret Qur'ānic verses in a way that includes the Demonstration from Natural Tendency with immeasurable love as its premise. This approach usually requires attaching meanings that are not contained within the Qur'ānic verses or found among any narrative texts that interpret those verses.

> you will be ruined [in the afterlife]. However, if what you state is the case and it [i.e., the case] is not as you state then you and they are equal.[23]

Further into the same conversation Ja`far al-Ṣādiq is said to have said the following:

> If the matter is as you say and it is not as you say, both you and we have acquired salvation. If [however] the matter is as we say and it is as we say [then], we are saved and you are ruined [in the afterlife].[24]

In another conversation attributed to the eighth Imām of the Shī`ah Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (148A.H./765C.E.-203A.H./818C.E.) the following argument is put forward:

> Tell me, if your opinion is correct–even though it is not correct–are we and you not the same having earned the same benefit? We receive no harm from our prayers, abstinence [*sawm*], giving of alms and faith…However, if our opinion is correct– and it is correct–then, you are ruined and we are saved (in the afterlife).[25]

Unlike Pascal's Wager, the argument does not require the opponent of a theist to give up reasoning and wager his belief. The argument is given in all three cases as a prelude to a discussion for the existence of God. As a result, Islamic philosophers and theologians have usually presented the argument as indicating good reasons for why one should seek out religious studies. The reason for such an endeavour, as they see it, is for discovering if there is any truth in the threat of eternal damnation contained in some or all of them. The argument is not usually presented as a theistic argument proving the existence of God but as a reason for not dismissing His existence until further information is acquired.

Theistic arguments reasoning from the premises that there is motion and inferring the existence of an unmoved mover have also been frequently mentioned in earlier works of Muslim philosophers. Arguments from motion were usually either a reiteration of the Greek arguments or with slight modifications. These arguments were mostly rejected from

[23]Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 75.

[24]Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 78.

[25]Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 78. Abstinence refers to the Muslim practice of abstaining from food, water and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramaḍān.

early on as not proving the existence of God.[26] It was rightly noted by many Muslim philosophers, that if the argument is successful it only proves that there exists an unmoved mover. It does not show whether the unmoved mover is a Necessary Being, has the attribute of unicity and is unique or that it is not some kind of a body. Furthermore, it only proves a cause for a thing's motion but not its existence.[27] However, motion has been used in Islamic theological and philosophical discussions to prove that the world is changing and is therefore not eternal. Hence, according to such arguments, a world which is not eternal must have had an originator at some point. Further premises are then added to the conclusion that the world is originated to construct an argument for the existence of God.

Discourses on miracles or the incorporeality of the intellect are common in most Islamic philosophical and theological works. However, these discussions do not use arguments from miracles or incorporeality of the intellect as proof for the existence of God. Miracles such as the inimitability of the Qur'an or dividing of the sea by Moses have been put forwarded by Muslim theologians and philosophers as evidence for the appointment of an individual as an agent (for example, a prophet or messenger) from God. Accepting that an extraordinary event is caused by a God requires many previously accepted beliefs such as the existence of God, the uniqueness and unicity of God, certain attributes of God and beliefs related to God's providence and involvement in the world. In cases where extraordinary events are proposed as claim to prophethood, having the belief that God appoints agents as guides for humanity and the basis on which such a belief is formed are also prerequisites for accepting that the said events are miracles from God. Without such presumptions, an extraordinary event is only an unexplained phenomenon.

There were certainly disagreements between those who followed the 'Ash`arī theology and the adherent of the Tashayyu and Mu`tazilah regarding the Qur`ān as the 'word' of God. In Islamic theology, God is said to be *Mutikallim* (one who speaks). Both the Qur'an and the instances of God speaking to Moses are referred to as examples of God speaking. The subject of contention between the different theological schools was whether the attribute of being a *Mutikallim* is an essential or a practical attribute. Essential (*dhātī*) attributes of God are those that the intellect does not need to conceptualise anything else

[26]Apparently with the exception of Ibn Rushd who regarded it as the only argument that reasonably proves the existence of God.

[27]For example see: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 194-195, Book 6, Chapter 1.

but the concept of God to abstract it as an attribute of God. Omnipotence is an example of an essential attribute of God. Practical (*fi`lī*) attributes are those that the intellect needs to conceptualise something other than the concept of God (i.e., any entity created by God) to abstract it as an attribute of God. For example, in the sentence: "God is a creator", the attribute of creator is a practical attribute. In other words, essential attributes of God are those attributes that one does not need to consider anything but God to understand it as an attribute of God. Practical attributes of God are those attributes of God that indicates some kind of a causal relationship between God and his creation.[28] Furthermore, an essential attribute can never be separated from the concept of God. For example, it can never be said that God is not omniscient or was not omniscient. A practical attribute of God, on the other hand, can be denied of God in certain discussions. For example, in Islamic theology, one of the practical attributes of God is that He is *Murīd* (the one who wills). It could be said that God did not 'will' (*irādah*) the Nile to be parted before the time of Moses. Another practical attribute is that God is a Creator (*Khāliq*). God cannot be said to be a creator before He has created. However, God is essentially capable of creating and willing, so He has the essential attributes of creatorness and capability to will.

The ʾAsharī theologians assert that the word of God is eternal alongside the essence of God. The Shī`ah and the Mu`tazilah believed that the attribute of being a *Mutikallim* is a practical attribute of God and though God is never without the ability to speak to His creatures, the word of God such as the Qur'ān or the voice heard by Moses can only be spoken if there is a creature to hear it. Furthermore, the Qur'ān and the voice heard by Moses are not one with God but a creation of God, since they did not exist and then began to exist.[29] Despite their differences, neither one of the theological schools constructed an argument for the existence of God based on the miraculousness of the Qur'an.

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[28]This causal relationship is not an independent reality to God and his creation. For example, creating is not an independent reality to God and things created by him. It only indicates that God has created everything other than himself. Ash`arī theology, however, does consider God's attributes as being a reality other than God and His creation.

[29]The arguments of the Shī`ah and the Mu`tazilah use both the definition of the term 'word' and the impossibility of something created to be 'part' of the essence of God as evidence for their claim. The analysis of this disagreement would be an interesting task but unrelated to the main subject of this study and will therefore not be discussed here. The voice heard by Moses, according to the Shī`ah and the Mu`tazilah, is said to be created and not the actual voice of God. This is because if God is said to have an actual voice like that of a human being or a similar creature it would require Him to be limited to using anthropomorphic tools to produce that voice. Hence, Moses heard the words of God through a created voice.

The incorporeality of the intellect or knowledge has always been used by Muslim philosophers to infer in particular the metaphysical status of the mind and the human soul and in general the existence of metaphysical entities.

Based on what we have discussed in this chapter the categorization of the various theistic arguments in the Islamic tradition can be illustrated in the following way:

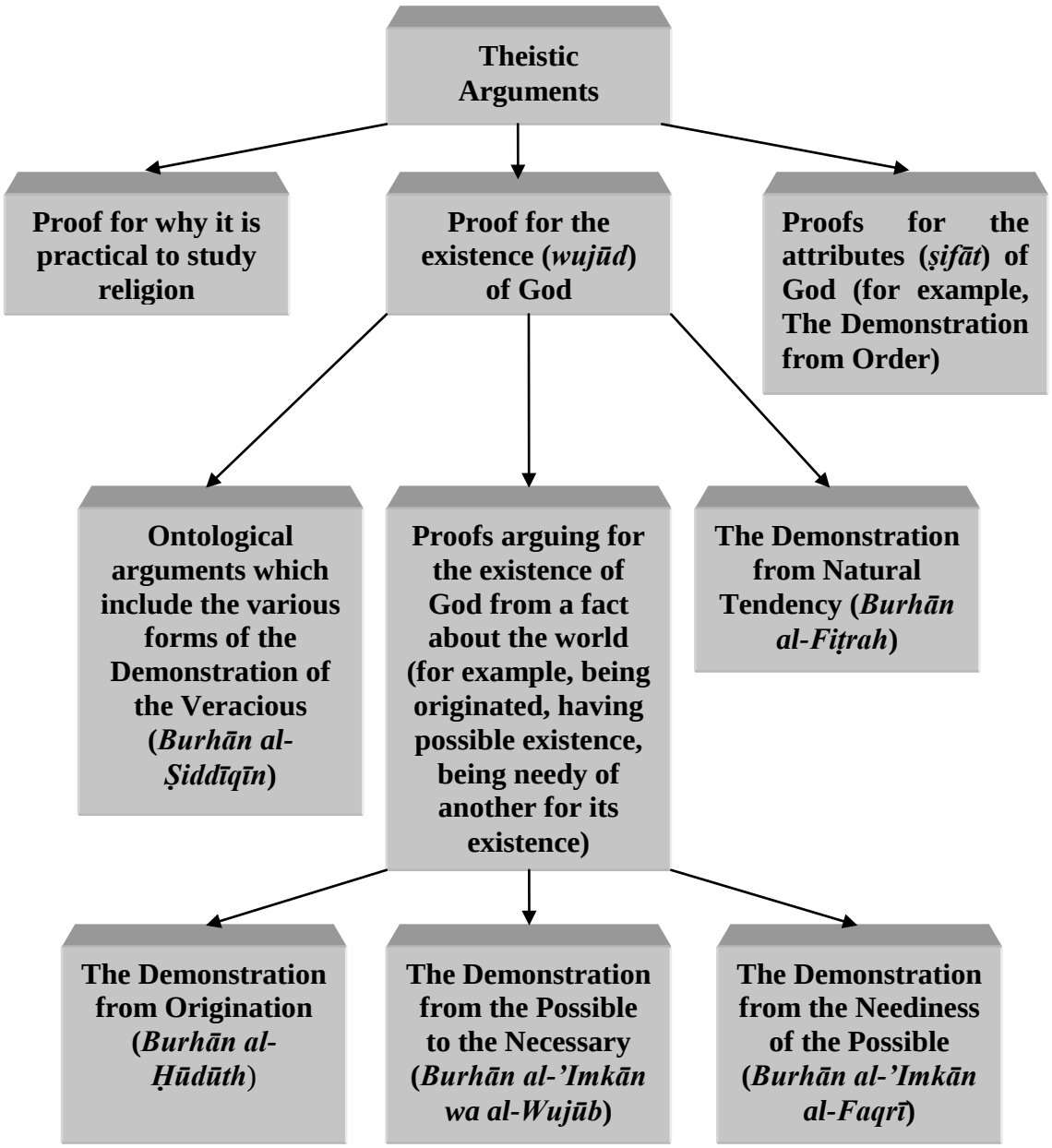

Figure 1. Showing the categorization of theistic arguments in the Islamic tradition.

3 The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary

The argument popularly known as *Burhān al-'Imkān wa al-Wujūb* (literally: the Demonstration of the Possible and the Necessary), titled here as 'The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary', is one of the oldest theistic proofs given in Islamic theology and philosophy for proving the existence of God. The earliest account of a theistic argument categorizing existence into possible (*al-mumkin*) and necessary (*al-wājib*) and analyzing their relationship to each other is in the work *al-Yāqūt* by the Shī`ah theologian Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Nawbakht who lived in the ninth to around the first half of the tenth century (c. 3rd-4th Century A.H.).[1] The argument found its way into the Latin West, most popularly in the work of Thomas Aquinas through the works of Ibn Sīnā. In the West it was more popularly known as the Argument from Contingency to Necessity. It was also influential on the theistic arguments given by many prominent figures in modern European philosophy, namely, René Descartes (1596C.E.–1650C.E.) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646C.E.–1716C.E.).[2] The two main principles of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary, namely, the division of beings into necessary, possible and impossible and the essence-existence distinction also underlie Baruch Spinoza's (1632C.E.–1677C.E.) philosophical views in the *Ethics*. In part one of the *Ethics* titled 'Concerning God', Spinoza's indebtedness to Ibn Sīnā's discussions is clear.[3] The argument's influence in

[1]Jamāl al-Dīn al-Hillī, *'Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, ed. Alī Akbar Ḍīyāī (Tehran: Al-Hoda, 2007), 102-107, Aim 4, Discourses 5, 6 and 7, 157-159, Aim 6, Discourses 1, 2 and 3; Sayyid `Amīd al-Dīn al-`Ubaydilī, *Ishrāq al-Lāhūt fī Naqd Sharh al-Yāqūt*, ed. Alī Akbar Ḍīyāī (Tehran: Miras-e Maktub, 2002), 168-189, Aim 4, Discourses 5, 6 and 7, 291-297, Aim 6, Discourses 1, 2 and 3.

[2]Herbert A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 388-406.

[3]See: Benedictus De Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Andrew Boyle (England: J.M. Dent & Sons, n.d.), 1-36. Also see: Spinoza, *Ethics*, 38, Axiom I.

Twentieth Century Western philosophy can be seen in Barry Miller's book *From Existence to God* which is a recent representative of the argument.[4]

In this chapter the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary, its underlying principles and some of the objections raised against it will be analysed. It will be shown that the objections raised, whether by mediaeval Sunnī Islamic theologians, mediaeval European philosophers or in twentieth and twenty first century Western philosophy, are rooted in misunderstandings or unfamiliarity with the principles and procedures used in the argument.

The version of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary presented here is the one given by Ibn Sīnā with later improvements made to it by philosophers and theologians who came after him. The argument in one version or another seems to have been most popular and still is today among Shī`ah theologians and philosophers. The reason for using the version presented by Ibn Sīnā and the thinkers who came after him is that unlike some of the previous theological and philosophical renderings of the argument, these thinkers managed to construct the argument in a way that comprehensively explained some of the principles that the argument is constructed upon.

Ibn Sīnā presents the Demonstration from the Contingent to the Necessary in a comprehensive manner in *al-Shifā*, *Ishārāt*, *Al-Mabda wa al-Ma`ād* and *al-Najāt*.[5] He also presents it in the metaphysics section of his Persian work titled *Dāneshnāmeh `Alā'ī*. There are also a number of other works attributed to Ibn Sīnā which include the argument in one form or another.[6] Among other theologians and philosophers who came after Ibn Sīnā and

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[4]Barry Miller, *From Existence to God* (New York: Routledge, 1992). It is rather strange that Miller does not trace the origin of his argument in any way to Ibn Sīnā and has presented it as an entirely new theistic argument. The argument really corresponds exactly to Ibn Sīnā's Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary presented, in regards to only a few issues, in modern Western philosophical terminology.

[5]A*l-Najāt* is a summary of discussions that Ibn Sīnā selected from *al-Shifā*. Although *al-Najāt* can be considered as an important work on its own, many writers have limited themselves to this work rather than the more comprehensive *al-Shifā* when analyzing the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. This has led them to overlook the arguments given by Ibn Sīnā in the latter work, some of which constitute the reasoning that can be considered as forming the foundation upon which the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary is constructed.

[6]For one such work attributed to Ibn Sīnā see: Ibn Sīnā, *Resālah dar Ḥaqīqat wa Kayfīat-e Selseleye Mawjūdāt wa Tasalsol Asbāb wa Mosabbabāt*, ed. Mūsā `Amīd (Hamadan: Bu-Ali Sina University, 2004).

used the argument is the prominent figure Khāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī who gives the theistic argument for the existence of God in his *Tajrīd al-Kalām*, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, a response to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and two treatises, one dedicated to proofs for the existence of God and the other a response to his opponents regarding various different philosophical problems.[7] *Tajrīd* deals with a number of issues surrounding the underlying principles of the argument and the discussions that in one way or another are related to those principles. One of Ṭūsī's students, the Shī`ah theologian by the name of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d.726A.H./1325C.E.) wrote a commentary on *Tajrīd* called *Kashf al-Murād*, which aims to explain in more detail issues discussed in *Tajrīd*. Al-Ḥillī also gives the argument in one of his own works.[8] This study will draw upon all these works for its presentation of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. It will make use of any other works where it is needed.

Definition of the terms 'existence', 'thing' and 'necessity'

In both *al-Shifā* and *Ishārāt*, the argument is given in the section on metaphysics (*Ilāhīyāt*). Ibn Sīnā, considered the enquiry into the existence of God as a metaphysical one rather than a subject in physics. Hence, Ibn Sīnā unlike Aristotle attempts to give a metaphysical argument and not a physical one for the existence of God. In chapter (*faṣl*) five of the section on metaphysics in *al-Shifā*, Ibn Sīnā begins to establish the principles that he needs for constructing his version of the Demonstration from the Contingent to the Necessary. After completing his discussion on the subject of metaphysics, Ibn Sīnā claims that the meanings of 'existent' (*al-mawjūd*), 'thing' (*al-shay`*) and 'necessity' (*al-ḍarūrī*) are among the first concepts known by a person.[9] An individual, according to Ibn Sīnā, has

[7]Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād: Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I`tiqād*, ed. and trans. Abul Hasan Sha`rānī (Tehran: Islāmīyah, 1383H.S.), 389; Al-Kāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Tilkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā, 1985), 245-246, Element 3, Part 1; Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī, "Treatise on the Proof of a Necessary [Being]," in *The Metaphysics of Tusi*, trans. Parviz Morewedge(New York/Tehran: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1992), 3-4; Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, "Treatise on the Division of Existents," in *The Metaphysics of Tusi*, trans. Parviz Morewedge(New York/Tehran: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1992), 35-36.

[8]Jamāl al-Dīn al-Hillī, *Tarjome wa Sharḥ Bāb Hādī `Ashar*, trans. Ali Shirwani (Qom: Dār al-Fikr, 1385H.S.), 25-31. (Arabic text with Persian translation)

[9]Literally, 'the existent', 'the thing' and 'the necessary'. The definite article '*al-*' in Arabic is not always used in the same way as definite article 'the' is used in English. I have left out 'the' for

knowledge regarding them without needing any other concepts in order to clarify their meaning. If a person does not already know the meaning of the existent, the thing and the necessary, then, it is impossible for a person to know their meaning through other concepts. This is especially the case about the meaning of 'existent' and 'thing' because their meanings are common to all and therefore the most basic and clear. Defining the concepts of existent and thing through other concepts would only lead to circularity because it would assume having knowledge of the meanings of existent and thing.[10]

Take, for example, the concept of 'existent' defined in the following manner: "It is in the nature of the existent to be either active or be acted on." Ibn Sīnā argues that though it is the case that existents can be divided into active and passive, such a division nevertheless belongs to the existent and therefore assumes the meaning of existence in its definition.[11] Moreover, most people know the meaning of existent better than the meanings of active and passive. Similarly, defining 'thing', as 'that about which it is valid [to give] an informative statement' is circular and does not lead to knowledge of 'thing', since 'is valid' and 'informative statement' is not known as well as 'thing'.[12] 'is valid' and 'informative statement' can only be defined by using the term 'thing' or what is synonymous with it such as 'whatever' or 'that which' and other similar terms.[13]

Hence, when informing a person of the expressions used to indicate 'existent', 'thing' and 'necessity' or defining the meaning of these concepts through other less known concepts, it is not knowledge which is imparted to that person, but rather, it is the act of drawing the attention of that person to what he already knows.[14]

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what I believe is a better representation of Ibn Sīnā's usage of the term. However, where needed, I have used the definite article. *Al-mawjūd* can also be translated as 'the being'.

[10]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing: A parallel English-Arabic text*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 22-23, Book 1, Chapter 5; Ibn Sīnā. *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh `Alāyī*, ed. Mohammad Mo`īn (Hamadan: Bu-Ali Sina University, 2004), 8-9, Chapter 3; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt: Ma`a Sharḥ al-Khāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī wa al-Muḥākimāt l-Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, ed. Karīm Fayḍī (Qom: Matbū`āt Dīnī, 1383H.S.), vol.3, 7-14, Method 4, Metaphysics (*Ilāhīyāt*).

[11]That is to say, only that which exists can be divided into active and passive and therefore the meaning of the term 'existent' is more general and encompasses the meaning of 'active' and 'passive'.

[12]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 23, Book 1, Chapter 5.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., 22.

The notion that existence is the most primary element that a person knows is central to Islamic philosophy, especially post-Ibn Sīnian Islamic philosophy. Even animals and newborn babies are said to know the difference between existence and lack of existence.[15] In general, existence or the existent is said to be the subject of the 'First Philosophy' (i.e., metaphysics). The discussion surrounding the meaning of existence is especially important for arguments that rely on the different categories of existent entities, such as the current discussion on the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary.

Hence, many Muslim philosophers and theologians have claimed that the meaning of existence cannot be defined. In cases where a definition is given for existence or the existent, the defining term does not have the role of imparting knowledge of the meaning of existence, since that is already known, rather, it is a description (*ta`rīf*) of a term. A distinction is made between defining the meaning of a term which is for the purpose of making known something which was previously unknown and a lexical explanation which serves only to associate that term with a meaning already known.[16] The former kind of definition is similar to when a box is defined for someone like a child who does not know what a box is. The latter kind of definition (i.e., a lexical explanation) is when a term is explained using another term either synonymous or with a meaning very close to it. In the case of existence, for example, it might be defined as, "That which is and which is such that it is not the case that it is not." Such a definition is the same as saying, "That which exists and which is such that it is not the case that it does not exist." Even the second part of the definition (i.e., "which is such that it is not the case that it does not exist") assumes the meaning of existence, since without knowing the meaning of existence there is no way to understand what lack of it means.[17]

Mullā Ṣadrā (c.979A.H./1571C.E.- 1050A.H./1640C.E.), following in the footsteps of Muslim philosophers preceding him, also believed that the concept of existence cannot be defined. He gives two reasons for why existence cannot be defined. First, for Mullā Ṣadrā,

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[15]For example, an animal knows when there is food and when there is not any food or when there is a predator or when there is no predator. A baby knows when there is milk (i.e., milk is existent) and when there is not any milk and so forth.

[16]Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 2; Hādī ibn Mahdī Sabzavārī, The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 31.

[17]Other definition could include, for example, 'having objective reality'. But this too only means to have existence outside of the mind. Having reality is synonymous to existing.

defining terms are either definitions (*ḥadd*) or descriptions (*rasm*).[18] For a definition, a genus and a proximate specific difference are needed.[19] A description, however, is obtainable only through the presence of at least one accidental property. Existence has neither a genus nor a specific difference nor does it have accidental properties.[20] Therefore, existence cannot be defined.

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[18]For Ibn Sīnā's distinction between definition and description see: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhā*, vol.1, 175-194, Method 2, Logic (*Mantiq*). For the English translation of the distinction refer to: Shams Innati, trans., *Ibn Sīnā Remarks and admonitions: part one: logic* (Toronto: Pontifical Institue of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 70-76. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d.726A.H./ 1326C.E.), better known as Allāmah al-Hillī, in his *Al-Jawhar Al-Naḍīd* defines *ḥadd* in the following manner:

> *Ḥadd* can be categorized into two kinds; one on the basis of names, the other on the basis of essence. The first kind is that which describes and explains a thing and is consisted of 'existence' and 'non-existence'. The second kind is a statement which is for conceptualizing a thing in itself and comes after that thing exists. If it consists of all the properties of a thing from among its genus and specific difference, it is a complete definition (*ḥadd al-tām*), for example when we say, 'A human being is a rational animal.' If it is missing some of that which distinguishes a thing, it is an incomplete definition (*ḥadd al-nāqiṣ*), for example when we say, 'A human being is a rational body.' Moreover, if all material parts are mentioned but the parts relating to the figure are not properly described, it is an incomplete definition (*ḥadd al-nāqiṣ*), for example when we say, 'Human being is an animal rational.'

He also defines *rasm* in the following manner:

> *Rasm* is a description that is for the purpose of distinguishing one thing from other things. If it distinguishes a thing completely from other things that are contrary to it then it is a complete description (*rasm al-tām*), for example, when we say, 'A human being is a being who laughs' [given that laughter is unique to human beings]. However if it distinguishes it [i.e., the thing] from only some of the things that are contrary to it, then it is an incomplete description (*rasm al-nāqiṣ*), for example, when we say, 'A human being is a creature capable of walking'. They say that a complete description (*rasm*) is one that includes both essential as well as accidental properties whereas an incomplete description (*rasm*) is one that includes only accidental properties.

For both definitions see: Al-Hillī, *Al-Jawhar Al-Naḍīd*, ed. Muhsin Bidarfar (Qom: Enteshārāt Bīdār, 1413A.H.), 221-222 and 228-229.

[19]Ibn Sīnā also alludes to this point in: *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 27, Book 1, Chapter 5.

[20]Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *Ḥikmat al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-`Aqlīyah al-Arba`ah* (Qom: Maktabah al-Muṣtafawī, 1368H.S.), vol.1, 25, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 1; Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra (Kitāb al-Mashā`ir*), trans. Parviz Morewedge (Tehran/New York: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1992), 7, First Prehension; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 31. In Sabzavārī's text, he states that accidental properties are part of the five universals, the division of which is based on the thingness of essence. I have not included this part of his argument for the sake of brevity. The five universals are: Genus, specific difference, species,

Second, the meaning of the defining term must be more immediately known and clearer than what is defined. There is, however, nothing clearer than existence and therefore existence cannot be defined.[21]

Ibn Sīnā also goes on to argue against the definitions that have reached him from Hellenistic philosophers for the concepts of 'the necessary' (*al-wājib*), 'the possible' (*al-mumkin*) and 'the impossible' (*al-mumtani`*), saying that their definitions entail circularity.[22] When defining each of these terms the Hellenistic philosophers would use either one of the other two terms or their meaning. For example, they defined 'the possible' by using the concepts of 'necessity' (*al-ḍarūrī*) and impossibility (*al-mahāl*) as that which is not necessary or that which is currently non-existent but existence for it in the future is not impossible.[23] 'The necessary' was defined as that which it is not possible for it not to

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proprium, and common accident which, for example, correspond to: Animal, rational, man, laughing and walking. The translation of the five universals and the examples are given in: Ibid. p.219, note 3.

[21]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 7; Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Asfār, vol.1, 25-26; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 31.

[22]Ibn Sīnā uses the term 'the Ancients' to refer to Hellenistic philosophers. Ibn Sīnā distinguishes between two different usages of 'possibility'. First, there is the meaning of possibility as that which accompanies the negation of the necessity of non-existence. Hence, in this sense that which is not possible is impossible. This way of using the expression 'possible' can be applied to the necessary in existence as well as the possible in existence. However, Ibn Sīnā claims that possibility in the 'proper' usage means the negation of both the necessity of non-existence and the necessity of existence for a subject. This second usage of the term cannot be applied to the necessary existent. See: Inati, *Remarks and admonitions*, 95-97; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.1, 237-243, Method 4, Logic. When Ibn Sīnā uses the term 'possible' he has its 'proper' usage in mind. It is important to note that Ibn Sīnā's definition of possible existence is not the same as Aristotle's diachronic definition of contingency. This point will become clear in the discussions that will follow below. Put succinctly, according to Ibn Sīnā the essence of something which has possible existence is indifferent to existence and non-existence and can both exist and not exist.

[23]Both *wājib* and *ḍarūrī* in the sense used here mean necessary. Shams C. Inati in the footnote of her translation of the logic part of *Ishārāt, Remarks and admonition*, page 91, footnote 4, makes the following distinction:

> *Wājiba*. This is to be distinguished from "*ḍarūriyyah*" (necessary). The former refers to the necessary in existence while the latter refers to the necessary in general, whether in existence or in non-existence (the impossible). In other words, both the necessary in existence and the impossible are particular cases of *ḍarūriyyah*.

Inati refers the reader to Ibn Sīnā's *al-Najāt* for her distinction. The point Inati is trying to make is that *ḍarūrī* can be applied to both existence and non-existence, for example, in saying that existence is necessary for the necessary existence while non-existence is necessary for the impossible. Wājib on the other hand, according to Inati, is not used in that

exist or that which is impossible to suppose as anything other than it is. Again, when defining 'the impossible', as far as Ibn Sīnā was aware, the Hellenistic philosophers would use the term necessary and possible. For example, the 'impossible' was defined as that which non-existence is necessary for it or that which existence is not possible for it.[24]

Of the three concepts of 'the necessary', 'the possible' and 'the impossible' it is the concept of 'necessary' which is conceived first because, as Ibn Sīnā explains, "'the necessary' (*al-wājib*) point to the assuredness of existence (*al-wujūd*), existence being better known than non-existence. [This is] because existence is known through itself, whereas non-existence is, in some respect or another, known through existence."[25] The

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way. Although in *al-Najāt* Ibn Sīnā does make several different distinctions between the different usages of the term *ḍarūrī* (necessary), including the one mentioned by Inati, nevertheless, he does not seem to make such a distinction between the words *wājib* and *ḍarūrī*. See: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, ed. Mohammad Taqī Dānesh Pezhūh (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1379H.S.), 34-37, Part 1, Logic. It seems to be the case that Muslim philosophers and theologians have generally used *ḍarūrī* in the broader sense mentioned by Inati. But this is only a kind of technical usage. There is no reason why *wājib* cannot be used in the same way. In either case, it is only after the word existence or a context that indicates existence is attached to *wājib* that the word can be used to refer to 'necessary in existence', such as for example, *wājib al-wujūd* (necessary existence). I have translated both words with the word 'necessary' or 'necessity' depending on the context.

[24]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 27-28, Book 1, Chapter 5.

[25]Ibid, 28. I have kept the Marmura's translation here. However, I would have used 'emphasis 2of existence' which, in my opinion, corresponds better to *ta`kid al-wujūd*, rather than 'assuredness of existence'. Herbert A. Davidson in his work titled *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, 290, states:

> Nevertheless, although primary concepts are not explicable by anything wider and better known, and are consequently inaccessible to true definitions, there is, Avicenna understands, a way of presenting them to the man who for some reason does not have them imprinted in his soul. One may "direct attention" to the primary notions and "call them to mind" through a term or an indication." On that basis, Avicenna ventures an explication of *necessary*: "It signifies certainty of existence".

Davidson refers the reader to the metaphysics section of *al-Shifā*. Davidson seems to have misunderstood Ibn Sīnā. Ibn Sīnā never admits to the possibility that what constitutes primary knowledge could not be impressed on the soul. In fact, he believes knowledge of such concepts is present in a person's *gharīzah*, which literally means 'instinct' but probably is referring to the natural ability to know such concepts. It would be counterproductive to his entire argument that such concepts cannot be defined with less clear concepts if Ibn Sīnā were to define 'the necessary' with the definition: "It signifies certainty of existence". In such a definition, the concept 'it' either refers to an existent or an essence (thing) and the other concepts such as 'signify' would be regarded by Ibn Sīnā as being less clear than necessary. What Ibn Sīnā means by drawing a person's attention to what she already knows is not as Davidson has assumed. Rather, he is referring to the act of drawing a person's attention to what she already knows. In either case, I did not find the definition attributed to Ibn Sīnā in the Arabic text of the *al-Shifā*. What I did find in the text was

concept of 'non-existence' is only a meaning that occurs in the mind without a reference to anything outside of the mind.[26]

Ibn Sīnā is making the point that what is first conceived or known is pure existence, that is, existence *qua* existence.[27] When considering the meaning of existence on its own it cannot be but necessary, for it is contradictory to say that it is possible for existence not to be existence or that it is impossible for existence to be existence. Hence, the concept of 'the necessary' is a concomitant of the concept of 'existence'. Only after conceptualizing the meaning of existence and its concomitant 'the necessary' can a person assess whether it is possible or impossible for another concept in his mind to have actual existence outside of his mind. By knowing the meaning of existence a person can know that it is possible or impossible for what is in the mind to exist outside of the mind.

Ibn Sīnā, in his discussion on the meaning of existence raises an important question. To what if anything does the concept of 'non-existence' refer to? More importantly, how can one make judgments regarding non-existent things? Khawjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī takes up the discussion surrounding this debate in *Tajrīd al-Kalām*. The entire discussion is not necessary for the purposes of this study and a few points will suffice. The mind can conceptualize 'nothing' in the sense that it has nothing corresponding to it outside of the mind. It can also conceptualize the combination of contradictory concepts even though it is impossible for such a combination to exist outside of the mind. In reality, the mind can conceptualize anything, even its own non-existence. It can also conceptualize the non-existence of non-existence by bringing a concept into the mind and calling it 'non-existence' and then imagining its non-existence. Hence, there needs to be a distinction made between that which is fixed in the mind and that which is contradictory to existence. In this sense, 'non-existence' is existent inasmuch as it exists as a concept in the mind (i.e., intensionally) but it is non-existence when one considers its existence outside of the mind

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what I have quoted above. In that quote Ibn Sīnā is not attempting to give a definition of necessary nor is he admitting that primary concepts are not impressed on the soul.

[26]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 26, Book 1, Chapter 5.

[27]For this claim refer to *al-Shifā*: Ibid., 6-11, Book 1, Chapters 1 and 2. There he discusses the subject of metaphysics and concludes that it is existence *qua* existence (or existent inasmuch it is existent) which is the subject-matter of existence. Also refer to the same work, page 194, Book 6, Chapter 1. Also refer to: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 79, at the end of Method 4, Metaphysics.

(i.e., 'non-existence' is non-existence and refers to nothing when considered in relation to what is outside of the mind).[28]

'Non-existence', in so far as it is a concept in the mind, can be conceptualized and judgment can be made regarding that concept. Similarly, impossibilities can be conceptualized in the mind and judgements can be made regarding their actual existence outside of the mind (i.e., it is impossible for them to have actual existence outside of the mind). However, true non-existence is simply nothing and being nothing it can never be brought into the mind.

Distinction between mental existence and actual existence

In general, when discussing knowledge and cognition, Muslim philosophers make a distinction between two different kinds of existences, the mental existence (*wujūd al-dhihnī*) or conceptual existence and the actual existence (*wujūd al-khārijī*).[29] Essences (*māhīyah*) of things that have objective reality are known by having a mental existence in the mind of the knower.[30] The mental existence of the essence corresponds to or is identical with the essence in actual existence. Put another way, a thing's essence can have either a mental existence or an actual existence.[31] Concepts, however, can be constructed

[28]Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 62-64, 72; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 84-86. For a similar discussion given by Ibn Sīnā see: *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 25-26, Book 1, Chapter 5.

[29]Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 8-10. Sometimes the term *wujūd al-`Ilmī* (cognitive existence) is also used to refer to mental existence.

[30]Here, the term *māhīyah* has been translated as 'essence' mainly in order to agree with the translation of the term in many English philosophical writings on Ibn Sīnā. *Māhīyah* should really be translated as 'quiddity' while *dhāt* can be translated as 'essence'. The two terms are mostly used in the same way in Islamic philosophical works. There is a distinction made in the tradition between quiddity as having a particular meaning (*māhīyah bi al-ma`nā al-khāṣṣ*), referring to the answer given to the question 'what is it?', and quiddity as having a general meaning (*māhīyah bi al-ma`nā al-āmm*) referring to that by which a thing is what it is. But this distinction is not related to the current subject of enquiry. Recent translations and works on Ibn Sīnā translate *māhīyah* as 'quiddity'. However, I saw no need to complicate the current study by using two different translations.

[31]For a discussion in this regard and related issues refer to: Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 56-69. The mind has actual existence. Hence, in one sense, essences can either have actual existence or actual existence as concepts in the mind.

by the mind and therefore have mental existence but not correspond with anything in reality.[32]

'Ash`arī theologians like Fakhr al-Dīn Muhammad ibn `Umar al-Rāzī rejected the idea of mental existence and considered knowledge as a relation between the mind and its object without the object having any kind of existence in the mind. Hence, those Muslim philosophers and theologians who accepted the idea of mental existence gave several proofs for why such a distinction should be made. One such proof argues that actual existence produces a different kind of an effect to that of a mental existence. For example, the actual existence of fire causes heat and burns whereas the mental existence of fire does not produce such effects. Similarly, the mental existence of fire could cause such effects as fear, caution and so forth, but its actual existence does not cause such things.[33] Hence, the nature of their existence must be different but nevertheless both exist.[34]

A second proof claims that it is possible to make affirmative judgments in regards to what does not exist outside of the mind. For example, it is affirmed that the coexistence of contradictories is different from the coexistence of the contraries. Judgements such as this, known in Islamic philosophy and logic as factual propositions, could only be made if the two had some kind of existence. That existence is the mental existence of those two things.[35]

A third proof states there are things that exist outside of the mind with volume, quantity and so forth, but that same thing exists in the mind without volume, quantity and other such properties. For example, a box outside of the mind has a certain volume. The concept of

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[32]This depends on the view of the particular Muslim philosophers. Some philosophers like Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (c.979A.H./1571C.E.- 1050A.H./1640C.E.), known more famously as Mullā Ṣadrā, and those who are from his school of thought, are of the opinion that there is a world or realm of concepts (*`Ālam al-Taṣawwurāt* or *`Ālam al-Ṣuwar* or *`Ālam al-Mafāhīm*). Concepts that do not correspond with the reality outside of the mind correspond with the objects of that world. Mullā Ṣadrā's opinion was not merely a belief in platonic forms.

[33]Though the existence of fire may indirectly cause fear and caution in a person, it is only when the mind conceives of fire that these effects arise. This can be established by the fact that a person could hold a certain belief about fire, for example, that his house is on fire, and therefore have the mental existence of fire and its accompanying effects of fear and caution, when that belief does not in fact correspond with reality (i.e., his house is not actually on fire). Therefore, the cause of fear and caution is the mental existence of fire not its actual existence. In either case, the mental existence does not cause heat and burn.

[34]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī,* 31, 54.

[35]Ibid., 54; Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād,* 8.

the box in the mind does not have that volume. Then, what exists in the mind is not the same as what exists outside of the mind. It does, however, have existence and that existence must therefore be a mental existence.[36]

A fourth proof argues that it is possible to abstract universal and general concepts from things by eliminating their distinguishing factors. Such concepts can be referred to and distinguished from one another. Something which can be referred to and distinguished from other things must be existent. Universal and general concepts, therefore, have existence. Universal and general concepts cannot exist outside of the mind because whatever exists outside of the mind is individual and particular. The nature of their existence must therefore be a mental existence.[37]

Fifth, a pure reality can be imagined without having any multiplicity. That is, universal and general concepts can be abstracted from and apply to multiple objects in the actual world. A concept, on the other hand, can be imagined without any relation to what is outside of the mind. For example, whiteness can be imagined without any association with what is white outside of the mind. Since such concepts do not correspond with anything outside of the mind, they must therefore exist in the mind.[38]

In accordance to the distinction made between mental and actual existence, Muslim philosophers and theologians have said that propositions can be one of the three different general categories. One kind of proposition is that which is in regards to what is only in the mind. This proposition is known as a 'mental proposition' (*al-qaḍīyah al-dhihnīyah*). For example, when talking about the human being, it might be said that "animal is the genus of the human being". Outside of the mind, human beings are not a genus and such a proposition can only be made in regards to the property of being a human in the mind. On the other hand, when it is said that: "All the trees in New York city shed their leaves in winter," such a proposition is only about what is outside of the mind.[39] This proposition is known as a 'proposition about the actual world' (*al-qaḍīyah khārijīyah*, literally: actual

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[36] Alī Karajī, *Eṣṭelāhāt-e Falsafī Wa Tafāwot-e Ānhā bā Yekdīgar* (Qom: Markaz Enteshārāt, 1375H.S.), 258-259.

[37] Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 54-55.

[38] Ibid., 55. This proof applies only if it is accepted that such concepts do not correspond with anything outside of the mind.

[39] That is to say, the statement gives information about what is outside of the mind while the concepts that constitute the meaning of the statement exist in the mind.

proposition). A third kind of proposition is of the kind which is neither absolutely about what is outside of the mind nor absolutely about what is in the mind. Rather, it is about both. For example, the statement, "Angles of a triangle equal one hundred and eighty degrees," is true whether that triangle is in the mind or in reality. Such propositions are known as factual propositions (*al-qaḍīyah al-ḥaqīqīyah*).[40]

Returning to the point raised by Ibn Sīnā, the mind's understanding of 'non-existence' ultimately relies on existence and knowing the meaning of existence. Only after considering the concept of existence and its concomitant 'the necessary' can a person conceptualize the meanings that are contradictory to it, such as non-existence in terms of existence and possibility and impossibility in terms of necessity. In terms of non-existent things, it is the case that a person has conceptualized the thingness of something that is non-existent in the actual world. This thingness is referred to by the term 'essence'. A person can conceptualize many such essences and compare them together or just analyse the essence of a thing in itself.[41]

Distinction between essence and existence

Ibn Sīnā makes the important distinction between essence (*māhīyah*) and existence (*wujūd*). Essence, for Ibn Sīnā, refers to what he understands to be the meaning of 'the thing'. Essence refers to the particular existence (*al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*) of a thing as opposed to existence which refers to its affirmative existence (*al-wujūd al-Ithbātī*).[42] The particular existence of a thing is the answer given to the question, "What is it?" It is a thing's what-is-it-ness or its it-is-it-ness.[43] Affirmative existence is its existence in reality outside of the mind. Ibn Sīnā gives the two examples of a triangle and whiteness. That which distinguishes a triangle from other things is its essence whereas the triangle's existence outside of the mind, say, in a triangular object, is its existence. Similarly, what

[40]Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 8-9. Also see: Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 86-87.

[41]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 26-27, Book 1, Chapter 5.

[42]Ibid., 24.

[43]For Ibn Sīnā's definition of essence (*māhīyah*) see: Inati, *Remarks and admonitions*, 58-63; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.1, 143-158, Method 1, Logic.

distinguishes whiteness from other things is the essence of whiteness, whereas a white table is the existence of whiteness outside of the mind. Ibn Sīnā considers the essence-existence distinction to be intensional (i.e., that they have two different meanings). In actual existence, a thing's essence and existence are identical. There is a famous saying in this regard attributed to Ibn Sīnā which states, "God did not make an apricot an apricot. He simply made it."[44] In the mental mode of existence a thing's essence can be separated from its existence.

It is important to understand that Ibn Sīnā did not consider the mental mode of existence as having some quasi existence between existence and non-existence which, as it will be discussed below, was the opinion of some Mu`tazilah theologians. Rather, the mind has real non-corporeal existence and mental modes of existence are dependent on the mind. That is, their existence comes about because of the mind. This is an important point and which is why Ibn Sīnā's view withstands the criticisms directed towards the Mu`tazilah theologians who claimed essences have eternal reality. In regards to the view of the Mu`tazilah theologians, if essences have eternal reality and are not created by God then there is something that has reality alongside God. However, the reality of mental existences is dependent on God for its existence because the mind of a possible being is dependent on God for her existence.

Ibn Sīnā gives several arguments for why essence can be intensionally distinguished from existence. In contrast to Ibn Sīnā, the followers of the 'Ash`arīyah school of thought believed that there is no basis to make a distinction between essence and existence.[45] Hence, in addition to the arguments given by Ibn Sīnā, post-Ibn Sīnian philosophers have given several more arguments for why essences of possible beings can be distinguished from their existence. Ṭūsī has mentioned most of these reasons in his *Tajrīd al-Kalām*.

Ibn Sīnā argues that essence is different from existence because by predicating existence of essence one achieves a new meaning, which is not the case when predicating essence of

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[44]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 90.

[45]Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 4-5; Al-Ḥillī, *'Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, 96, Aim 4, Discourse 1; Al-`Ubaydilī, *Ishrāq al-Lāhūt fī Naqd Sharh al-Yāqūt*, 149, Aim 4, Discourse 1; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqīyah fī `Ilm al-Ilāhīyāt wa al-Ṭabī`īyāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, 1990), vol.1, 119; Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 148. For the early and later Imāmī Shī`ah views regarding the essence-existence distinction refer to: Al-Ḥillī, *'Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, 95-100, Aim 4, Discourse 1 and 2.

its self. [46] For the essence 'the table' the statement, "the table is a table", is a tautology, whereas the statement, "the table exists", provides us with a meaning other than 'the table'.

Ṭūsī, considers an objection to the distinction between existence and essence. The objection states that if existence is other than a thing's essence then it has to be an accidental property. In order for something to have an accidental property it needs to exist first because accidental properties cannot be a predicate of non-existent things. For example, whiteness is the accidental property of a white object. But for the white object to have the property of whiteness it needs to first exist. But if an object already exists, it is absurd to predicate the accidental property of existence to it. Ṭūsī's responds by saying that existence is not predicated of an existent or a non-existent essence, just as whiteness is not predicated of a white object or an object with another colour (say, for example, a red object). Rather, existence is predicated of essence without any consideration in regards to its existence and non-existence, just as whiteness is predicated of an object without consideration of any colour, whiteness or otherwise.[47]

Ibn Sīnā gives a second argument for the essence-existence distinction but he does not present it in the section that deals with the subject. For this reason, some commentators on Ibn Sīnā might have missed its purpose. Ibn Sīnā argues that when considered in itself, essence is not associated with unity and multiplicity. It is neither universal nor particular. In reality, an essence can be identified with a single existent being or with many existent beings. Therefore, essence when considered in itself is not identified with properties that are associated with existent things. Hence, essence must be distinguished from existence because what applies to the existent is not found in essence when considered in itself (i.e., essence *qua* essence). For example, humanness (i.e., the essence of humanness), when considered in itself is neither associated with being one nor with being many. It is only when there are one or more existent human beings that these properties can be associated with the essence of humanness.[48]

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[46] Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 24-25, Book 1, Chapter 5.

[47] Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 7.

[48] *Avicenna The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 148-157, Book 5, Chapter 2. Also see: *Avicenna The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 274, Book 8, Chapter 4, where he states: "Hence, there is a difference between an essence in which the one and the existent occur accidentally and between the one and the existent inasmuch as it is one and an existent." Also see: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, 344-347, Part 6, Physics. For the English translation see: Muhammad Ali Khalidi, trans., "Ibn Sīnā, On the

Existence, argues Ṭūsī, has a common meaning in regards to all existent things. That is, when it is said that a table exists, the meaning of the term 'exists' is the same as when it is said a person exists. Essence on the other hand is the distinguishing factor of each existing thing. Hence, if existence and essence were the same, it would mean that everything has to be in fact one and the same thing and always existent (i.e., have necessary existence).[49]

Ṭūsī considers an objection that can be raised against his argument and replies to it. What if existence is part of and not identical with what a thing is? Ṭūsī gives the reply that in such a situation the thing would be made up of existence and something else. But, according to the same principle, that something else must also include existence and something else as part of what it is and so on *ad infinitum*, with each thing being made up of infinite parts of existence and something else, a notion that Ṭūsī considered impossible.[50] Furthermore, it would mean that essences can never be known fully because to know an essence one must know infinite number of things.[51]

Furthermore, both in the assumption that existence is part of what a thing is and in the assumption that it is identical with it, it would still be the case that the thing must always exist (i.e., have necessary existence). Everything would therefore be said to have necessary existence and denial of their existence would lead to a contradiction.[52] If it is possible for it

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Soul," in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Muhammad Ali Khalidi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 33-34.

[49]Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 4-5.

[50]Ibid, 5. If the claim is made that the something else does not have to have existence as part of its meaning then the existence-essence distinction is proved.

[51]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 44. Ṭūsī could also have meant this in his argument depending on how it is interpreted.

[52]Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 6. This means that the Necessary Being's essence is the same as His existence and cannot be distinguished from His existence. Later in the discussion, it will be shown that the Necessary Being cannot have existence as part of what it is and its existence must be identical with it. The conclusion of this argument is not contradictory to what will be said in that discussion. The reason that no contradiction occurs is that if existence is part of what a thing is then, by definition it must necessarily exist. However, it will be shown that it is impossible for such a definition to correspond with anything outside of the mind. In other words, if X has existence as part of what it is then, by definition it must have necessary existence. However, in actual existence, it is impossible for a Necessary Being to have existence as only part of what it is. A Necessary Being's existence must be identical with its essence. Therefore, X as a thing which has existence as part of what it is, by definition must have necessary existence but in actual existence it is impossible for it to exist. As a result no contradiction occurs because that which is being affirmed is predicated in a different way (i.e., predicated by definition) to that which is being negated (i.e., predicated of a thing in actual existence). The two different types of predication (which I have labelled here as

not to exist, then it must be the case that it can be defined without existence as part of its definition. There are things that do not have necessary existence and the distinction in question is regarding them. Therefore, it must be the case that their essence is separate from their existence.

Along the same line of reasoning, Ibn Sīnā had argued that the essence of a thing with possible existence can be represented in the mind. The fact that the essence of a thing can be represented in the mind without its actual existence shows that its actual existence is not part of its essence. Otherwise, if a thing's actual existence was part of or identical with its essence, either the essence along with the actual existence would have to be represented in the mind, or the essence would never be represented in the mind, both of which are obviously false.[53]

This last point indicates another reason why a thing's essence can be distinguished from its existence. There are instances in which the essence is conceived but there is doubt in regards to or denial of its existence. There are also cases which the existence of something is known but its essence is not known or it is not known well.[54] One is capable of knowing the essence of a phoenix, the mythical firebird of the Arabian Desert, but its existence is not confirmed. Similarly, one might know the existence of a black hole, assuming that such a thing does exist, but not know its essence very well.

'predication by definition' and 'predication of a thing in actual existence') is similar to what is known in Islamic philosophy as 'primary essential predication' (*al-ḥaml al-awwalī al-dhātī*) and 'prevalent technical predication' (*al-ḥaml al-shāyi` al-sinā`ī*). There will be more discussion on these two types of predication in the chapter about ontological arguments in Islamic philosophy. To clarify the issue at hand further, take X to be a square-circle. If a square-circle was to exist it must by definition be both a square and a circle. However, it is impossible for a square-circle to exist. Hence, by definition X must be both a square and a circle but in actual existence it is impossible for X to exist. This second example is not quite the same as X having existence as part of its definition because existence is not predicated of it by definition. It does, however, serve the purpose of clarifying that anything can be predicated by definition whereas that definition might or might not correspond, or it might even be impossible for it to correspond with anything that exists outside of the mind.

[53]Inati, *Remarks and admonitions*, 54-55; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.1, 121-122, Method 1, Logic. The concept of a human being does not include the actual existence of one or many human beings. An existent human being cannot be transferred into the mind. Hence, either the essence of humanness can be separated from the existent human, through whom a person knows what humanness is, or it cannot be separated and transferred into the mind, at which point a person cannot know what humanness is. The latter is false and therefore the former must be true.

[54]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 18-21, Method 4, Metaphysics; Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 5.

Furthermore, an essence does not require any kind of justification on its own. There is no need to justify that a doubtable being such as an angel is an angel but there is a need to justify the claim that an angel exists. Put another way, there is no need to justify the truth of the proposition, "An angel is an angel". One does, however, need a reason for why he believes the proposition "An angel exists" is true. What requires justification is belief in the existence of an angel not in its essence. Therefore, a thing's essence must be different to its existence.[55] If it were the case that essence and existence is one and the same thing, then the mere conception of any essence should also show that the essence exists. The mere conception of 'the table' or 'the phoenix' should be enough proof for their existence without needing any further justification.[56]

Lastly, essences refer only to some existent things while existence refers to all existent things. Hence, there are humans and tables and so forth. What they all share is existence, what distinguishes them is their essence. Therefore, essence must be something different to existence.[57]

The distinction between existence and essence raises many questions in regards to the nature of essences. The nature of what Ibn Sīnā called 'essence' and what Muslim theologians were calling 'thing' was a contentious issue between the different theological schools of thought within the Islamic world. It was previously stated that Ibn Sīnā considered the distinction between existence and essence to be intensional whereas in actual existence the two are identical. Ibn Sīnā's position will be discussed in more detail below. Before Ibn Sīnā, there were a number of Mu`tazilah theologians who propagated the idea of real essences that are not existent but are not non-existent either. According to those who have narrated the opinions of these theologians, it seems that they had differing views about what such essences entailed.[58] It is widely accepted that they maintained the

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[55]Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 6; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 43.

[56]It is important to understand the difference between this argument and the one given above. Needing justification is not the same as having a new meaning.

[57]This last proof is given in: Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tarjome wa Sharḥ Nihāyat al-Ḥikmah*, ed. and trans. Ali Shirwani (Qom: Dār al-Fikr, 2007), vol.1, 78-79. (Arabic text with Persian translation)

[58]For works that have distinguished between the different views refer to: Al-Ḥillī, *'Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, 95-100, Aim 4, Discourse 1; Al-`Ubaydilī, *Ishrāq al-Lāhūt fī Naqd Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, 149, 155-156, Aim 4, Discourse 1; Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 14-22. Also see: Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Muḥaṣṣal* (Qom: Intishārāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1999), 157-158. For a brief summary of their view see: Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, 149.

common view that in reality there is not just existence (i.e., existent beings) and non-existence (i.e., lack of existent beings). There is also something they called affirmative reality (*al-thābit*) and the negation of affirmative reality (*nafy'*). Affirmative reality is more general than existence and negation is a particular case of non-existence.[59] Hence, possible beings such as trees, human beings and so forth, have affirmative reality before existing. Affirmative reality is negated for that which existence is impossible such as, for example, a square circle.

In other words, these theologians believed that between existence and non-existence there was another mode of reality, namely, affirmative reality. This affirmative reality is the thingness of possible beings. Non-existent things that have possible existence have affirmative reality before existing.

There seems to have been two main reasons for why some Mu`tazilah theologians proposed affirmative reality as a mode of reality additional to existence. One reason seems to have been based on their understanding of certain Qur`ānic verses. In one verse, the Qur`ān states, "Our word for a thing which we have intended, is only that we say to it, 'Be,' and it is."[60] Again in another verse the Qur`ān states, "Verily, His command when He intends anything, is only to say to it, 'Be,' so it is."[61] The issue that preoccupied some Mu`tazilah theologians was that if there is no reality until God brings something into existence and therefore there is no distinction between non-existent things, then to what does God say, "Be."[62]

The other reason had to do with the theological problem of God's knowledge of future events. God, in Islam, is said to be omniscient and therefore have knowledge of everything

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[59]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 75; Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, 149.

[60]Qur`ān 16: 40.

[61]Qur`ān 36: 82.

[62]Abul `Alā Afīfī, "Al-`Ayān al-Thābitah fī Madhhab Ibn `Arabī wa Al-Ma`dūmāt fī Madhhab Mu`tazilah", in *Al-Kitāb al-Tadhkārī: Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn `Arabī*, ed. Ibrahīm Madkūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, 1969), 212-213; Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, 148. Wisnovsky makes the suggestion that it was reasonable for Mu`tazilah theologians to understand the two Qur`ānic verses as they did. I believe Wisnovsky's unreasonably makes such an assumption due to the fact that when speaking about the creation of a thing there is no other way but to refer to it either as a 'thing' or as 'it' or something along these lines. Using such terms does not necessitate belief in real platonic forms or the affirmative reality proposed by some Mu`tazilah theologians.

whether in the past, present or in the future. The question that these Mu`tazilah theologians were asking was how does God have knowledge about that which has not yet existed but which will exist in the future and what exactly are the objects of God's knowledge of things that will exist in the future? The issue they had to contend with while answering these questions was their understanding of the unicity of God. According to the Mu`tazilah doctrine, God was an absolute unicity and could not be a composition. Therefore, objects of God's knowledge of future events could not be said to be part of God, since from such a notion, they believed, it would follow that God is a composition.[63]

The earliest record of such a view is attributed to Abū Ya`qūb Yūsuf ibn Isḥāq al-Shaḥḥām (d. c. 280A.H./893C.E.), a student of Abū Hudhayl al-Allāf (d.c.230A.H./845C.E.). By the time of al-Shaḥḥām, Mu`tazilah theologians had come into contact with a number of Neoplatonic philosophical ideas. It is most likely that the concept of affirmative reality is rooted in the idea of platonic forms. In fact, it could be said that the interpretation of Qur`ānic verses only caused a problem for these Mu`tazilah theologians after coming into contact with the works of Neoplatonic philosophers in addition to certain concerns of their own. However, the idea of affirmative realities which was held by the Mu`tazilah theologians had one major difference with the notion of platonic form. Affirmative realities were not considered by Mu`tazilah theologians to have a more perfect state or existence than real entities since they were not quite existent. In fact, Mu`tazilah theologians believed that when essences came into existence they acquired a more perfect state.

The controversy about the nature of essence also entered mediaeval scholastic philosophy through Thomas Aquinas (1225C.E.-1274C.E.) in the thirteenth century. Aquinas held the view that there is a real distinction in things between their essence and their existence (or their act of existence). This led to Christian scholastic who came after Aquinas to give different theories about what is the nature of essences.[64]

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[63]Abul `Alā Afīfī, "Al-`Ayān al-Thābitah fī Madhhab Ibn `Arabī wa Al-Ma`dūmāt fī Madhhab Mu`tazilah", in *Al-Kitāb al-Tadhkārī: Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn `Arabī*, ed. Ibrahīm Madkūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, 1969), 212-213; Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, 148.

[64]For a brief overview of the issues and the personalities involved in the early mediaeval Christian consideration of the nature of essences see: John F. Wippel, "Godfrey of Fontaines," in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone (Cornwall: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 273-274. Also for later debates see: John A. Trentman, "Scholasticism in the seventeenth century," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony John Patrick Kenny and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 822-827.

With the idea of affirmative reality as a mode of reality additional to existence, the Mu`tazilah theologians attempted to solve the issue of the Qur`ānic verses as well as God's knowledge of future events. They suggested that it was in regard to things that have affirmative reality which God would say, "Be," after which point they would begin to exist. It was also the case that it was things with affirmative reality which were the object of God's knowledge before He gave them existence.

The notion of affirmative reality proposed by al-Shaḥḥām and his successors posed a more fundamental problem in regards to God's unicity and eternity. Prior to Ibn Sīnā Imāmī Shī`ah theologians rejected the idea altogether. Ibn Sīnā too rejected the idea of affirmative reality. Things that had affirmative reality would exist, so to speak, or be eternal beings alongside God. Furthermore, they would be part of the cause for the existence of things, in the sense that it would be only through each individual thing that God could create its existent counterpart.[65] God would not be creating the essence of things but rather He would be joining essences with existence. God then, was not a creator, but simply, a joiner.

Furthermore, God's knowledge of future events, similar to God's knowledge of present events, does not have to be explained as being mediated through some kind of existence or reality other than God Himself. There is no plausible reason why God's knowledge should be described in the anthropomorphic manner of comprehension through intermediaries, whether those intermediaries exist inside or outside of God. It can also be argued, as it has been by Muslim thinkers, that God's knowledge of things does not have to be in the form of a composition.

In the case of a human being, he can know things other than himself, through coming into contact or perceiving them in some manner. God's omniscience can be explained through God's knowledge of Himself. God has knowledge of Himself without any intermediaries. Since, God is the cause of the existence of everything and He is the one who sustains them for their continued existence (i.e., continues to give them existence),

[65]Note that the notion of affirmative reality is not the same as the intellectual forms and principles and the First Intellect (technically: First Emanation) proposed by some Muslim philosophers. Mullā Ṣadrā, for example, claims there are real nonmaterial concepts (*ṣuwar*) that exist in the world or realm of concepts (*`Ālam al-Mafāhīm*). Similarly, the First Intellect, which some Muslim philosophers suggest as being God's first creation and containing all possible beings potentially in a metaphysical state, is considered by them to exist. These nonmaterial or metaphysical entities have existential precedence over material entities but are ultimately dependent on God for their existence.

then it would necessarily be the case that He has knowledge of all that He creates and sustains before and after creating them.[66] That knowledge is one with God, in no way distinguishable from Him and not a composite. Existent things' thingnesses or essences (i.e., a thing's it-is-it-ness) are also caused along with their existence by God. This idea was later developed by Muslim philosophers and theologians such as Suhrawardī, Ṭūsī and Mullā Ṣadrā who maintained that a knower's knowledge is one with her essence or self. Knowing is merely the same as existing and therefore no plausible reason can be given for admitting multiplicity with regards to knowledge of multiple things.[67]

The Mu`tazilah theologians who did subscribe to the notion of affirmative reality, independently of their exegetical and theological considerations, gave further arguments for why such a notion is necessary. Non-existent things, they argued, are distinguishable from one another. Similarly, preference is shown in regards to some non-existent things while there is aversion towards others. For example, a person would like to be king but does not want to be tortured even though he might neither be a king or be going through torture. Furthermore, some non-existent things seem to be in one's control whereas others are not. Eating, for example, is in one's control and death, assuming that the person is still alive, is not in one's control. Without the notion of affirmative reality, they argued, there is no way to explain such distinctions between non-existent things. This is because non-existence cannot be distinguished from non-existence.[68]

It is also the case that some non-existent beings are possible in their existence while it is impossible for other non-existent things to exist. Without the concept of affirmative reality, in their opinion, there is no way to distinguish between things which have possible existence and that which it is impossible for it to exist.[69]

In general, Shī`ah theologians and Muslim philosophers such al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and many post-Ibn Sīnian philosophers, rejected the idea of a mode of reality additional to that

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[66]Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 83-86, Chapter 29 and 99-100, Chapter 35.

[67]See for example: Mullā Ṣadrā, *Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, ed. and trans. James W. Morris (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 113-116, Section 10.

[68]Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 15; Al-Rāzī, *Al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqīyah*, vol.1, 135.

[69]Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 16.

of existence.[70] Ibn Sīnā was of the opinion that in the case of the essence of a possible being, it is shared between the mental existence and the actual existence, in the sense that, the essence of a thing that has possible existence, can either exist in the mind or be an existent entity outside of the mind or both. For Ibn Sīnā and most Shī`ah theologians, existence and essence is one and the same thing outside of the mind.[71] It is only in the mind that the two can be separated. In actual existence, in other words, existence and essence are identical but intensionally they can be distinguished from each other. Ibn Sīnā replies to the Mu`tazilah theologians, by saying that what is distinguishable, preferred and so forth is the mental existence of an essence. The essence of a thing that does not exist has mental existence and hence it can be distinguished from another essence that also has mental existence neither of which exists outside of the mind.[72] True non-existence which has no actual existence outside of the mind cannot be distinguished.[73]

[70]As it will be discussed below, there were a number of philosophers and theologians who subscribed to the primacy of essences. But even such philosophers did not have two modes of reality. They believed that what has reality outside of the mind is a thing's essence while existence is an abstract mental concept. They did not, however, make the claim that there is a third mode of reality in addition to essences.

[71]In book one, chapter five of *al-Shifā*, Ibn Sīnā states, "[To the notion] that [the nonexistent] would be conceived in the soul as a concept that refers to some external thing, [we say] 'Certainly not!'". Again in book five chapter one, he states, "For this reason, there must be a distinction between our statement, 'Animal inasmuch as it is an animal is in abstraction, without the condition of some other thing,' and our saying, 'Animal inasmuch as it is animal is in abstraction, with the condition that there is no other thing.' If it were possible for animal inasmuch as it is an animal to be in abstraction, with the condition that no other thing exists in external reality, then it would be possible for the Platonic exemplars to exist in external reality. Rather, animal, with the condition that there is no other thing, exists only in the mind. As for the animal abstracted without the condition of anything else, it has existence in the concrete. For, in itself and in its true nature, it is without the condition of another thing, even though it may be with a thousand conditions that associate with it externally." For the quotes and Ibn Sīnā's position see: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 22-28, Book 1, Chapter 5, and 155, Book 5, Chapter 1. Ibn Sīnā also dedicates the last two chapters of book seven in *al-Shifā* to refuting the idea of platonic forms even if not taken as being non-existent, see: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 243-256.

[72]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 25-26, Book 1, Chapter 5; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 77.

[73]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 79.

Ibn Sīnā, on several occasions in *al-Shifā* argues against any reality other than existence and lack of existence.[74] Indeed, the basis of Ibn Sīnā's logical and philosophical system is that in actuality there is only existence. In the logic section of *Ishārāt* Ibn Sīnā states:

> Necessity may be either [1] absolute, as in the statement, "God, exalted, exists;" / or [2] linked to a condition.
>
> A condition may be either: [A] The duration of the existence of the essence, as in the statement, "Human being is necessarily a rational body." By this we do not mean that human being has not ceased, and will not cease to be a rational body; for this is false of every human individual. Rather, we mean by this that as long as his essence as human exists, he is a rational body. The case is the same in every negation resembling this affirmation.
>
> [B] The duration of the subject's being qualified by that [quality] which is made to accompany it, as in the statement, "Every moveable changes." This does not mean absolutely or as long as its essence exists but as long as the essence of the moveable moves. / There is a difference between this condition and the first one. For the first condition involves a fundamental essence, i.e. human being, while the present condition involves an essence accompanied by a quality, i.e., the moveable. For the moveable has an essence and a substance to which movement and the lack of movement can attach. Neither human being nor black is such.[75]

This passage and many others like it show that Ibn Sīnā did not adhere to the view that there are realities which have neither existence nor non-existence. This is because in the above passage Ibn Sīnā argues that the negation of the existence of an essence is also the negation of its essential properties. However, if it is accepted that essences have some kind of reality before existence then the negation of their existence is not necessarily the negation of their essential properties. In fact, Ibn Sīnā and other Muslim thinkers with the same view, had a better solution than that which was being proposed by the Mu`tazilah

[74]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 26. Also for Ṭūsī's response see: Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 15-16.

[75]Inati, *Remarks and admonitions*, 92; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.1, 231, Method 4, Logic.

theologians. Affirmative reality entailed only possible beings and negation of affirmative reality was, in the opinion of the Mu`tazilah theologians, true non-existence and entailed impossible beings. However, impossible beings are also distinguishable from one another. It can also be the case that a person prefers one impossible being over another. For example, a religious person who lacks training in philosophy, theology or other similar subjects might prefer the concept of a square-circle to that of God's partner, both of which were considered an impossibility by the Mu`tazilah theologians. The problems raised by the Mu`tazilah theologians could be better explained through the distinction between mental existence and actual existence (i.e., existence outside of the mind) than through affirmative reality. Impossible and non-existent possible beings can be distinguished from each other because they have mental existence. In actual existence, on the other hand, they cannot refer to anything.

Furthermore, intuitively it seems that affirmative reality is just another word for existence; maybe a different level or type of existence but existence nevertheless. Affirmation is synonymous with confirming something's existence or the existence of a thing for another thing. Negation, too, refers to the denial of existence for something or the denial of the existence of a thing for another thing. Hence, what the Mu`tazilah theologians were calling affirmative reality was just another term for existence and what they were calling negation of affirmative reality referred to the impossibility that a certain thing can exist.

The two 'Ash`arī theologians Abū Bakr Bāqillānī (d.402A.H./1013C.E.) and Ibn al-Juwayni (419A.H./1028C.E.-478A.H./1085C.E.) also subscribed to a notion similar to that of affirmative reality.[76] There is at least one of their arguments that should be considered for the purpose of this study. They held the opinion that there are many concepts in regards to which it cannot be said that they are existent or non-existent. Such concepts have a state (*ḥāl*) between existence and non-existence. Among them is the attribute of existence. According to this view, there is contradiction in the claim that the attribute of existence is non-existent. On the other hand, if the attribute of existence is said to be existent, the same question can be asked about attributing that second attribute of existence to the first (i.e., in the case when it is said the attribute of existence is existent) and so on *ad infinitum*. There

[76]See: Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 17-18. Apparently, a Mu`tazilah theologian by the name Abu Hāshim al-Jubbā`ī (d. 321A.H./933C.E.) and his followers also held this view.

is no other solution, according to those who propagated the view, but to say that the attribute of existence is neither existent nor non-existent but a 'state' in between.[77]

In response, it can be said that an attribute is necessarily itself. For example, it is not the case that the attribute of whiteness is either whiteness or blackness. Hence, it cannot be claimed that the attribute of whiteness is a state in between whiteness and blackness. Similarly, it cannot be said that existence is either existent or non-existent and therefore it must be a state in between. In the same way that the attribute of whiteness is necessarily itself, the attribute of existence is necessarily itself too.[78]

The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary

After clarifying a number of discussions related to the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary, the argument itself can be stated and analyzed. Ṭūsī in a work titled *Treatise on the Division of Existents* gives the logical form of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary in the following manner:

Premise 1	If there is not a being that has necessary existence then there would not be any existent beings.
Premise 2	There is at least one existent being.
Conclusion	Therefore there is a being that has necessary existence.[79]

The argument begins with the consideration of what exists. When an existent thing is considered in itself, either existence is necessary for it or it is not. If existence is necessary for it, the aim of proving the existence of a Necessary Being is achieved. However, if when considered in itself, existence is not necessary for it, then, either existence is impossible or possible for it. The term possibility is used here in the same sense given to it by Muslim philosophers and theologians. That is, possibility in terms of existence is contrary to both necessity and impossibility. An existent thing that has possible existence can either exist or

[77]Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 17-18.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ṭūsī, "Treatise on the Division of Existents," 35.

not exist. That which exists and has necessary existence can only exist and it is not possible for it not to exist nor is it impossible for it to exist. For that which is impossible to exist, existence is neither possible nor necessary.[80] In view of the fact that an existent thing exists, existence is not impossible for it. It must then be the case that it is possible for it. Because both existence and non-existence is possible for it then it is indifferent to existence and non-existence. Anything that exists, on the other hand, is necessarily existent (i.e., in the sense just that it exists) and cannot be said to be indifferent to existence and non-existence. Similarly, anything that does not exist is necessarily non-existent (i.e., in the sense that it does not exist).[81] Therefore, indifference to existence and non-existence (which is contradictory to necessity and impossibility) cannot be observed in the existence of the thing which has possible existence, just as it cannot be observed in its non-existence. It must then be the case that the indifference to existence and non-existence is realised by considering the essence of a thing. It is the essence of a thing that has possible existence.[82]

Essence, as it was mentioned above, is the it-is-it-ness of an existent thing in itself. Hence, it is the essence of the thing which has possible existence (i.e., what it is in itself), that shows its relation in regards to existence and non-existence. When the essence of a thing which has possible existence is considered in itself (i.e., as essence *qua* essence), it is neither existent nor non-existent, in the sense that neither existence is identical or part of what it is to be what it is nor is non-existence identical or part of what it is to be what it is. This is because the essence of a thing which has possible existence can be either existent or non-existent. If the essence of a thing which has possible existence were identical with

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[80]These definitions are circular as mentioned by Ibn Sīnā, but I have mentioned it here only for clarifying what is meant by possibility, namely, what Ibn Sīnā and other Muslim philosophers and theologians would call the proper usage of the term possibility. In other words, what I have said here is only the explanation of the term not a definition. In Western philosophy usually what is being referred to as possibility is referred to as contingency.

[81]For example, if Socrates actually exists then even though his essence might be indifferent to existence and non-existence Socrates as an existent being is necessarily existent and it cannot be said that Socrates as an existent being is indifferent to existence and non-existence. Hence, what is necessarily existent either has necessary existence in itself or it has possible existence in itself but has necessary existence through another. This distinction will become clear as the discussion proceeds.

[82]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 29-30, Book 1, Chapter 6; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 26-27, Method 4, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma`ād*, ed. `Abdullah Nūrānī (Tehran: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1363H.S.), 3-4, Discourse 1, Chapter 4.

existence, or existence was part of it, then it could not be the case that it is possible for it not to exist. Similarly, if non-existence was identical or part of its meaning then it was impossible for it to exist. Rather, existence or non-existence is predicated of the essence of a thing that has possible existence.[83]

One might object that the claim that the essence of possible being is neither existent nor non-existent would mean that there is a state between existence and non-existence, a notion which was rejected above. Furthermore, given that it is agreed that there is only existence and lack of existence, such a claim is the denial of both of a pair of contradictories which is impossible. A thing at any given time either exists or does not exist. It cannot be the case that at any given time a thing both exists and does not exist, or neither exists nor does not exist.[84]

In regards to the first objection, the reply can be given that what is being claimed is not that the essence of a possible being has reality other than existence. Such an essence, as a concept being considered in the mind, has mental existence and as a thing that exists outside of the mind, given that it exists outside the mind, has actual existence. But when an essence is considered intensionally (i.e., without considering its relationship to existence outside of the mind) and without any consideration of the nature of its existence as a concept in the mind, then it has neither existence nor non-existence. For example, the essence of humanness in virtue of being an essence of humanness, but not as a human being that exists or does not exist in actuality, is neither existent nor non-existent. That is, neither existence nor non-existence is part of the meaning of humanness. When considered as a concept existent in the mind, being a concept it has mental existence. When considered as a being in actual existence (i.e., existing outside of the mind), it is said to be an existent human being.

The reply to the second objection is more challenging. Though it is true that denial of both of a pair of contradictories is impossible, such a negation occurs when two contradictories are negated of the same thing. In the case of essence, existence and non-

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[83]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 30, Book 1, Chapter 6; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 26-27, Method 4, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 65, Chapter 18; Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 44-45. Also see: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, 547-548, Part 11, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma`ād*, 2-4, Discourse 1, Chapter 1-4.

[84]The two propositions have the same meaning. That is, the claim that a thing both exists and does not exist is the same as the proposition that a thing both neither exists nor does not exist. This is because, 'neither exists' means does not exist and 'nor does not exist' means exists.

existence is negated from the essence, intensionally, not in regards to its actual existence or non-existence. The claim being made is that, intensionally, the essence of a possible being is indifferent to existence and non-existence (i.e., can either exist or not exist). For the negation of contradictories to occur on the level of intension, the essence's relation to existence and non-existence has to be negated not the essence's existence and non-existence. For further clarification, take as an example, the essence of a body in as much as it is an essence of a body (i.e., body *qua* body), without the consideration of the body's actual existence or non-existence. Denying both redness and non-redness from the essence of body is not negation of contradictories because neither redness nor any other colour is included in the meaning of body. In actual existence, however, the body must be either red or non-red. Hence the proposition, "The essence of body *qua* body (i.e., that which can be either red or non-red in actual existence) is red," is not contradictory to the proposition, "The essence of body *qua* body (i.e., that which can be either red or non-red in actual existence) is non-red." Rather, it is contradictory to the proposition, "It is not the case that the essence of body *qua* body (i.e., that which can be either red or non-red in actual existence) is red." In the same way, the proposition, "The essence of body *qua* body (i.e., that which can be either red or non-red in actual existence) is non-red," is contradictory to the proposition, "It is not the case that the essence of body *qua* body (i.e., that which can be either red or non-red in actual existence) is non-red." Therefore, no denial of both of a pair of contradictories occurs by combining the two propositions, "It is not the case that the essence of body *qua* body (i.e., that which can be either red or non-red in actual existence) is red and it is not the case that the essence of body *qua* body (i.e., that which can be either red or non-red in actual existence) is non-red," because the body, in actual existence, can be either only red or only non-red, but in terms of its essence it is neither red nor non-red.

Similarly, the proposition, "The essence of a possible being (i.e., that which can be either existent or non-existent in relation to actual existence) is existent," is not contradictory to the proposition, "The essence of a possible being (i.e., that which can be either existent or non-existent in relation to actual existence) is non-existent." Rather, it is contradictory to: "It is not the case that the essence of a possible being (i.e., that which can be either existent or non-existent in relation to actual existence) is existent." Also, the proposition, "The essence of a possible being (i.e., that which can be either existent or non-existent in relation to actual existence) is non-existent," is contradictory to, "It is not the case that the essence of a possible being (i.e., that which can be either existent or non-

existent in relation to actual existence) is non-existent." By combining the two, we get the proposition, "It is not the case that the essence of a possible being (i.e., that which can be either existent or non-existent in relation to actual existence) is existent and it is not the case that the essence of a possible being (i.e., that which can be either existent or non-existent in relation to actual existence) is non-existent." This is not a negation of contradictories because it is the case that, in actual reality, the essence of a possible being can be either existent or non-existent but intensionally, it is neither existent nor non-existent.[85]

Since the essence of a thing that has possible existence is indifferent to existence and non-existence, it must have a cause outside of itself to necessitate either existence or non-existence for it. Put another way, the possibly existent thing, the possibility of which is indicated by its essence, must have a cause to determine either existence or non-existence for it because in itself it is indifferent to existence and non-existence.[86] Things can, therefore, be categorized in the following four ways:

1. When considered in itself, it has necessary existence.
2. When considered in itself, existence is impossible for it (i.e., any concept for which existence is impossible).
3. When considered in itself, existence is possible for it and existence has been necessitated for it (i.e., anything that has possible existence and it exists).
4. When considered in itself, existence is possible for it and non-existence has been necessitated for it (i.e., anything that has possible existence and it does not exist).[87]

Because non-existence refers to nothing and therefore does not need a cause in the true sense, the cause that necessitates the non-existence of a thing that has possible existence is the lack of a cause that necessitates existence for it.[88]

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[85] A similar explanation is given by Ibn Sīnā in *al-Shifā* , see: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 150, Book 5, Chapter 1. Also the explanation is given with technical terminology and different examples in: Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 141-143; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Nihāyat al-Hikmah*, vol.1, 309-312.

[86] Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 31, Book 1, Chapter 6; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, 547-548, Part 11, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 65, Chapter 18; Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 44-45; Ṭūsī, *Tilkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 111, Element 2.

[87] Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 29-30, 40.

By considering the essence of a thing which has possible existence and its modal relation to existence and non-existence, it becomes clear that it must have an existent cause outside of itself in order to necessitate its existence. The existent cause which necessitates its existent is either a being which has possible existence or a being which has necessary existence. If it is a being that has necessary existence then the aim of proving the existence of such a being has been achieved.[89] However, the assumption can be made that the cause that necessitates the existence of a thing that has possible existence is another thing which also has possible existence.

In order to address the issue of whether the necessitating cause can be another being which has possible existence, the relationship between the cause that gives existence and the effect that receives it has to be discussed in more detail. In fact, one of the important principles that distinguishes the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary from other theistic arguments, such as, for example, the Demonstration from Origination, is the result of this discussion. It is also the reason why the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary does not need to rely on the impossibility of infinite regress for its cogency.

Ibn Sīnā discusses the causality of the possible being's existence in *al-Shifā*. The common held opinion at the time of Ibn Sīnā was that origination is the reason that a thing which has possible existence needs a cause to necessitate its existence. This view maintained that since the thing did not exist at a previous time and then became existent, it must be the fact that it was originated that explains why it needs a cause for its existence.[90] Ibn Sīnā disputed the idea that origination explains why a thing that has possible existence needs a cause to necessitate its existence. Origination argues Ibn Sīnā, only tells us that at one time the thing did not exist and then became existent. The fact that it did not exist and then came to exist does not, on its own, clarify why it needs a cause for its existence. It is rather only an indication that the thing can both exist and not exist without showing why it

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[88]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 31, Book 1, Chapter 6, 197, Book 6, Chapter 1; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 26-27, Method 4 and 137, Method 5, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 65, Chapter 18.

[89]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma`ād*, 21, Discourse 1, Chapter 15.

[90]In other words, the causal relationship was understood to be a relationship between something temporally prior and something temporally posterior.

needs a cause in order to exist. Moreover, origination is an attribute of the possible being once it exists and cannot be the reason for its existence.[91]

Furthermore, origination requires the existence of the cause to be prior to the effect. There are, however, many instances where the cause and the effect coexist with each other but it is nevertheless known that one is the cause of the other. For example, when Zayd moves a key, the movement of Zayd's hands coexists with the movement of the key. However, it is known that the movement of Zayd's hand is the cause of the movement of the key. Therefore origination is not an adequate explanation for such causality.[92]

Possibility, argues Ibn Sīnā, is rationally prior to origination. That is, it is the fact that it is possible that it can be originated. In addition, origination is not in itself necessary and therefore cannot be the reason for why another thing's existence is necessitated. It is the possibility of both existing and not existing indicated by the essence (i.e., what something is in itself) of the thing which demonstrates its need for a cause to either necessitate its existence or necessitate its non-existence.

The thing that has possible existence not only needs a cause to exist but needs that same cause to sustain its existence. The cause of a thing's existence is that which necessitates existence for it, based on the premise that the thing in itself is indifferent to existence and non-existence. Hence, necessitating existence is not included in the thing in itself. If necessitating existence were part of the thing in itself then it did not need a cause to necessitate its existence as it would have necessity of existence in itself. Therefore, it is the case that the thing that has possible existence is in constant need of its existential cause to necessitate existence both in terms of its coming into being (origination) and continued existence.[93] To put it simply, the existence of a thing that has possible existence is defined in terms of the cause that is necessitating existence for it as opposed to its own indifference towards existence and non-existence.[94] If the necessitating cause were to not necessitate

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[91]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 198-200, Book 6, Chapter 1; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, 547-548, Part 11, Metaphysics; Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 42-43; Ṭūsī, "Treatise on the Division of Existents," 47-48.

[92]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 126, Book 4, Chapter 1. In general for a discussion on origination and causality see: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 124-130.

[93]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 197-200, Book 6, Chapter 1; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 68, Chapter 20; Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 45-46.

[94]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 272-273, Book 8, Chapter 3; Ṭūsī, "Treatise on the Division of Existents," 46.

existence for it then again it would be what it is in itself, indifferent to existence and non-existence. More accurately, due to a lack of cause, non-existence would be necessary for it.[95] The existential cause of a thing must therefore, as Ibn Sīnā states, "coexist with the effect" and it cannot be the case that it gives existence to the effect and then ceases to exist itself.[96]

Following from the above argument that the thing that exists possibly is in constant need of its existential cause to necessitate its existence, an important point emerges about why it cannot be without a cause to necessitate its existence. The possible being not only needs a cause to necessitate its existence but also to sustain it. If it were to cause and sustain its own existence, it would have existence in itself (i.e., have necessary existence), whereas it was assumed that it was indifferent to existence and non-existence and due to a lack of a cause it was non-existent.

Muslim philosophers consider it self-evident that a thing which has possible existence needs to have a cause outside of itself. Nevertheless, they argue, although the knowledge of a possible being's need for a cause is self-evident it can be demonstrated by showing that its denial entails a contradiction. The demonstration for proving that a possible being is in need of a cause for its existence begins with the enquiry into the modal properties of its essence (i.e., what it is in itself). If that which has possible existence and exists does not have a cause outside of itself that necessitated and sustains its existence then, either it was the cause that necessitated and sustains its own existence or it did not have a cause but exists. In order to necessitate and sustain existence for anything it must first have existence (i.e., it must first have its own existence necessitated before being able to necessitate and sustain the existence of another). Therefore, in order to be the cause that necessitates and sustains its own existence, it must not in itself be indifferent to existence and non-existence. But that which has possible existence when considered in itself is indifferent to existence and non-existence. Therefore, if it was to cause its own existence, it must at the same time be indifferent and not indifferent to existence and non-existence. Because such a claim is a

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[95]Ibn Sīnā gives a comprehensive discussion on the issue of the effect's need for its existential cause in *Ishārāt*, see: vol.3, 82-136, Method 5, Metaphysics.

[96]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 202, Book 6, Chapter 2. Also see: Ṭūsī, "Treatise on the Division of Existents," 51.

conjunction of contradictories and conjunction of contradictories is impossible, then a thing that has possible existence must have a cause for its existence.[97]

The claim that a thing which has possible existence does not have a cause for its existence but nevertheless exists is equal to the claim that nothing is the cause that necessitated and sustains its existence. Nothing, however, is the cause of nothing and cannot necessitate and sustain existence. It cannot have come into existence without any cause because that would mean that in itself it could exist without a cause. If in itself it could exist without a cause then existence should be necessary for it, not possible. Therefore, it cannot be said that a thing that has possible existence does not have a cause for its existence.[98]

A philosopher, remarks Ibn Sīnā, is not concerned only with the principle of motion. The natural efficient cause, he argues, only bestows motion in one form or another. What is observed in the world and called causality is not the type of causality that bestows existence. Rather, it is a cause for movement or something else.[99] Ibn Sīnā argues that the constant need of an effect for its existential cause is even observed in the physical world. The builder who constructs a building is not the cause of the existence of the building. He is the cause of certain movements that result in the transporting of material and the arrangement of that material. His movements cause a certain kind of combination and that combination causes a certain kind of shape. The builder is, in reality, only the cause of the movements and his effect, namely, the movement, ceases to exist when he stops. It is the combination of the material and the property of that material that sustains the building. Similarly, the father is not the cause that sustains the existence of the son. He is only the cause of the movement of the sperm. The motion of the sperm is the cause of the occurrence of the sperm in the womb and so on.[100] There are, therefore, different kinds of

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[97]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 31, Book 1, Chapter 6; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 27-28, Method 4, 139-141, Method 5, Metaphysics; Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 77; Ṭūsī, "Treatise on the Division of Existents," 37-38. Also see: Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 69-73, Chapter 20. For a detailed discussion see also: Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 111-118, Element 2 and 245-246, Element 3, Part 1.

[98]Ibid.

[99]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 31, Book 6, Chapter 1.

[100]Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 69-70, Chapter 20; Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 201-205, Book 6, Chapter 2. Both these examples have been given by Ibn Sīnā. Also see: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 126, Book 4, Chapter 1, where Ibn Sīnā states: "In

causes and the concern of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary is the existential cause.

For the purposes of this study, there is no need to explain the different causes, though Ibn Sīnā and other Muslim philosophers have gone to great length to do so in their works. Each philosopher held different opinions about the type of causes and the nature of those causes. Explicating the philosophical views of each of these philosophers is beyond the scope of this study. To summarize their view, the concern of the discussion surrounding the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary is the cause that necessitates the existence of a thing. The cause for a possible being's existence (i.e., that which necessitates and sustains its existence) must be present and continually give existence to it if the effect is to remain in existence.

The cause that necessitates the existence of a thing which has possible existence either has necessary existence or it does not. The assumption can be made, for the sake of the argument, is that it does not have necessary existence. Having possible existence, it is in itself indifferent to existence and non-existence and in need of another to necessitate and sustain its existence. Being indifferent to existence and non-existence it does not have the ability to necessitate and sustain another's existence. Hence, both things considered in themselves are indifferent to existence and non-existence. Even if this indifference is referred to another thing with possible existence, the same situation occurs in which all three when considered in themselves are indifferent to existence and non-existence. No matter how large the number of things that have possible existence is taken to be, say for example, infinite things that have possible existence, all of them, both individually and as a whole are indifferent to existence and non-existence and need a cause to necessitate their existence.[101]

To state it in another way, it is not sufficient for the necessitation and the sustaining of the existence of the thing with possible existence (i.e., a thing which is indifferent to existence and non-existence) to be referred to another thing which is in the same situation and which itself does not have necessitation and sustaining of existence but is indifferent to existence and non-existence. Because a being with possible existence when considered in

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reality, a thing cannot be such that it is rightly a cause of [another] thing unless [that other] thing coexists with it."

[101]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 28-38, Method 4, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 65-66, Chapter 18; Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 247, Element 3, Part 1.

itself is indifferent to existence and non-existence it can only be an intermediary cause for another possible being and both will be in need of another in order to exist. An infinite number of indifferences are only equal to indifference and not necessity. Therefore, the totality of an infinite number of essences that have possible existence (i.e., an infinite number of things that are indifferent to existence and non-existence) can only have possible existence (i.e., be indifferent to existence and non-existence).[102]

Take as an analogy the example of a series of light bulbs. The first light bulb cannot generate electricity from itself. The first light bulb is connected to a second light bulb in a way that if the second light bulb is turned on then it too will turn on. This second light bulb also does not generate electricity from itself. Rather, the second light bulb is connected to a third light bulb which too does not generate electricity from itself and so on *ad infinitum*. Unless these light bulbs have an external source of power then none of them can turn on. There is no difference whether there is a finite number of such light bulbs or an infinite number. Since none of the light bulbs have the capability to produce electricity from themselves they cannot be the source of electricity for another light bulb. This analogy is not a complete analogy in the sense that the light bulbs still have existence from themselves but need another to give them electricity whereas possible beings which are indifferent to existence and non-existence in their entire being need another to give them existence. Nevertheless, the analogy serves the purpose of demonstrating an important point. If every member of a totality is missing something then the number of members (finite or infinite) has no impact on the totality acquiring what it is missing. The argument given above and the analogy given here are not dependent on the impossibility of infinite regress to prove their conclusion. This is because the conclusion of the argument and the analogy do not appeal to the number of members in a totality.[103]

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[102]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 31-32, Book 1, Chapter 6; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma`ād*, 22-23, Discourse 1, Chapter 16; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, 567-568, Part 11, Metaphysics.

[103]If it is assumed that each possible being is logically independent of the existence of any other possible being (which is not a premise which Ibn Sīnā's argument is based on and his argument works either way) then, the need of the totality of possible beings for a Necessary Being to necessitate and sustain its existence can be shown another way. If it is possible for such a set to not exist then it has possible existence and needs another to necessitate and sustain its existence. In a set that includes infinite number of things with possible existence (i.e., have an essence which is indifferent to existence and non-existence), each member in itself has possible existence. It is, therefore, possible for each member not to exist. The totality of possible beings in such a set is comprised of each individual member. Such a totality either has an objective reality or is the result of the mental process of collecting together all of the possible beings into a whole. If it is a mental concept then it cannot have possible or necessary existence. If the totality is more than a mental

One might argue that it is not the combination of the possibly existing things that necessitates and sustains the existence of the totality but the combination of their necessitating acts (i.e., the act of one thing necessitating the existence of the thing that comes after it). Such an argument is fallacious in that the act of necessitating depends on the existence of the thing that has possible existence and therefore has possible existence in itself. The necessitating act of the thing with possible existence can only be a reality after existence has been necessitated and sustained for it. Therefore, the necessitating and the sustaining act of a thing with possible existence is also reliant on the cause that necessitates and sustains its existence. Hence, the act of necessitating has to be included in the totality that contains things with possible existence. The necessitating act of the members of the totality cannot be an explanation for the necessitation and the sustaining of the totality and its individual members unless the members and therefore the totality first exist. However, it is the very existence of the totality and its members that is the subject of enquiry in the first place.

In reality, when a possible being necessitates the existence of another possible being, that necessitating act is not from itself because in itself, as it was shown previously, it does not have the ability to necessitate and sustain existence.[104] A possible being necessitates the existence of another possible being only through the necessitating and the sustaining ability given to it through the necessitation and the sustaining of its own existence. This means that its necessitating ability also has possible existence. Therefore, that necessitation, sustaining and the accompanying ability are dependent on something else. The ability to necessitate and sustain existence is not included in an infinite number of possible beings because they are all indifferent to existence and non-existence. Hence, they cannot exist nor have the ability to necessitate and sustain another's existence if they do not have something that does not have possible existence (i.e., has necessary existence) necessitating and sustaining their own existence first.

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concept and has a reality outside of the mind then its existence is dependent on the individual members in it (i.e., the possible beings). It is possible for each and every member of the totality to simultaneously not exist. This is because the essence of each member is indifferent to existence and non-existence. Anything which is indifferent to existence and non-existence has possible existence and needs another to necessitate and sustain its existence. If that other is also a being which is indifferent to existence and non-existence then it too has possible existence and it is possible for it not to exist and so on *ad infinitum*.

[104]Otherwise it would not need another to necessitate its own existence.

A final consideration has to be taken into account in order to complete the argument that a totality of things with possible existence needs a cause outside of itself that has necessary existence. It can be argued that each thing which has possible existence is the cause that necessitates the existence of another thing which has possible existence and in return that second thing necessitates the existence of the first. This is what is known as circular causation. Say, for the sake of the argument, that S necessitates and sustains the existence of T which necessitates and sustains the existence of U which in return necessitates and sustains the existence of S and so on in a circular causation.

Based on the premise that S, T and U have possible existence, in order for S to necessitate and sustain the existence of T, it must first have something necessitating and sustaining its own existence. Similarly, for T to necessitate and sustain U, it must have its own existence necessitated and sustained. Again, in order for U to necessitate and sustain S it must have its own existence necessitated and sustained. If S is the necessitating and the sustaining cause of T which is the cause of U which is the cause of S then, S is the necessitating and the sustaining cause of itself, a claim that has already been shown to lead to a contradiction. In fact, the impossibility of circular causation is based on the same reasoning that was used to argue why the totality of things existing possibly cannot have its existence necessitated without a cause external to it. S, T and U are all defined by their indifference to existence and non-existence and as such cannot exist without an external cause necessitating their existence.[105]

Having given the reason why a totality of things with possible existence needs a cause outside of it to give it its existence, it can be shown that the cause that necessitates their existence must be a being that when considered in itself has necessary existence and therefore does not need anything to necessitate and sustain its existence. If the cause that necessitates and sustains the existence of possible beings also has possible existence it would be included in the totality of things that have possible existence and will therefore also need a cause to necessitate its existence. Hence, even if the causality that necessitates the existence of a thing that has possible existence is referred to another thing which has possible existence, still, it needs to end at a being that has necessary existence. There is no

[105]Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 81-82, Chapter 27; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma`ād*, 23, Discourse 1, Chapter 17; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, 568-570, Part 11, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 22-34, Method 4, Metaphysics. Also see: *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 245-246, Element 3, Part 1.

need to appeal to the impossibility of infinite regress to demonstrate the need of the totality of things that have possible existence for a being that has necessary existence. This is because, as mentioned above, the totality of infinite number of possible beings taken together are indifferent to existence and non-existence. In its entirety it has nothing in itself except indifference to existence and non-existence (i.e., the possibility of either existing or not existing) and needs a cause to necessitate and sustain its existence.

Ibn Sīnā had realized that the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary does not need to appeal to the impossibility of infinite regress. In *Ishārāt*, he states:

> [In regards to] any series consisting of causes and effects, whether finite or infinite, it became apparent from [what was demonstrated] before this that if in that series there is nothing but effects [then,] it needs a cause outside of it.[106]

Similarly, in *al-Shifā*, he states:

> [Once again] from the beginning this would be in need of the existence of a third thing through which either existence (as distinct from non-existence) or non-existence (as distinct from existence) would be assigned [for the possible] when the cause of its existence with [this state of affairs] would not have been specified. This would be another cause, and the discussion would extend to an infinite regress. And, if it regresses infinitely, the existence of the possible, with all this, would not have been specified by it. As such, its existence would not have been realized. This is impossible, not only because this leads to an infinity of causes-for this is a dimension, the impossibility of which is still open to doubt in this place-but because no dimension has been arrived at through which its existence is specified, when it has been supposed to be existing. Hence, it has been shown to be true that whatever is possible in its existence does not exist unless rendered necessary with respect to its cause.[107]

[106]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 37, Method 4, Metaphysics.

[107]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 31-32, Book 1, Chapter 6.

These two passages clearly show that Ibn Sīnā was well aware that the argument did not need to depend on the impossibility of infinite regress. In the second passage Ibn Sīnā is stating that his argument does not rely on the impossibility of infinite regress. In other words, even if the existence of each possible being is necessitated and sustained by another possible being and so on *ad infinitum*, the totality still needs a cause to necessitate and sustain its existence as it was argued above. Hence, even if one can argue that it is possible to have a series of causes going back infinitely, if each and every cause has possible existence then, the totality will still need a cause to necessitate and sustain its existence. The being which is the cause that necessitates and sustains the existence of the totality must have necessary existence because otherwise it would be another member of the totality of possible beings. Without the impossibility of infinite regress the Necessary Being necessitates and sustains the existence of a series of causes that go back infinitely. However, it may be argued (as many theologians and philosophers do) that a series of causes cannot go back infinitely. Therefore, such a series not only needs the Necessary Being to necessitate and sustain its existence but also that the series must begin with the Necessary Being bringing into existence a possible being which can then be the cause of another possible being and so on. In fact Ibn Sīnā reiterates this point several times in *Ishārāt*.

Up to this point in the argument it has been established that:

1. All things that have possible existence, whether considered individually or as a totality need a cause outside of itself to necessitate their existence, and
2. The being that necessitates their existence must have necessary existence.

From the premise that the Necessary Being does not need anything to necessitate and sustain its existence it is inferred that it does not have a cause for its existence. The next step in the argument is to examine the attributes of the being which has necessary existence to see if it can be said to be God. Moreover, if it is to be the God of monotheists it has to be shown that there is only one such Necessary Being.

Unlike a thing which has possible existence, the essence of a being that has necessary existence is identical with and indistinguishable from its existence. The Necessary Being, to put it another way, has no essence other than its existence. Otherwise, if its essence was distinguishable from its existence like that of a thing with possible existence it would be the

case that when considered in itself it would not have necessary existence and would need another to necessitate and sustain its existence. Therefore, necessity of existence cannot be an accidental feature of the being with necessary existence because then when considered in itself, the Necessary Being would no longer have necessary existence and would be in need of an external cause to necessitate and sustain its existence.[108]

There are then two other assumptions that can be made, either its essence is identical with its existence in which case the conclusion being sought is achieved, or necessity of existence is part of a Necessary Being's essence. Its essence, however, must also be identical to its existence and not just part of it. If existence was only part of it then it would be comprised of necessary existence and something else. That something, not being the same as its necessary existence when considered in itself can only have possible existence. Having possible existence it is indifferent to existence and non-existence and needs a cause to necessitate and sustain its existence. The argument that will follow is not only a proof for why the Necessary Being's essence is identical with its existence but also why it cannot be composed of a combination of a component with necessary existence and one or more components of possible existence.

Take EP to be that which is comprised of necessary existence and something else. Take E to represent the necessary existent component of EP and P to represent the something else with possible existence. E existentially precedes P, as it is the case that P's existence is dependent on E. Hence, E is the true necessary existence that necessitates and sustains P and every other possibly existent being. Then, P must be included in the totality of other possibly existent things and not as part of the necessary existent being that is their cause.

E and P cannot have a separate existence to EP (i.e., the combination) because it was assumed that E and P are both part of an entity known as EP which has necessary existence. The existence of P must then either be necessitated by E or something else. If it is necessitated by something else then EP's existence and therefore E's and P's existence is dependent on something else to necessitate and sustain its existence which is contradictory to the original claim that EP has necessary existence. EP's existence must therefore be dependent on its parts E and P. For EP to exist, E must necessitate and sustain P. This means that for EP to exist, E must necessitate and sustain EP since EP's existence is

[108] Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 274-277, Book 8, Chapter 4; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 76-77, Chapter 24; Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 55-56; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 70-71, Method 4, Metaphysics; Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 97-98, Element 2.

dependent on E necessitating and sustaining P. Because it was assumed that E and P exist together as one being and not separately, E's existence is also dependent on EP and therefore dependent on P. Therefore, for E to necessitate P, EP and as a consequence P must first exist. If P already exists then there is no reason for E to necessitate and sustain its existence. In addition, at least E was assumed to have necessary existence on its own and without the need of anything, including P, to necessitate and sustain its existence.

In other words, for E to necessitate and sustain the existence of P, EP (i.e., the combination) and as a consequence P must exist first in order to cause and sustain the existence of E and P. Similarly, for EP to exist, E must first necessitate and sustain P and as a consequence EP. EP must therefore precede its own existence and necessitate and sustain its own existence. The impossibility of such a proposition is clear by considering both the fact that a thing cannot precede its own existence and that in order for EP to exist it must both precede its own existence and not precede its own existence.[109] The reason that a Necessary Being cannot be comprised of two component parts one of which is necessary and one of which is possible is due to the fact that they are contradictory to each other. A being which is comprised of a component part which has necessary existence and a component part which has possible existence is both necessary in itself and necessary through another (i.e., another has necessitated and sustained its existence). This, however, is impossible. The above proof indicates that impossibility.[110]

Another attribute of the necessary existence is that it cannot be a composition in any way. In a composition either the parts can exist independently of the whole and each other or they can only exist with the whole. If the parts can exist independently of the whole then the existence of the whole is necessitated by its parts in which case the whole does not have necessary existence in itself. A further consideration that needs to be accounted for is that if the parts can exist independently of the whole then, the whole needs a cause to have

[109]In other words, E and P must exist first so that E can necessitate and sustain P and as a consequence necessitate and sustain EP, while EP has to exist before E and P (i.e., E and P must exist second) in order to necessitate and sustain the existence of E and P. This is a conjunction of contradictories and therefore impossible.

[110]The same argument although in a different format is given by Ibn Sīnā. See: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 274-283, Book 8, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 73-74, Chapter 21. Also for similar and related arguments see: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 66-69, Method 4, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, 551-553 and 557-556, Part 11, Metaphysics; Ṭūsī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 54-56. In General Ibn Sīnā argues that the Necessary Being must be necessary in every way; see: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma`ād*, 6, Discourse 1, Chapter 6.

necessitated and sustained the joining of the parts.[111] The parts either have possible existence or necessary existence. If the parts have possible existence then, the same argument which was given for why a series of possible beings need a cause outside of itself to necessitate and sustain its existence, can also be given in this case. If, however, the parts have necessary existence the argument is then directed to whether or not there can be more than one Necessary Being.

The assumption, however, can be made that the parts cannot exist without the whole and the whole cannot exist without the parts with the whole necessitating the part and the part necessitating the whole. Take EQ to represent the whole and E and Q as the parts of that whole. For EQ to exist necessarily it must be necessitated and sustained by E and Q, since both E and Q have necessary existence and cannot be the effect of the other. But for E to exist EQ must necessitate and sustain it. Similarly for Q to exist EQ must necessitate and sustain it. The result is similar to that of EP, in the sense that something must both precede and not precede itself in existence in order to exist and remain in existence. Moreover, E must become the necessitating and the sustaining cause of the existence of Q and vice versa even though it was assumed that E and Q have necessary existence on their own. The Necessary Being, therefore cannot be comprised of parts.

The proponents of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary also argue for the uniqueness of the Necessary Being in the sense that there is only one Necessary Being. Everything else other than that one Necessary Being has possible existence. Ibn Sīnā, ingeniously, considers all the different aspects of such a claim, some of which are related to the question discussed above about whether or not a Necessary Being can be composed of parts. The assumption that more than one Necessary Being exists requires that they have in common with each other the fact that they have necessary existence. Each one must also have a specific difference that separates it from the other Necessary Beings for otherwise without a distinguishing feature there is no basis to say that more than one entity is the extension of the concept of a being with necessary existence. The specific difference of each Necessary Being is either that which is a condition (i.e., is a cause) for the necessity of existence or not. Clearly, it is not a condition for the necessity of existence for otherwise every being with necessary existence is in need of that feature in order to have necessary existence. If every being has that feature then again we arrive at the situation where one

[111]Ibid.; Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 96, Element 2.

being is not distinguished from the other. It must therefore be the case that necessity of existence is an accidental feature of that specific difference. However, the impossibility of the assumption that necessity of existence can be an accidental feature of the Necessary Being has already been shown above. It was shown that if the thing in itself does not have necessary existence then it has possible existence. The only other option is to claim that the necessity of existence is part of the identity (i.e., the essence) of each Necessary Being with the other part being different between each of the necessary beings. Then, the part which is different either has necessary existence or has possible existence. It was shown that in either case the two cannot be instantiated in reality due to the contradictions that arise from both assumptions. It was also shown that circular causation is impossible and therefore it cannot be the case that the first Necessary Being is the cause of the possible element of the second Necessary Being whereas the second Necessary Being is the cause of the possible element of the first Necessary Being. Therefore, more than one Necessary Being cannot exist.[112]

Ibn Sīnā presents another argument for the unicity of the Necessary Being. He reasons that that if there is more than one Necessary Being then each one is either completely different in its essence or different in some component part of their essence. The latter has already been considered and shown to be implausible. In fact, the former had already been considered as well since necessity of existence must then be an accident for each Necessary Being making them in actuality possibly existent beings. Ibn Sīnā, however, continues to present another argument for its impossibility. They must, therefore, be completely different. If they are completely different then, one Necessary Being has a certain level of perfection which the other does not have and vice versa. Let us take X and Y to be two necessary beings. X has a certain level of perfection, namely, X-ness, which Y, being completely different to X, does not have. In such a case, X's existence is limited by not having Y-ness and Y's existence will be limited by not having X-ness. Limitation, or as Ibn Sīnā calls it privation, is something added to the existence of the Necessary Being in the sense that what one Necessary Being does not have is what identifies and distinguishes it from the other Necessary Being. This, however, means that the Necessary Being's

[112]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 34-36, Book 1, Chapter 8, 279-283, Book 8, Chapter 5; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 51-70, Method 4, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt*, 567-568, Part 11, Metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 75-76, Chapter 22; Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 99-101, Element 2.

existence is dependent on something it does not have since it is that which it does not have which distinguishes it as what it is in itself. In a manner of speaking, it is comprised of two component parts, what it has, namely, X-ness and what it does not have (i.e., Y-ness). That it is a composite and that it is dependent on what it does not have is not only contradictory to having necessary existence but also makes each one dependent on the other. X's existence is dependent on the component parts of X-ness and not having Y-ness. Not having Y-ness, however, is dependent on Y. A similar circumstance applies to Y. Hence, the two are dependent on each other. But it has already been shown that circular causation is impossible. It must then be then be the case that there cannot be more than one Necessary Being.[113]

It might be argued that X is distinguished from Y not by what it does not have but by what it does have, namely X-ness. However, what distinguishes X from Y cannot be just X-ness because it can always be argued that X-ness is Y-ness and therefore there is no difference between the two and they are one and the same thing. Hence, X must be comprised of X-ness and that X-ness is not Y-ness. If it is further argued that one Necessary Being must then also be limited and comprised of parts because it has necessity of existence and not possibility of existence. In response to this, it can be argued that not having possible existence is having necessary existence and therefore not a limitation or a composition. It is simply a negation of a privation. In the case of two necessary beings, however, because both have been assumed to have necessary existence and a kind of perfection not shared by the other, then the negation of what it does not have is necessarily an indication of limitation and lack of perfection not a negation of privation. That is, Y-ness is not a privation but a kind of perfection and similarly X-ness is not a privation but a kind of perfection. Therefore, due to the impossibility of circular causation and a Necessary Being having dependence on another, it must be the cause that two necessary beings cannot be instantiated in reality. There is, therefore, only one Necessary Being.

The argument presented by Ibn Sīnā and other Muslim thinkers to show why it is impossible for the existence of the Necessary Being to be distinguished in any way from its essence is in reality sufficient for showing that there cannot be more than one Necessary Being. This is because the extension of a single concept can only be a single reality. Anything else that implies multiplicity is something added to that concept. For example,

[113]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 280, Book 8, Chapter 5.

the extension of the concept of 'human being' includes more than one human being only because concepts such as place, time and other such concepts are added to it. The necessary existence cannot have anything added to its reality for that would imply that its reality is caused (i.e., necessitated and sustained) by another.[114]

Other attributes can also be affirmed of a being that has necessary existence. A being which has necessary existence is perfect in every way. It has all existential perfection that can be found in its creation in an unlimited way because any perfection is dependent on it for its existence.[115] For example, it is omnipotent since the existence of any power other than the one that belongs to the Necessary Being is dependent on it and it is the cause of everything. The Necessary Being is omniscient because the existence of everything (including knowledge that can be found in its creation) is caused by it (i.e., the necessary being is the cause that necessitates and sustains its existence) and therefore it has knowledge of them.[116] It is not corporeal because corporeal objects are comprised of parts and are in need of certain conditions (for example, space) in order to exist. It is unchanging, because only things which have possible existence can change. A thing with possible existence can change because its essence can acquire new attributes and it is

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[114]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 36-37, Book 1, Chapter 7, 278-279, Book 8, Chapter 5; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 51-55, Method 4, Metaphysics.

[115]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 283.

[116]Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 296; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 83-836, Chapter 29, 97-199, Chapter 34-35; Ṭūsī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 390-396. To necessitate a possible being's existence is, as it was argued above, to bring it into existence *ex nihilo* (Hence the term 'creation'). In Islamic philosophy knowledge is seen as an existential perfection and lack of knowledge (i.e., ignorance) as a lack of existential perfection. A being that is perfect in every way would also be perfect in terms of His knowledge. Ibn Sīnā, in addition to mentioning that the Necessary Being has all the perfection of its creation to an unlimited degree, goes on to argue for the knowledge of the Necessary Being from its incorporeality. According to Ibn Sīnā corporeality prevents knowledge and anything that is incorporeal is capable of having knowledge and since the Necessary Being is incorporeal and has knowledge of itself and its creation then its omniscient. However, there is no need to argue for the Necessary Being's omniscience through its incorporeality. The fact that the Necessary Being is the cause of knowledge in its creation is a sufficient reason for its omniscience. This is because it would have the attribute of knowledge and self awareness and since it is the creator of everything it would also be omniscient. There are various different arguments that have been given for God's omniscience in Islamic philosophy. Some of these include arguments from order and design in the world, arguments from the origination of the world which proves God's omniscience by arguing for his free will (i.e., a being which has free will must by necessity have knowledge). See: Al-Hillī, *Tarjome wa Sharḥ Bāb Hādī `Ashar*, 48-53. Also, Mullā Ṣadrā argues that if God does not have knowledge then it will be a limited being and a limited being which can be more perfect than it actually is has possible existence because it is possible for it to not exist as it does.

possible for its essence to be something other than what it is.[117] Furthermore, if it was to change then it would be gaining an attribute which it did not have before. The attribute which it did not have before could only have possible existence and therefore in need of a cause to necessitate and sustain its existence. The cause is either itself or something else. It cannot be something else because it is the cause of everything that exists. It cannot be itself, since then we are faced with the same impossibility that was proven for EP above.[118]

The Necessary Being's essence cannot be conceived. If an essence of a thing is conceived in the mind, then its existence can been distinguished from its essence since its existence does not enter the mind. It was argued above that only in regards to possible beings can their existence be distinguished from their essence. Hence, in regards to the Necessary Being, its essence cannot be distinguished from its existence and therefore cannot enter the mind.[119] This means that the Necessary Being cannot in any way be seen or comprehended. It is only known that it exists.

Attributes such as omnipotence and omniscient cannot be something that is added to the Necessary Being's essence (i.e., added to what it is in itself) and must be identical with its essence. Rather, such attributes are a concomitant of a being that has necessary existence and are all indications of existential perfection. These attributes can be imagined as being distinguished only through conceptualizing a certain level of existential perfection, such as omnipotence, without conceptualizing the other attributes of perfection along with it. In the essence of a being that has necessary existence, however, there is no distinction between these attributes. When an attribute is additional to a thing's essence either that attribute is the effect of that essence or has a separate existence of its own. If it is an effect of the essence then it cannot be an attribute of that essence. If, however, it has existence of its own, not only does such a claim lead to multiplicity of necessary beings, but also the Necessary Being will be dependent on another being for its existence.[120]

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[117]Ibn Sīnā did not believe that a thing's essence can change and maintained that essences must always remain the same. However, Mullā Sadrā disputed the notion of unchanging essences and argued that it was a thing's existence that does not change. Ibn Sīnā was of the opinion that possible being's essences gain new accidental properties.

[118]Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 76, Chapter 22.

[119]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 15-16, Method 4, Metaphysics.

[120]Since the Necessary Being will need another being in order for it to be what it is. See: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 273-274, Book 8, Chapter 4; Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhīyāt Dāneshnāmeh*, 79-81, Chapter 26; Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād*, 413.

It is not necessary for the purpose of this study to present the proofs for all the attributes that Muslim philosophers and theologians claim for God. What is important is that it has been demonstrated that if there are existent beings that do not have necessary existence, then there must be a Necessary Being that necessitates and sustains their existence. The Necessary Being that necessitates and sustains their existence is necessarily unique and has such attributes of existential perfection as omnipotence, omniscience and so forth. Furthermore, attributes that indicate a lack of existential perfection, such as change, having an essence separate to its existence and so on are negated from such a being. Such a Necessary Being is what is called in theology God.

The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary requires the existence of only one possible being for its cogency. Ibn Sīnā and many Muslim thinkers who came after him were of the opinion that one has knowledge of one's self without any intermediaries and from the moment of consciousness. Therefore, having knowledge of one's self and the fact that one exists possibly satisfies the requirement that at least one possible being exists. The argument can therefore be constructed entirely on *a priori* knowledge, making the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary an *a priori* cosmological argument.

Criticisms of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary

One of the most well-known critics of Ibn Sīnā was the 'Ash`arī theologian Abū Ḥāmid Muhammad al-Ghazzālī (450A.H./1058C.E.-505A.H./1111C.E.). In his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), al-Ghazzālī attempts to defend the claims of the 'Ash`arī theologians against the views of what he labels 'the philosophers'. In many places in *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazzālī misrepresents the views of the philosophers he set out to criticize and in many of his arguments he demonstrates a lack of knowledge regarding many of the philosophical principles that underlie the arguments of his opponents.[121] A thorough

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[121]Al-Ghazzālī was greatly indebted to Ibn Sīnā for his scholarly popularity both before he wrote *Tahāfut* and after. Before *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazzālī prepared a work titled *Maqāsid al-Falāsifah* which is merely an Arabic translation of Ibn Sīnā's *Dāneshnāmeh* but which Al-Ghazzālī presented it as his own work. It is likely that al-Ghazzālī prepared *Maqāsid* in order to suggest that he had sufficient knowledge about the philosophical principles and discussion of his time. His *Mishkāt al-'Anwār*, which is a mystical analysis of a Qur'ānic text, is also largely influenced by Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of the same text.

examination of *Tahāfut* is beyond the scope of this study and the current discussion will have to be limited to al-Ghazzālī's arguments against the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary.

Herbert A. Davidson in his book *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* also employs al-Ghazzālī's arguments against the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. His criticisms will be considered along with that of al-Ghazzālī. Al-Ghazzālī begins by stating that the expressions 'the possible' (*al-mumkin*) and 'the necessary' (*al-wājib*) are vague. The meaning of the former is nothing other than a reference to that which has an external cause for its existence. Similarly, the latter is just another term for that which does not have an external cause for its existence.[122] The general idea behind al-Ghazzālī's argument is that the basis of Ibn Sīnā's Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary is an arbitrary concept of God with certain kinds of attributes. He argues that if Ibn Sīnā's so called proofs were properly analyzed without relying on such a concept of God, the demonstration collapses and Ibn Sīnā fails to show that God exists. Al-Ghazzālī states:

> But all their "demonstrations" are arbitrary [matters] built on taking the expression "necessary existence" in a sense that has necessary consequences [following from it] and on the acceptance that proof has demonstrated a necessary existence having the quality they attributed to it. But this is not the case, as previously [shown].[123]

Hence, al-Ghazzālī attempts to undermine the two fundamental premises of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary by showing that:

1. There is no reason why an infinite chain of things with possible existence cannot have necessary existence and

[122]Al-Ghazzālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A parallel English-Arabic text*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 82, Discussion 4.

[123]Ibid., 119, Discussion 8.

2. There is no reason to accept that the Necessary Being proven by the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary, if it is in fact proven, does not have internal causes that necessitate its existence.

To prove the first point al-Ghazzālī maintains that, given the expression 'possible existence' only means that which has an external cause for its existence, there is no reason why what is true of each and every unit in a series that contains an infinite number of things with possible existence should also be true of the totality of the units. Even though the units are individually in need of an external cause for their existence, the totality is not in need of anything for its existence. Not everything, al-Ghazzālī argues, which is true of each and every unit is also true of the whole. For example, the unit is one, whereas, the series is many and the unit is part of the series while the series is not a part of anything. In other words, al-Ghazzālī is arguing that just because every possible being has possible existence does not mean that all possible beings taken together has possible existence. Hence, according to al-Ghazzālī, the world taken as infinite units of things with possible existence, with each unit having as its cause another unit with possible existence can in its totality be said to have necessary existence.[124]

The twentieth century Western philosopher Bertrand Russell also gives the same objection. Russell in his famous example argues that the fact that every existent human being has a mother does not mean that it is true that the whole of the human race has a mother.[125] Al-Ghazzālī's objection, however, is superior to that of Russell's. It can always be argued that having a mother is not something which is necessary for a human being but having a cause is necessary for a possible being. That is, one can imagine that in some future time a human being is constructed biologically from natural elements without the need of using anything from another human being. Hence, the reasons why having a cause also applies to the totality of possible beings is not the same as why having a mother does not apply to the totality of the human race. Such a reply cannot be given to al-Ghazzālī's example because one cannot argue that it is not necessary for each individual unit not to be one.

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[124]Ibid., 83, Discussion 4.

[125]Bertrand Russell and F.C. Copleston, "The Existence of God: A Debate between Bertrand Russell and Father F.C. Copleston," in *The Existence of God*, ed. John Hick (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 175.

Following along the same line of argument Davidson maintains that Ibn Sīnā does not show why the totality of infinite things with possible existence cannot add up to a being that has necessary existence. According to Davidson, Ibn Sīnā rules out this possibility only by considering his definition of the necessary existence as that which does not have any internal component parts. Hence, he is only arguing from a definition rather than providing any proof.[126]

Both al-Ghazzālī and Davidson then go on to argue that the Necessary Being can be comprised of parts.[127] Davidson claims that after Ibn Sīnā has established, based on a definition, that the totality of possible beings cannot have necessary existence in itself, he goes onto to consider the alternatives about what can necessitate and sustain its existence. According to Davidson, Ibn Sīnā considers only two alternatives. Either that the totality is necessitated and sustained by one of the units contained in it or by something external to it. Ibn Sīnā, Davidson claims, had reasoned that if the cause that necessitates and sustains the existence of the totality was one of the units in it then, that unit would primarily be the cause of itself. The cause that necessitates and sustains the totality is in reality the cause of all the units within that totality. Therefore, since the unit that is the cause of the totality is also a member of that totality, the unit would be the cause of itself. Davidson then remarks:

> Curiously, however, he does not consider a further alternative, which we may call (β3), the thesis that the totality is sustained in existence not by a single component but by all the components together. On this alternative the totality of possibly existent beings-in effect, the entire universe-would indeed be possibly existent in Avicenna's sense; for it would, taken as a whole, exist by reason of something different from itself. Still, it would not exist by reason of anything external to it, but would be possibly existent only inasmuch as it exists by reason of its own components. It would be possibly existent by virtue of itself, necessarily existent by virtue of its components.[128]

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[126]Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God,* 305.

[127]Al-Ghazzālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers,* 125-127, Discussion 10. Because Davidson presents the same argument as al-Ghazzālī, I saw no need to repeat the argument of the latter from this point onwards.

[128]Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God,* 305. Ibn Sīnā does in fact consider this alternative in a number of places where he states that the cause of the whole is either

Davidson notes that Ibn Sīnā could always respond by arguing that each of the units would then be part of the cause that necessitates and sustains its own existence. However, Davidson states:

> But to eliminate the new alternative, according to which the components together maintain the totality in existence. Avicenna would have to show that a possibly existent being cannot even be part of the cause of the existence of itself.[129]

Davidson goes on to suggest that there is another way to construe the totality of things with possible existence that does not require each unit to be part of the cause of itself. Rather, it can be said that the totality is dependent on its component parts to necessitate and sustain its existence and those component parts are each dependent on their own parts (i.e., subcomponent of the original totality) for their existence and so on *ad infinitum*. In this way, Davidson maintains, it could be argued that the totality's existence is necessitated and sustained not just by its component parts but also by its infinite subcomponent parts and so forth. Then, there is no need for a cause external to the universe to necessitate and sustain its existence. The universe's existence can be said to be necessitated and sustained by its component and subcomponent parts. Davidson claims that this is in fact the gist of al-Ghazzālī criticism of the proof.[130]

Both al-Ghazzālī and Davidson's criticisms of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary are based on a mistaken understanding of what it means to be a thing with possible existence. Furthermore, it seems that they did not fully comprehend the complexities of Ibn Sīnā's arguments regarding both the impossibility of the totality of things with possible existence to have necessary existence and the uniqueness of the Necessary Being. Ibn Sīnā, as we will show below, did not rely on the premise that the Necessary Being cannot be comprised of parts to prove that the totality of things with

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all the entities that constitute that whole or some of them. For example see: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 22-25, 31-35, Method 4, Metaphysics.

[129]Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God*, 305-306.

[130]Ibid., 306.

possible existence cannot add up to a being with necessary existence. Rather, after demonstrating that the totality of things with possible existence cannot add up to a being with necessary existence, he sets out to show that the Necessary Being cannot be comprised of parts. He argues that if the Necessary Being is comprised of parts then, either the same difficulties as those which arise for a possible being arise in the sense that it will need an external cause to necessitate and sustain its existence, or a contradiction occurs. This fundamental confusion underlies both al-Ghazzālī and Davidson's criticisms.

To begin with al-Ghazzālī makes the erroneous supposition that the expression 'possible being' can be replaced with the expression 'that which needs an external cause for its existence'. Although it is true that the possible being needs a cause to necessitate and sustain its existence, use of the expression 'possible being' in itself does not make such an assumption. In other words, al-Ghazzālī's expression 'that which needs an external cause for its existence' implies that a possible being needs an external cause for its existence without actually investigating the modal nature of a possible being which can demonstrate why it needs an external cause to necessitate and sustain its existence as opposed to its non-existence. The expression 'possible being', only refers to a thing that when considered in itself, it must be indifferent to existence and non-existence. Only after establishing the modal nature of a possible being, does Ibn Sīnā demonstrate that it must have a cause external to itself to necessitate and sustain its existence. Al-Ghazzālī's expression skips any discussion related to the modal nature of a thing with possible existence and only considers the fact that it needs a cause. It could be for this reason that he does not seem to understand Ibn Sīnā's argument for why it is impossible for the totality of infinite things with possible existence to have necessary existence.

In either case, replacing the expression 'possible existence' and 'necessary existence' with al-Ghazzālī's terminology does not cause any problems to Ibn Sīnā's arguments and the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary if Ibn Sīnā's reasoning is understood correctly. It might even be the case that by replacing the two expressions, it becomes much easier to demonstrate the existence of a unique Necessary Being based on the fact that there is no need to demonstrate why a possible being needs a cause to necessitate and sustain its existence.

Before considering the serious objections raised by al-Ghazzālī and Davidson, one important point should be made about Ibn Sīnā and whether he set out to disprove the hypothesis that a thing can be part of the cause of itself. In several places in *Ishārāt*, Ibn

Sīnā states that the cause of the entirety of the possible beings is either all of them or some of them and rejects both notions.[131] He considers whether the totality of things with possible existence can be the cause that necessitates and sustains the existence of the whole and rejects such a notion on grounds that are different to those mentioned by Davidson. However, Ibn Sīnā should not be criticized for not attempting to show why a thing cannot be part of the cause that necessitates and sustains the existence of itself because he would have assumed, quite correctly, that the same reason that can be given for why a thing cannot be the full cause of itself also applies to why it cannot be a part of the cause of itself. Davidson agrees that if X is part of the cause that necessitates and sustains the totality and that totality includes X then, X is part of the cause that necessitates and sustains its own existence. If X is the cause that necessitates and sustains the existence of the totality and the totality includes X, then X is the cause that necessitates and sustains itself. A contradiction arises because X must precede its own existence in order to necessitate and sustain its own existence. Hence, for X to necessitate and sustain the existence of the totality it must both exist and not exist at the same time.

The same reasoning can be given for why it is impossible for X to be part of the cause that necessitates and sustains its own existence. That is, X would have to first exist in order to be part of the cause that necessitates and sustains the existence of the whole. The whole however, also includes X. That would mean that X must exist before necessitating and sustaining its own existence since without being part of the cause that necessitates and sustains the existence of the whole and therefore itself, X's existence cannot be necessitated and sustained. Hence, for X to become existent it must precede its own existence and consequently be both existent and non-existent.

In either case, as mentioned earlier, Ibn Sīnā does not make the claim that because a Necessary Being cannot have parts then the totality of infinite things with possible existence cannot have necessary existence. Ibn Sīnā reasons that it is impossible for an infinite number of things with possible existence to have necessary existence because each and every unit in the totality is indifferent to existence and non-existence. Since, each and every member in the totality is indifferent to existence and non-existence then necessitation and sustaining of existence is not included in any of them. They must, therefore, have an external cause that necessitates and sustains their existence. Ibn Sīnā's argument applies

[131]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 22-25, 31-35, Method 4, Metaphysics.

whichever way the series of possibly existent things are stacked. Hence, it makes no difference whether they are arranged next to each other or from inside to the outside. Based on the same reasoning, even if an entity has internal components and subcomponents to necessitate and sustain its existence, if those components and subcomponents have possible existence when considered in themselves, then they are all indifferent to existence and non-existence. In their entirety, they do not have the ability to necessitate and sustain anything's existence unless something necessitates and sustains their existence first. That which necessitates and sustains their existence must therefore have necessary existence.

Take as an example, the moon as a thing which has possible existence but which can be divided into component parts, with those parts being divided into subcomponent parts and so on *ad infinitum*. Even though it has component parts and subcomponent parts and so forth, *ad infinitum*, sustaining its existence, because all the component parts and subcomponent parts have possible existence, the moon itself will also have possible existence. Both the moon and its parts will then need an external entity to necessitate and sustain its existence. The situation would be no different if the moon was also a component part of another entity, with that entity being the component part of another entity above it and so on *ad infinitum*.

In order to pinpoint the difference between Ibn Sīnā's claim and that of al-Ghazzālī's and Davidson's, take the following series as representing infinite things with possible existence:

$$P_1, P_2, P_3, P_4, P_n\rightarrow$$

Al-Ghazzālī and Davidson claim that the explanation why P_1 exists is P_2 and the explanation why P_2 exists is P_3 and so on *ad infinitum*. Ibn Sīnā and the proponents of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary would argue that al-Ghazzālī's and Davidson's claim is begging the question. Something cannot be an explanation for another's existence until it has an explanation for its own existence. Hence, P_2 cannot be an explanation for why P_1 exists until it has an explanation for its own existence first. Similarly, P_3 cannot be an explanation for why P_2 exists until it has an explanation for why it exists first and so on *ad infinitum*. Al-Ghazzālī and Davidson have assumed that each possible being has an explanation for its own existence before demonstrating their claim. They have assumed that P_2 already has an explanation for its existence and can therefore be

an explanation for P_1 and that P_3 has an explanation for its existence and therefore can be an explanation for P_2 and so on *ad infinitum.*

In reality, Ibn Sīnā and the proponents of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary would argue, there is no need to consider the issue from the aforementioned perspective. Each possible being, or as al- Ghazzālī would have us say, that which has a cause outside of itself for its existence, when considered in itself does not have necessitation and sustaining of existence in the first place. It cannot be an explanation or a cause for the necessitation and the sustaining of the existence of anything. The ability to necessitate and sustain existence is not from another possible being because that too has nothing when considered in itself. If it has nothing from itself then all that it would be passing onto something else is also nothing. It can only pass on something to other than itself once it has been given existence, an existence which is dependent (i.e., relies on another to necessitate and sustain it). That which it passes on is then also dependent existence not necessary existence. That is, what one possible being passes on to a second possible being is dependency of existence. However, this dependency is not a dependency of existence of the second possible being on the first possible being because the first does not have existence from itself and is also dependent in its existence. Being dependent in its existence it cannot fulfil the requirement of that which the second possible being can depend on to necessitate and sustain its existence. Hence, what the first possible being has passed on to the second possible being is dependency of existence on a thing which is different from both of them. Every unit in a series that includes possible beings has only dependent existence and can only pass on dependency of existence. Therefore none can be the thing which they all depend on to necessitate and sustain their existence since they all only have dependency of existence that is not by itself capable of necessitating and sustaining existence. This dependent existence must then end at a being that does not have dependent existence.

What al-Ghazzālī and Davidson have ignored is that each possible being not only needs a cause to necessitate existence for it but also to sustain it. Only when this is realized does it become clear that possible beings have dependent existence. Al-Ghazzālī and Davidson have assumed that something needs a cause to begin existing but then can become free of that cause for its continued existence. It is only when a possible being is considered not to depend on a cause for its continued existence that it can be an explanation for the existence of another possible being by itself. However, that would assume that a possible being has

become a Necessary Being. It was, however, shown above that a possible being cannot ever become free of its existential cause to necessitate and sustain its existence.

One final issue that should be considered before concluding the discussion of the criticism of al-Ghazzālī and Davidson is al-Ghazzālī's objection that what applies to the unit does not necessarily have to apply to the whole. The reply to this objection can be approached in different ways. It can be argued that the reason why what applies to the unit does not apply to the whole is because the whole does not have a reality of its own. The whole is only a mental concept that collects all the units with possible existence together.[132] Being a mental concept, what applies to the unit does not apply to the concept that refers to the mental act of collecting all those units together.[133] However, when speaking about the existence of the totality of the units, it is the actual existence of each and every unit that is being considered not the concept of collecting them together. Hence, because each and every unit has possible existence and is therefore indifferent to existence and non-existence then it necessarily follows that the totality of each and every unit and not the whole as a mental concept are in need of something external to each and every unit to necessitate and sustain their existence.

That is, the totality when taken as a concept is not in need of a cause because it is non-existent and has neither possibility nor necessity. The negation of need from the totality is due to the non-existence of the subject of the proposition. In other words the non-existence of the subject leads to the failure of the proposition to have a truth-value. In Islamic philosophy such a negative proposition is known as 'negation due to the non-existence of the subject'. However, when speaking of the need of the totality of possible beings for a cause it is not the concept of the totality that we are talking about. It is rather the actual fact that each and every possible being because of their possibility is in need of a cause and this

[132]Interestingly, the eighteenth century philosopher David Hume tries to use the idea that the whole is just a mental composition against the argument that the whole must also have a cause. See: David Hume, "Dialogues concerning natural religion," in *Dialogues concerning natural religion and other writings*, ed. Dorothy Coleman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 65-66, Part 9.

[133]The totality is a mental concept and being a concept it does not have necessity or possibility of existence.

possibility and need for a cause cannot accumulate into a totality with necessary existence because the totality is only a concept.[134]

Arguments have already been given above for why the actual totality (as opposed to the concept of totality) of possible beings is in need of a cause.[135] However, it has to be pointed out that the burden of proof does not actually lie with those who claim that the totality of possible beings cannot have necessary existence. This is because an infinite series of causes and effects that includes only possible beings does not prima facie have necessary existence and if it does not have necessary existence then it can only have possible existence and need a cause to necessitate and sustain its existence.

Even if it is admitted that the whole can be considered as an entity that is additional to its component parts then it is necessarily the case that the existence of the whole is dependent on the existence of its component parts. It was already shown above why such an entity (i.e., an entity that is comprised of components that have possible existence) must have an external cause to necessitate its existence. Therefore, the criticism of al-Ghazzālī and Davidson of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary fails to refute it.

Among the mediaeval European scholastic philosophers William of Ockham (c.1287-1347C.E.) also undertook a criticism of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. His criticism was directed more towards the version presented by Thomas Aquinas rather than Ibn Sīnā's and even in that version only in terms of the argument's proof for the unicity of God. Stephen P. Menn in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy* implies that Ockham's objection equally applies to the Ibn Sīnian version as it does to the version presented by Thomas Aquinas. He therefore, sets out to criticize the argument on the basis of the Thomist version because, he claims, it is a "less complicated treatment" of the argument.[136] Menn also directs the reader to al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Rushd's (Latin: Averroes) discussions on the subject. Moreover, when presenting Ibn Sīnā's Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary he gives the paraphrased versions by al-

[134]See for example: Jawādī Āmulī, *Tabyīn Barāhīn Ethbāt-e Khodā* (Qom: ISRA Publication Center, 1996), 156-157.

[135]The argument given above can be constructed in a way that can argue both for why the real and the conceptual totality cannot have necessity of existence. The totality in that argument can be either a conceptual totality or a real one but it proves the conclusion either way.

[136]Stephen P. Menn, "Metaphysics: God and being," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 158.

Ghazzālī and Ibn Rushd. However, it has been established that Ibn Rushd's comments on Ibn Sīnā's work is based on secondary literature that was not a representative of the latter's philosophical arguments and views.[137] Al-Ghazzālī's objections have already been considered above.

The discussion that will follow concentrates mainly on Menn's interpretations of Ockham's criticisms and the conclusions he draws from them. Menn asserts that Ibn Sīnā and Aquinas maintain that if X has possible existence then the statement, "X exists," or "X is existent" gives more information about X than the statement, "X is X". We might recall that this was one of the reasons given above for why existence and essence should be intensionally distinguished from each other. Menn adds that some mediaeval thinkers like Ockham denied the Ibn Sīnian distinction between existence and essence.[138] Ockham had rejected the distinction on the basis that terms such as 'existence' unlike terms such as 'white' are not a connotative term. Connotative terms such as white, do not always refer to the same thing and can only signify whiteness when the quality of whiteness is found in a thing.[139] Now for Ockham universals are not metaphysical entities. Instead they are the mind's act of collecting several different things together. For example, the similarity between a white table and a white chair is not by some whiteness additional to them. Outside of the mind there is only a white table and a white chair and the two whitenesses are distinct from each other. Expressions such as 'existence' and 'animal', however, always refer to the same thing. Menn describes Ockham's view in the following manner:

> But (says Ockham) "being" and "animal" always signify the same thing, and there is no reason to think they connote a further beingness or animalness: so

[137]See for example: Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God*, 311-336. Davidson discusses in detail why Ibn Rushd's criticisms are based on a mistaken understanding of Ibn Sīnā's position. It should be emphasized that among Muslim philosophers it had already been established that Ibn Rushd's criticism was based on mistaken assumptions. Furthermore, it seems that Menn has not read Ibn Sīnā's original works since he attributes many Ibn Sīnian discussions of causality found in the extant work *al-Shifā* to Ibn Rushd. Although he does reference *al-Shifā* on one occasion, for some reason he uses the version of the argument presented in al- Ghazzālī's *Tahāfut* and Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. See: Menn, "Metaphysics: God and being," 151.

[138]Menn, "Metaphysics: God and being," 158-159.

[139]Ibid., 159.

> there is no reason to think that either the existence or the essence of the animal Bucephalus is anything other than Bucephalus.[140]

Ockham, Menn continues, accepts that "Bucephalus exists" is not a necessary truth. However, neither is "Bucephalus is Bucephalus". Both statements are only true if Bucephalus exists. For this reason, essence is no more indifferent to existence and non-existence than it is indifferent to being an essence or not being an essence. For Ockham, Menn goes on to say:

> ...sometimes Bucephalus exists and sometimes he does not, but this is not because there is an essence lying around from eternity and waiting to receive existence. Ockham grants that because "Bucephalus exists" is contingent, there is something beyond Bucephalus through which Bucephalus exists, but this is just Bucephalus's external causes, not an *esse* inhering in Bucephalus. And "God exists" is necessary, not because God's essence is or includes *esse*, but because God exists without a cause.[141]

The term *esse* used by Aquinas and Ockham means 'to be' and is used to refer to existence. Ockham concludes, according to Menn, that there is no reason why two or more gods must be either pure necessary existence or necessary existence in addition to a differentia. Each god might be a single simple nature in itself without any common component.[142]

Contrary to what Menn seems to be implying, Muslim philosophers like Ibn Sīnā did not subscribe to the idea that there were essences lying around from eternity waiting to receive existence.[143] Such a position was held only by a number of Mu`tazilah theologians and even fewer 'Ash`arī theologians. The notion, however, was rejected by most philosophers

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[140]Ibid.

[141]Ibid.

[142]Ibid.

[143]See: Ibid., 160. Menn writes: "Few Christian thinkers will admit to believing in essences waiting to receive existence. If such an essence is not itself created, we are denying that everything but God is created by God."

and non-Mu`tazilah theologians of their time. Not long after Ibn Sīnā and at least a century before Ockham the idea was no longer popular among most Muslim philosophers and theologians. Furthermore, to what extent Ockham's views were different and similar to Ibn Sīnā's when it came to universals, individuation and other similar issues is also a subject of debate. Certainly, Ockham himself declared his indebtedness to Ibn Sīnā for his ideas on universals.[144] As Allan Bāck stated:

> Again, in the problem of universals, which has been called the main problem of medieval philosophy, Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham all cite Avicenna (the same passage!) in support of their respective positions. What has often happened with Avicenna's views, as with many others, is that those who repeat them are given credit for being brilliant and having originated them.[145]

The comparison between Ibn Sīnā's philosophical views and that of Ockham's, requires a separate study of its own. However, in response to the Ockham-Menn criticism, two important points should be made. First, the proof for the essence-existence distinction is not limited to that which was discussed by Ockham and Menn. Second, whether or not the proposition "Bucephalus is Bucephalus" is as contingent as the proposition "Bucephalus exists" is unrelated to the argument that the latter needs justification. The requirement for the proposition "Bucephalus is Bucephalus" to be necessarily true is the Law of Identity not the essence-existence distinction. The statement "Bucephalus is Bucephalus" can be interpreted in two ways. It can be interpreted to mean that if there is such a thing as a Bucephalus in the real world then, it must necessarily be itself. It can also mean that the concept of Bucephalus in the mind (i.e., the mental existence of Bucephalus) is necessarily the concept of Bucephalus. In the former case it is speaking of an existence outside of the mind. In the latter it is speaking of an existence inside the mind. In both cases Bucephalus must be itself. If such a proposition is not confirmed as being necessarily true based on the Law of Identity then, there would be no basis to ever establish that Bucephalus is

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[144]William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 266.

[145]Allan Bāck, "The Islamic Background: Avicenna (B. 980; D. 1037) And Averroes (B. 1126; D. 1198)," in *Individuation in Scholasticism*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 40.

Bucephalus even if it did exist outside of the mind. In either case, intuitively, the proposition "Bucephalus is Bucephalus" does not give the same information as "Bucephalus exists" unless in the former case, the second Bucephalus is taken to mean either 'exits' or an 'existent Bucephalus'.

The issue raised by Ockham was not something new for Muslim philosophers. The same criticism was known among Muslim philosophers and theologians as the 'Problem (*shubhah*) of Ibn Kammūnah', named after Sa`d ibn Manṣūr Ibn Kammūnah (d.683A.H./1284C.E.) who died a few years before Ockham's birth.[146] Ibn Kammūnah had actually borrowed the so called problem from Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Habash Suhrawardī (549A.D./1154C.E.-587A.H./1191C.E.), the founder of the Philosophy of Illumination (*Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*), but for some reason the problem was named after him.[147] Suhrawardī explains the problem in *al-Mashāri` wa al-Muṭāriḥāt* and refers to it in his *Talwīḥāt*. Ibn Kammūnah wrote a commentary on *Talwīḥāt* called *Sharḥ Talwīḥāt fī al-`Ilm al-Ilāhī* and it was likely that he acquired the problem from the familiarity he had with Suhrawardī's works.[148]

Ockham's conclusions are at times very similar to that of the position maintained by Suhrawardī who advocated the idea that existence and relations are abstract concepts. After arguing that existence is not a real constituent of things that have reality outside of the mind Suhrawardī goes on to state:

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[146]Alternatively, one can translate *shubhah* as fallacy. For the Problem of Ibn Kammūnah, see: Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: 'Izz Al-Dawla Ibn Kammuna (d. 683/1284) and His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 37-40. Ibn Kamūnah was of Jewish ancestry who had apparently converted to Islam. In a number of his works he sends salutations on Prophet Muhammad and his family. This was the custom of the Shī`ah and in addition to his writing a commentary on al-Suhrawardī's works, who was also considered an adherent of the faith, could be the reason why some have included him among Shī`ah thinkers. However, most likely he was an adherent of the Jewish faith. In his work *Tanqih al-Abḥāth fī al-Baḥth `an al-Milal al-Thilāth*, he criticizes the tenets of the Christian and Muslim faith and defends the Jewish theory of prophethood.

[147]Al-Ghazzālī also makes a similar argument. For al- Ghazzālī's argument see: Al-Ghazzālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 86, where he states: "Why is it impossible for two existents having no cause, neither being the cause of the other, to firmly stand." Al-Ghazzālī's argument, however, lacked the philosophical basis to make such a claim.

[148]For a manuscript copy of Ibn Kammūnah's writing see: Ibn Kammūnah, *Sharḥ Talwīḥāt fī al-`Ilm al-Ilāhī* (UCLA Library, Near Eastern Manuscripts: Caro Minasian Collection Digitization Project, 1856C.E.), DP Number: M61, Microfilm: 04678, 07216. See: pages 100-101. Also see: Suhrawardī, *Al-Mashāri` wa al-Muṭāriḥāt*, ed. and trans. Ṣadr al-Dīn Ṭāhirī (Tehran: Chāpkhāneye Majles-e Shurāye Islāmī, 1385H.S.), 371, Part 4. (Persian translation).

> It is erroneous to try to prove that existence is superadded in concrete things by arguing that if something were not conjoined to the quiddity by a cause, the quiddity would remain in nonexistence. The one who makes this argument posits a quiddity and then joins existence to it, so his opponent can argue that this concrete quiddity is itself from the efficient cause. The argument also can return to the question of whether the added existence is given something else by the efficient cause or whether it is left as it was.[149]

Suhrawardī goes on to argue against what he believes might be a response against his position. He states:

> The followers of the Peripatetics argue that we can think of man without existence, but we cannot think of him without a relation to animality. Yet the relation of animality to humanity means nothing except its being existent in him, either in the mind or in concrete reality. Thus, they posit two existences in the relation of animality to humanity: one belonging to the animality which is in him; and the second, that which becomes existent in humanity by reason of the existence of humanity. Indeed, some of the followers of the Peripatetics base their whole system of metaphysics upon existence.[150]

Suhrawardī distinguishes between what he considers to be the different usages of the term 'existence'. Existence, Suhrawardī claims, is used to indicate a thing's relation to something else, such as, for example, when it is said that something is existent in the house, the mind or in concrete reality. It can also be used as a copula, such as in "Zayd is writing." It may also refer to the reality of a thing the meaning of which, according to Suhrawardī, is indicated by such expressions as "The essence of the thing and its reality," "the existence of the thing," "its concreteness," and "its self." In all these cases, Suhrawardī, argues, the

[149]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, Edited and translated by John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 46, Part 1, Third Discourse.

[150]Ibid., 47.

term ‘existence’ is a mental concept and not a constituent of what is instantiated in realty.[151]

Suhrawardī’s primacy of essences was not a direct threat to the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary because a possible being’s indifference to being instantiated or not being instantiated can be asserted whether or not existence is considered as a real constituent of an existent thing. It can be argued that an existent being either necessarily exists in the sense that when considered in itself it is necessarily instantiated in reality, or it exists possibly in the sense that when considered in itself it is indifferent to being instantiated or not being instantiated in reality. If in itself it is indifferent, then it needs another to necessitate and sustain its instantiation in reality. It is not sufficient for the other that necessitates and sustains its instantiation in reality to be that which when considered in itself also does not have necessity of instantiation in reality. It is not sufficient for it to rely on something that does not have necessity of instantiation in reality for the same reasons that were given above for why a possible being cannot rely on another possible being to necessitate and sustain its existence. Furthermore, it cannot be the case that only part of that which has necessity of instantiation in reality when considered in itself has necessity of instantiation because otherwise the part that when considered in itself does not have necessity of instantiation in reality must be reliant on the part that does have it. The arguments then follows the same course of reasoning as the one given above for why a Necessary Being cannot have parts that have possible existence.

In fact, Suhrawardī himself presented his own version of the proof by arguing for a necessary essence.[152] His objections, however, provided the basis needed for the Problem of Ibn Kammūnah. Muslim philosophers and theologians gave several different replies to the Problem of Ibn Kammūnah and some of their replies will be provided below.[153]

The Problem of Ibn Kammūnah can be stated in the following manner: Philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā argue that God is a being whose necessity of existence is the same as His essence. Hence, if there are two of such beings, then there must be some distinguishing

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[151]Ibid., 47.

[152]Ibid., 87, Part 2, First Discourse. The argument ultimately relies on the same principle of a possible being’s indifference to existence and non-existence that was used by Ibn Sīnā. Suhrawardī, presents several other proofs of his own.

[153]Muslim philosophers and theologians actually provided several different replies, but I have selected the ones that I believe best deals with the problem from a philosophical perspective.

feature that is specific to one of them but which is not found in the other. This distinguishing feature is either an essential property or something which is added to the essence and is therefore an accidental property. If it is an accidental property then it is either added to the essence by the other being or by a third being. All these assumptions can be shown, as we did above, to be impossible. If it is something added by another being independent of the two then it would be the case that their existence is dependent on another and therefore not necessary. If, however, the accidental property of one of the two is caused by the other and vice versa, it would lead to circular causation, which is also impossible. Hence more than one being whose necessity of existence is the same as his essence cannot exist.

The Problem of Ibn Kammūnah continues: That a thing's existence is one with its essence is not unique to the Necessary Being. It is the case with all existent things that their essence is one with their existence since the distinction is intensional. Hence, what is proper to the Necessary Being is that necessity of existence can be abstracted from its essence, whereas with possible beings, existence cannot be abstracted from their essence.[154] Therefore, it can be argued that there are two or more beings that necessity of existence can be abstracted from their essences. That is, it can be the case that there are two or more beings that are completely simple and not a composite in their essence and which necessity of existence can be abstracted from their essence. Not being a composite means that their essence is not distinguished from their existence. In this way, it can be shown that Ibn Sīnā's proof for the unicity of God fails.

Now both Ibn Kammūnah's problem and the challenge posed by Ockham do not reject the existence of at least one Necessary Being (i.e., the existence of at least one God). But, they do argue, there is no reason to claim that there is just one God. Before considering the Problem of Ibn Kammūnah and the replies that were generated by Muslim thinkers both contemporary to Ibn Kammūnah and after, there is one other criticism against the essence-existence distinction presented by Menn that must be considered first. Menn proposes another challenge for the essence-existence distinction. He states:

[154]Existence cannot be abstracted from the essence of a possible being because in itself (i.e., in its essence) it is indifferent to existence and non-existence. It is only after the essence of a possible being begins to exist because of a cause that existence can be abstracted from it because of the existence that has been given to it by its cause.

> The essence-existence distinction must also confront another infinite regress challenge. Whenever X is a contingent being, X exists through the existence of X, which is something other than X. But existence of X also exists. Does it exist through a further existence, and so *ad infinitum*....But if it exists through itself – that is, if its essence includes existence – then on Avicenna's analysis it is an intrinsically necessary being, and Avicenna claims to have proved that there is only one such being, namely God.
>
> Thomas tries fending this off by denying that existence itself exists. But some mediaeval philosophers take the bull by the horns and accept that, for any X, the *esse* of X is God,...This view is taken by many Muslim writers who combine Avicennian philosophy with Sufism.[155]

Menn, as he states, borrows his challenge from Ibn Rushd's criticism of Ibn Sīnā. He does not clarify who he is referring to when talking about the Muslim thinkers who combined Ibn Sīnā's philosophy with Ṣūfīsm but from his later discussion on the 'Unity of Existence' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) it can be assumed he is referring to Mullā Sadrā and those who adopted Sadrā's philosophical position. The version of Menn's challenge that is considered by Mullā Sadrā was put forward by Suhrawardī, which the latter presents when arguing for the position that that which corresponds with reality is a thing's essence while existence is only a mental concept.[156] However, neither Mullā Sadrā nor any other Muslim philosopher considered Menn's infinite regress challenge as a problem. Furthermore, the issue of the 'Unity of Existence' is not related to the challenge presented by Menn.[157]

Rather, the challenge is based on an incorrect understanding of the essence-existence distinction, or at least the distinction as it was made by Ibn Sīnā. Ibn Sīnā had maintained that the essence-existence distinction is an intensional distinction. Therefore, the essence of X in actual existence is no different to the existence of X. The essence of X on its own is nothing and needs no explanation or justification. Existence of X, however, needs an explanation if X has possible existence when considered in itself. A possible being like X

[155]Menn, "Metaphysics: God and being," 160-161.

[156]See for example: Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 46.

[157]The issue of the 'Unity of Existence' is beyond the scope of the current study. But there is abundant literature available that explain the reasons for why some Muslim philosophers like Mullā Ṣadrā adopted the idea.

does not exist through the 'existence of X'. In actual existence, there is no such thing as X and the 'existence of X'. There is only X existing. Because X has possible existence, it exists through another being necessitating its existence. It makes no sense to say that X exists through the 'existence of X' any more than saying that intensional X exists through X in actual existence. When speaking of the existent X's essence, it is a reference to the type of existence it has. For example, if X refers to a human being, then if it is said of an existent entity that "It is X", what is meant by such a statement is that there is a being that exists and its existence is of the type X.

The fallacy committed by Menn and Suhrawardī is that they confuse the concept of existence with its reality. Existence of X is not a separate being so that it would be a cause for X existing. Existence of X or the existent X is the very reality of X existing or being instantiated outside of the mind. It is only in the mind that existence as a universal concept is abstracted from the existing X and other existent things and then predicated as an accident to existent things. This concept is then imagined to be a being in itself. However, that universal abstract concept of existence is not that through which X exists. Put simply and answering the criticism of Menn, a thing which has possible existence in itself (i.e., in its essence) and is existent is necessarily existent (i.e., in the sense that it exists) but is not a being which has necessary existence in itself. It is necessarily existent in the sense that its existence has been necessitated for it by God. God, on the other hand, has necessary existence without anything necessitating existence for Him. When this mistake is corrected the challenge no longer poses a problem.

In fact, what was said constitutes the gist of Mullā Sadrā's respond to Suhrawardī. Mullā Sadrā argues that the existence of the existent only means that the existent is something which is instantiated in reality. In this sense, existence is existent through itself because it does not need anything outside of itself in order to be regarded as a being which is instantiated in reality. We don't need to know anything beyond the fact that a table exists in order to accept that it is necessarily existent. However, this does not mean that everything that exists must therefore have necessary existence. A being is said to have necessary existence only if its essence necessarily includes existence without a cause to necessitate and sustain it. On the other hand, when referring to that which does not need anything outside of itself in order to be regarded as being necessarily 'existent', it can either

mean that whose necessity of existence is due to itself, which is the case of the Necessary Being, or due to another, which is the case of possible beings.[158]

In regards to the problem of Ibn Kammūnah, Ibn Sīnā had in fact already considered the problem and answered it in *al-Shifā*.[159] A response to the problem can also be found in Ṭūsī's response to Abul Fatḥ Muhammad al-Shahrastānī's *al-Muṣāra`*, called *Maṣāri` al-Muṣāra`*.[160] First, it has to be stated that necessity of existence cannot be something outside of the essence of the Necessary Being. If it was something outside of its essence and an accidental property then its essence when considered in itself will not have necessity of existence and will therefore be possible existence. Hence, two beings with necessary existence must have necessary existence in their essence. From this it follows that the two necessary beings must have in common necessity of existence. Then that which differentiates them must be something additional to their necessary existence. The conclusion from such a claim would be that the two necessary beings are comprised of component parts. It was already demonstrated above why a Necessary Being cannot have component parts.

The second reply to the Problem of Ibn Kammūnah can be constructed in the following manner: Let us take X and Y to represent two distinct necessary beings. X and Y are completely different from each other in their essence. Now, if they are completely different from each other in their essence that would mean that X's necessity of existence (or necessity of being instantiated in reality) comes from X-ness and Y's necessity of existence comes from Y-ness. After all, it is their existence that is the subject of enquiry not just the

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[158]Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *Ḥikmat al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-`Aqlīyah al-'Arba`ah* (Qom: Maktabah al-Muṣtafawī, 1368H.S.), vol.1, 40 -41, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 4, 93 -96, Course 2, Chapter 2; Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra (Kitāb al-Mashā`ir)*, trans. Parviz Morewedge (Tehran/New York: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1992), 24-27, Fourth Prehension. There is more discussion about this in the next chapter.

[159]Opt.Cit. The discussions that were given for the unicity of the Necessary Being in His essence already include a reply to the problem of Ibn Kammūnah as it will be shown below.

[160]Al-Shahrastānī, an 'Ash`arī theologian, wrote *al-Muṣāra`* as a refutation of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical views. The work is filled with derogatory language against Ibn Sīnā and rhetorical statements aimed at pleasing a certain crowd. Ṭūsī wrote *Maṣāri` al-Muṣāra`* as a refutation of al-Shahrastānī's work. Ṭūsī quite easily demonstrates al-Shahrastānī's inadequate knowledge of basic logical principles and his lack of knowledge about the philosophical opinions of Ibn Sīnā. He also points out that al-Shahrastānī borrows from differing opinions to attack Ibn Sīnā without knowing the reasoning behind those opinions or the way they are used in an argument.

conception of their essences. That is, the entire purpose of the argument is about the existence of a deity and whether one or more of such a deity can exist. If Y's necessity of existence (or instantiation in reality) is because of its Y-ness then, before having necessity of existence (or being instantiated in reality) it must have Y-ness. X, also, will have its necessity of existence from X-ness. In that case, Y-ness in case of Y, and X-ness in case of X, has to precede necessity of existence (or instantiation in reality) and be the cause for Y and X having necessary existence (or being instantiated in reality). The result is that Y and X have to precede their own existence (or precede themselves in being instantiated in reality) in order to necessitate and sustain their existence (or be instantiated in reality).[161]

The reason such a conclusion is reached is because multiplicity can only apply to possible beings (or that which is not instantiated in reality in itself). When it is assumed that two necessary beings exist, such an assumption is only in the mind. Hence, two possible beings are conceived and then necessity of existence (or necessity of being instantiated in reality) is imagined for them. But because they are actually possible beings, necessity of existence (or being necessarily instantiated in reality) is added to their essence and is not included in it. When their existence is actually something added to their essence, then when it is imagined that they have necessary existence and are without a cause to necessitate and sustain their existence, it must necessarily follow that they precede their own existence. It was shown above that a possible being can only be said to exist without a cause if it is its own cause. Being its own cause, it must precede its own existence. Such an assumption is impossible because it assumes that the possible being both exists and does not exist in order to be the cause that brings itself into existence and sustains its own existence. Therefore, there cannot be two necessary beings.

Ibn Sīnā clarifies the matter further by stating that either Y-ness is a condition for necessity of existence or not. If it is a condition then everything that has necessary existence must have it. If it is not a condition for necessity of existence then it must be the case that necessity of existence is added to Y-ness. That, however, means that Y-ness does not have necessity of existence when considered in itself.[162]

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[161]Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 36, Book 1, Chapter 7, 280-281, Book 8, Chapter 5.

[162]Ibid., 35. Ibn Sīnā actually gives this argument before the previous one.

A third reply argues that a single meaning cannot be abstracted from differences. Rather, a single meaning is abstracted from what several different things share. For example, it is not the difference between possible beings that shows their similarity in having possible existence. It is their need for a cause to necessitate and sustain their existence that is common to all possible beings that groups them as having possible existence. In the same way, the difference between the assumed necessary beings does not show that they have necessary existence. It is the necessity of existence shared by all of them that categorizes each one under the category of having necessary existence. This necessary existence which is shared by each of the assumed necessary beings is either part of their essence or something additional to their essence. It has already been shown why a Necessary Being cannot have necessity of existence added to its essence. Furthermore, it was shown why necessity of existence cannot be part of its essence. Hence, there cannot exist more than one Necessary Being.[163]

In this chapter, the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary was presented. Its underlying principles and premises were explicated and it was shown that many of the objections raised against it were based on mistaken assumptions of its premises. The Problem of Ibn Kammūnah which had some similarities with Ockham's criticism of Ibn Sīnā's argument for the unicity of God was considered and it was shown that Ibn Sīnā had already provided the solution to it from several different perspectives. It was, therefore, shown that the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary retains its cogency both in term of proving the existence of the Necessary Being and His attributes of unicity and uniqueness.

A final point should be made that in the Western philosophical tradition the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary has more than often been confused with the *Kalām* argument or other versions of the cosmological arguments. This may be in part due to al-Ghazzālī's influence on the transmission of the argument into the Western philosophical tradition through his work *Tahāfut* and Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. Other reasons could include the way mediaeval Latin thinkers presented the argument which might have not corresponded exactly to the Ibn Sīnian version. However, if the argument is taken in its original form presented by Muslim philosophers and theologians, it would not be subject to the criticisms that have been raised against the other versions of the

[163]Ibid., 279. Also see: Khawjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Maṣāri` al-Muṣāra`*, trans. Sayyed Mohsen Mīrī (Tehran: Enteshārāt Ḥekmat, 1380H.S.), 135-139. (Persian translation)

cosmological argument. Unlike other cosmological arguments, the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary as presented in this study and as it was presented for centuries by Muslim thinkers, provides proofs for why a contingent being needs a cause for its existence and why the universe cannot have necessary existence. These proofs do not rely on the impossibility of true infinites or infinite regress.

Ibn Sīnā himself, considered the argument to be ontological because it proceeded from the concept of existence *qua* existence, which applies only to God.[164] Accordingly, he labels the argument as the Demonstration of the Veracious. But the argument clearly relies on the existence of at least one possibly existent being. If an ontological argument is defined as arguing for the existence of God only from the concept of God (as we defined it in chapter two), then Ibn Sīnā's Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary does not qualify as an ontological argument.[165]

[164]Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol.3, 79, Method 4, Metaphysics.

[165]For an alternative view which states that Ibn Sīnā's argument should be considered as an ontological argument see: Toby Mayer, "Ibn Sīnā's 'Burhān Al-Siddīqīn'," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12 (2001): 18-39. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

4 The Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible

The Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible *(Burhān al-'Imkān al-Faqrī*) is a theistic argument for the existence of God that was first formulated by Mullā Ṣadrā (c.979A.H./1571C.E.- 1050A.H./1640C.E.). The argument relies on Mullā Ṣadrā's 'Primacy of Existence' (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) and any exposition of it should begin with the explanation of that philosophical idea. It was mentioned in chapter one that Suhrawardī's (549A.H./1154C.E.-587A.H./1191C.E.) Illuminationist (*'Ishrāqī*) philosophy considers existence as an abstract mental concept and essence (*māhīyah*) as that which corresponds to objective reality outside of the mind. Suhrawardī's philosophical position became known as the 'Primacy of Essences' (*aṣālat al-māhīyah*). In contrast to Suhrawardī, Mullā Ṣadrā claimed that existence has objective reality outside of the mind while essences (*māhīyah*) are abstract mental concepts. Mullā Ṣadrā establishes his entire philosophical view on the basis that existence has primacy. For this reason, Mullā Ṣadrā is known among Muslim thinkers as the founder of Islamic Existentialism.

Illuminationist philosophers have given different arguments for why existence must be an abstract mental concept. Their arguments can all be summarized in the following way: If existence is instantiated outside of the mind (in contrast to being an abstract mental concept), then it will necessarily follow from such a claim that either existence is existent through its own essence or through something else. Since, neither of the two cases can be true then existence must be an abstract concept and not instantiated in reality.

The arguments given by Illuminationist philosophers are attempts to prove the above premises and its conclusion. Suhrawardī had argued that if existence is existent through itself then 'being existent' has the same meaning as existence. It then follows that 'existent' (i.e., being existent) would not apply with the same meaning to both existence

and other things.[1] However, 'being existent' is applied with the same meaning to every existent thing. Therefore, existence cannot be existent through itself.[2] The point that Suhrawardī is trying to make is that it would be absurd to suggest that the meaning of 'exists' is different from one existential statement to another. The meaning of 'exists' is the same in the statement "the table exists" as it is in the statement "the chair exists".[3] Philosophers as well as others use 'being existent' with the same meaning in regards to every existent thing. Hence, according to Suhrawardī, because it is true that the meaning of 'being existent' is always the same and if existence was existent through itself it would contradict this truth then, it must be the case that existence cannot be existent through itself.

Illuminationist philosophers further argue that if existence was existent through its own essence, then everything existent would then be a necessary being. If existence exists through its own essence, then anything that has existence must exist through itself. The definition of a necessary being is that which has existence through its own essence. Clearly, however, there are things that do not have necessary existence.[4] Therefore, at least in regards to things that have possible existence, their existence cannot be existent through its own essence.[5]

If, on the other hand, existence is not existent through itself then an infinite regress problem occurs. That is, if existence is existent through something else, that other thing

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[1]It would not apply with the same meaning because in the case of existence, being existent simply means being itself, whereas in the case of other things being existent does not mean being itself.

[2]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, ed. and trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 45, Part 1, Third Discourse.

[3]Suhrawardī in contrast to Aristotle does not believe that existence applies equivocally to existent things. He shares this view with many other Muslim philosophers. However, he also believes that existence is abstracted from essences and is a mental concept. It is essences that have reality outside of the mind. In this sense, the realities of existent things (i.e., things that exist outside of the mind) are distinct from one another.

[4]For this objection against the Primacy of Existence see: Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra (Kitāb al-Mashā`ir)*, trans. Parviz Morewedge (Tehran/New York: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1992), 23, Fourth Prehension; Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāī, *Tarjome wa Sharḥ Nihāyat al-Ḥikmah*, ed. and trans. Ali Shirwani (Qom: Dār al-Fikr, 2007), vol.1, 84-85. Mullā Ṣadrā and Ṭabāṭabāī (who is also a Ṣadrian philosopher) narrate the problem then answers it from the position of the Primacy of Existence.

[5]Note that the term 'possible' is used in this chapter with the same meaning intended by Ibn Sīnā.

must also have existence, the existence of the second thing must also be existent through something else and so on *ad infinitum*.[6] Suhrawardī claims that existence can be conceived as being non-existent in the sense that, for example, blackness can be conceived as not existing and therefore its existence as being non-existent. If existence can be conceived as being non-existent then when it corresponds to objective reality (i.e., when it exists) it must exist through another existence and again that other existence can be conceived as being non-existence and must exist through another existence and so on *ad infinitum*.[7]

Furthermore, if existence is a real constituent of things outside of the mind then it must be superadded to the essence of a thing. However, that would mean that the thing which existence is superadded to it must be existent in order for existence to be superadded to it. This would mean that something is existent before existence is added to it, which is an absurd proposition.[8]

Mullā Ṣadrā criticizes the arguments given by Illuminationist philosophers for the primacy of essences and gives his reasons for why it is the 'existence' of a thing and not its 'essence' that corresponds with its objective reality outside of the mind. He gives eight comprehensive proofs for the primacy of existence in *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir* (The Book of Prehensions) and *Ḥikmat al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-`Aqlīyah al-'Arba`ah* (Transcendental Wisdom about the Four Intellectual Journeys), known by its shorter title of *al-Asfār* (Journeys).[9] Later Ṣadrian philosophers have expanded on the premises of these proofs. For the purposes of this chapter there is no need to comprehensively discuss the philosophical idea of primacy of existence in all its complexities and it will suffice to mention a few points in this regard that will provide the basis for the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible.

Mullā Ṣadrā is of the opinion that some of Suhrawardī's arguments apply only if existence and essence are considered as two separate entities outside of the mind.

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[6]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 45-46. Suhrawardī actually argues in a number of different ways that if existence exists through something else then an infinite regress problem occurs. For the purposes of this study it was sufficient to mention the main point of the argument.

[7]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 45.

[8]Ibid., 46.

[9]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 10-22, Third Prehension; Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *Ḥikmat al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-`Aqlīyah al-'Arba`ah* (Qom: Maktabah al-Muṣtafawī, 1368H.S.), vol.1, 38 -44, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 4. All eight arguments are given one after another in *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir*.

Furthermore, Suhrawardī has confused the concept of existence with the objective reality of existence outside of the mind. However, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, essences are instantiated in reality through existence and essences are only mental abstractions from individual existences.[10] For statements such as "This is a human" or "This is a horse" to be true, 'horse' and 'human' must designate an actually existing referent and not just the essence of human or horse. Similarly, in the statement "Jack is a human being", the humanity of Jack is actualized through his existence. If essences are instantiated outside of the mind through their existence then their existence is more deserving of having objective reality than their essences.[11]

If we recall from the discussion of the previous chapter, Ibn Sīnā had argued that intensionally the essence of a thing with possible existence is indifferent to existence and non-existence. Hence, Mullā Ṣadrā argues, what distinguishes the intensional essence from the essence that is actualized in reality is the existence of the latter. In other words, abstracting existence from something that has actual existence can only be done if that essence has existence outside of the mind. Consequently, it must be the essence of a thing which is mentally abstracted from its actual existence and not vice versa. If essence had primacy and existence was only a mental phenomenon which did not correspond to anything in reality then there is nothing through which a thing's essence would be instantiated outside of the mind.[12]

The famous commentator on Mullā Ṣadrā, Hādī Sabzavārī (1212A.H./1797C.E.-1289A.H./1873C.E.), expands on the above argument in his *Sharḥ Manẓūmah-ye Ḥikmat* and states that what is agreed upon by both the Illuminationists and Existentialists (i.e., Islamic Existentialists) is that essence *qua* essence is indifferent to both existence and non-existence and as a result when considered in itself it does not have existence or non-

[10]See: Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 33-40, Fifth Prehension. In this section of his book Mullā Ṣadrā discusses why in actual reality the existence and essence of things must be one and the same thing and gives similar arguments to that of Suhrawardī. Also for a similar set of arguments see: Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 245 -247, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 2, Chapter 22.

[11]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 10-12; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Asfār*, vol.1, 38-39. At the beginning of his first reason for the primacy of existence in *Al-Asfār*, Mullā Ṣadrā states, "Since the reality of everything is from its existence then existence is more deserving of that thing, or for that matter anything, to have reality. Just as white is more deserving of that which is not white to have whiteness predicated of it."

[12]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 15-16.

existence. According to Sabzavārī, if it is given that essences contain neither existence nor non-existence in their selves then it must be the case that they are just abstract concepts. But if that is the case and it is also true that existence is only an abstract mental concept without any corresponding reality then, there is no justification for predicating 'existent' (i.e., having an objective reality outside of the mind) of essences. This is because both the existence and the essence of a thing would be non-existent mental phenomena which do not represent anything outside of the mind.[13] The conjunction of one concept (which does not correspond to anything outside of the mind) with another concept is not capable of showing their instantiation in reality.[14]

Mullā Ṣadrā also argues for the primacy of existence based on the distinction between mental existence and actual existence. In order for there to be knowledge of actual realities the essence of something must be the same in regards to both its objective reality and its mental representation. What distinguishes something with objective reality from its mental mode of existence is that the former has certain properties (for example dimensions in regards to a physical body) and can cause certain effects (for example, burning in regards to fire) which the latter cannot. If existence is an abstract mental concept, then there is no difference between the mental mode of things and their actual realities because both share the same essence. However, because it is clear that such a difference exists, then it must be the case that the difference is due to the existence and not the essence of things.[15]

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the primacy of existence can be shown through the unity of different essences in a single objective reality. If it is the essence rather than existence that has actuality then concepts cannot be predicated of each other. Essences (*māhīyah*) are intrinsically different to each other. For example, being a 'writer' is not the same as being a 'human being'. 'Writer' and 'human being' are therefore two different essences and when predicated of each other the former is an accident of the latter. If the assumption is made that existence is only an abstract mental concept, then it must be abstracted from the

[13]According to the Illuminationist philosophers 'existence' is a mental abstract without objective reality and the essence of a thing (or more correctly, the essence of a possibly existent entity) does not have existence when considering it in itself.

[14]Hādī ibn Mahdī Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 36.

[15]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 13-14; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 34.

essence of things in actual reality because there is no objective reality other than the essence corresponding to it. However, in propositions that predicate something of a subject there is an aspect of unity and an aspect of difference. The aspect of difference is the disparity between the essence of the predicate and the essence of the subject. In fact, in order for the proposition not to be tautological and assert something meaningful about the objective reality the predicate and the subject must have two different meanings. For that reason, if existence were only an abstract mental concept while essences had objective reality, then there would be nothing through which two different essences could be united as a single reality outside of the mind. In other words, there would be nothing that unites one essence with the other because the existence of each is abstracted only from its actual corresponding essence outside of the mind without any relation to the other essence.[16]

Mullā Ṣadrā also claims that the individual members of a species cannot be instantiated in reality if existence does not have actuality. For an individual member of a species to have individuality it needs more than what it shares with others of the same species. Even if more universal concepts were added to it in order to distinguish it from other members of the same species, it (i.e., the combination of universal concepts) is still a universal concept in itself which can be predicated of many.[17] Hence, an actualized member of a species needs something other than its essence to individuate it. In other words universal concepts can only be applied to individuals outside of the mind if they have something additional to their essential features and accidental properties. It is through existence that a member of a species is individuated.[18]

Sabzavārī makes an important distinction between 'individuation' (*al-tashakhkhuṣ*) and 'distinction' (*al-tamīz*). Distinction occurs when one universal concept is added to another universal concept in order to distinguish the resulting concept from either one of the universal concepts considered on its own. The example Sabzavārī gives is the concept of 'laughing man'. The concept of laughing man can still be predicated of many.

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[16]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 14-15, Third Prehension; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī,* 37-38.

[17]For example, if we take the universal concept of humanity and try to individuate it by adding the concept of white, this combination is also a universal concept in the sense that it can apply to more than one individual.

[18]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 16-18; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī,* 159.

Individuation, according to Sabzavārī, is that which is due to a thing itself whereas distinction is relative because it is something which it shares with other things. Hence, that which individuates unlike distinction is not something that can be predicated of many.[19]

One of the reasons given by Mullā Ṣadrā for the primacy of existence also reflects another important aspect of his philosophical school, namely, that of 'gradation of existence' (*tashkīk al-wujūd*). There is no doubt that for some things in reality there is intensity (*al-shadīd*) and weakness (*al-ḍa`īf*).[20] Take, for example, the qualitative state of blackness that can have different degrees of intensity (darker black, lighter black, and so forth). In addition, between any two limits of a particular state (such as for example, blackness) an infinite number of other intermediary states can be imagined each of which has its own essence. If existence is an abstract concept then its realization is dependent on the realization of the essences which it is abstracted from.

In cases where things accept different qualitative states it can be said that there is a kind of movement from one limit to another. Therefore, if the premise is accepted that existence is an abstract mental concept, then in order for there to be a movement from one limit (or point) to another, an infinite number of other limits (or essences) must have actuality between them. Mullā Ṣadrā considers such a conclusion absurd. However, he argues, one can do away with the absurdity by accepting the premise that existence has primacy while essences are abstract mental concepts.[21] If existence has primacy then all the various limits represented by the different essences have one existence (*wujūd wāḥid*) and one continuous form (*ṣūrah wāḥidah Ittiṣālīyah*). There is between the two limits a continuous unity through existence where in the reality outside of the mind one limit (or essence) is not separated from another limit (or essence) through intervals of non-existence. In such a situation each of the various limits has potentiality and not actuality.[22] Mullā Ṣadrā states:

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[19]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 159.

[20]Weakness could also be defined relatively in the sense that something is weaker when compared with something else which is more intense.

[21]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 21.

[22]Let us take the two points A1 and A2. Between A1 and A2 there can be an infinite number of points represented by $A1_1$ $A1_2$...$A1_n$. In each case, there is an assumption that there is an interval of non-existence that separates one point from another. However, if there is no such interval and A1 and A2 are united with each other through one existence then the infinite number of points between them has potentiality not actuality. This idea is ultimately rooted in the notion that an effect is continuously in need of its cause to give it existence without any intervals where it might not give it existence at which point it would no longer exist. It is based on such an existential unity that Mullā

> Indeed, if all things had one existence and one continuous form, as is the case with continuous quantities, whether [all members are co-present such as spatial points or only one is present such as with temporal instances], then they would be limited [only] potentially, and not limited [lit. enclosed] in principle. Since the existence of those species which corresponds to limits or kinds [hold] only potentially and not actually. For the totality [of the species of these individuals] would exist [lit. an existent] due to the one continuous [form] and its unity [in the] actual [mode], while its multiplicity would be in potential [mode].[23]

Sabzavārī expands on Mullā Ṣadrā's reasons for the primacy of existence by giving two of his own arguments. Sabzavārī argues for the primacy of existence on the basis that existence is the source of all values.[24] In Islamic philosophy, goodness and any other form of value is measured by existence whereas lack of goodness (or evil) is measured by non-existence. That is, something is actually good if it exists outside of the mind. Something lacks a certain goodness or value if that goodness or value is not existent in it.

One might object to the existential idea of goodness and value and argue that there are things that can be imagined which are better than what is of the same species in reality. Although an individual might think that something in his mind is good or better than what has objective reality, it can only be truly good or better than the objective reality once it is instantiated in reality. Otherwise, the value which is placed on something when comparing one mental mode of existence with another, with one of the two modes having actuality outside of the mind, is only an imaginative value and not a real one. Unless the second thing which has a mental mode of existence also actualizes in reality, it has no real value.[25]

Ṣadrā builds his theory of 'substantial motion'. Creation moves from its lowest form of existence upwards towards higher degrees of existential perfection through its existence. This existence is given to creation by God and is dependent on it.

[23]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 21. Mullā Ṣadrā gives two other arguments for the primacy of existence. I have not included the arguments because they are not in my opinion required for the purposes of explaining the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible.

[24]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 33-34.

[25]In other words, the thing we have imagined to be better (i.e., with more goodness) only reflects the proposition that: "If it was the case that *y* then it would be better than *x* which is the case now". However, since *y* does not have actuality then it cannot be better than *x*.

This is the reason people are not simply satisfied with a mental representation of what is good but seek to actualize it in reality.[26]

Therefore, according to Sabzavārī, since goodness and other values are measured in accordance with existence, then it must be the case that existence is not a mere abstract mental concept. This is because goodness has objective reality and therefore existence, by which goodness is measured, must also have objective reality.[27]

Sabzavārī also argues for the primacy of existence based on the priority of the cause in regards to its effect. Mullā Ṣadrā also gives the same argument once in *al-Asfār* and again in *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir*. In *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir*, however, he gives the argument in regards to why it is existence rather than the essence which is the subject of causation (i.e., the effect of the cause). The argument states that essences do not have priority or posteriority in regards to each other and therefore priority and posteriority in regards to a cause and its effect must be something which is to do with their existences (or being) and not their essences.[28] Sabzavārī demonstrates his argument by considering causes and effects that are of the same species or genus. One of the examples he gives is that of fire. There are cases where fire causes other fires. If existence is mentally posited then fire *qua* fire in the aforementioned case would have both priority and posteriority (i.e., the fire which is the cause has priority and the fire which is the effect has posteriority) which is an implausible proposition. Therefore existence must have primacy and essences must be abstract mental concepts.[29]

Mullā Ṣadrā also responds to Suhrawardī's infinite regression criticism by stating that (and we already alluded to part of his response in the previous chapter) 'existent' simply means a thing which existence has been posited for it (i.e., instantiation in the objective reality). Just as we do not say that the whiteness of an object in actual existence is white, in the same way we do not say that existence is existent. Suhrawardī's criticism is rooted in

[26]Sabzavārī does not include the explanation I have given in this paragraph in his work. Nevertheless, I have included it as a reply to the claims that imaginative good or any other imaginative value system can be realistically better than what is existent.

[27]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī,* 33-34.

[28]I will be using the word 'existence' rather than 'being' because I believe the former has a more clear meaning which can better represent Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical notion.

[29]Ibid., 34-35. For Mullā Ṣadrā's argument see: Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 37, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 2; Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 53-54, Seventh Prehension.

the mistaken assumption that there is an existence through which existence is existent whereas existence is existent in itself.[30] In other words, Suhrawardī confuses the concept of existence with the reality of existence outside of the mind.

Mullā Ṣadrā disagrees with Illuminationist philosophers who claim that existence being existent in itself necessarily means that every existent thing must be a necessary being. In regards to the existence of the possible beings, their existence is existent in itself in the sense that there is no need to consider anything else but their existence (i.e., their existence does not need another existence to be predicated of it) in order to regard them as an existent entity. However, the possible being is still in need of a cause to give it that existence. Moreover, the possible being's existence is only existent in itself due to its cause which not only caused it to exist but also continues to sustain it in existence. The Necessary Being's existence is also existent in itself, in the sense that there is no need to consider anything else but its existence in order to regard it as an existent entity. However, the Necessary Being does not have a cause for its existence.[31] Being necessarily existent applies to anything that is existent whether it is an existent possible being or a Necessary Being.

The matter can be clarified further by considering a distinction which is made in Islamic logic and philosophy between causal conditions (*ḥaythīyāt al-ta`līlīyah*) and stipulating conditions (*ḥaythīyāt al-taqyīdīyah*). The former refers to conditions that are required in a proposition in order for the predicate to be predicated of a subject. For example, laughter is predicated of a human being through the cause that is responsible for laughter even if the cause is not mentioned in the proposition that asserts the predication. Hence, if surprise is the cause of laughter then it is the causal condition for predicating laughter of human beings. Also, if it is accepted that there is a Necessary Being then, the Necessary Being is a causal condition for predicating existence to possibly existent beings.[32]

A stipulating condition refers to a condition which is involved in making the subject of a predicate the subject of a predicate in the first place. For example, a body can be that which is seen if it has some kind of a colour. Hence, in the proposition "A body can be

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[30]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 22-23, Fourth Prehension; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Asfār*, vol.1, 39-40.

[31]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 23-24; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Asfār*, vol.1, 40-41.

[32]`Alī Karajī, *Eṣṭelāhāt-e Falsafī Wa Tafāwot-e Ānhā bā Yekdīgar* (Qom: Markaz Enteshārāt, 1997), 118.

seen" the subject is composed of being a body and its stipulating condition, which is colour (again even if the stipulating condition is not mentioned in the proposition).[33]

Hence, although existence is existent in itself without requiring a stipulating condition it does not mean that it is existent in itself without requiring a causal condition. In other words, in regards to the existence of a possible being, 'existent' can be predicated of it without a stipulating condition. This does not, however, mean that it does not need a causal condition. In regards to the Necessary Being, however, 'existent' is predicated of its existence without the need for a stipulating or a causal condition.[34]

With the above points in mind, Mullā Ṣadrā goes on to show what he believes to be the fallacy of Suhrawardī's first proof for the primacy of essences. The concept of existence applies with the same meaning to all existent things. Once it is established that the concept of 'existence' means instantiation in reality, then it becomes clear that the difference which Suhrawardī refers to is not in regards to the meaning of the concept of existence. The difference actually refers to the extension of the concept of existence in actual existence. This is what Ibn Sīnā meant when he said that the possible being is necessary through another but possible in its own essence whereas the Necessary Being is necessary through its own self. Put simply, the necessity of existence is affirmed of a thing with possible existence only after a cause gives it existence. On the other hand, necessity of existence in regards to the Necessary Being is the very nature of its existence.[35]

Given that essences are only mental abstractions from real existents then it can be shown why the last of Suhrawardī's criticism given above does not apply. Suhrawardī assumes that essences have reality outside of the mind and therefore existence must be superadded to them if it also has objective reality. However, if the essence and existence of a thing is one and the same outside of the mind and the essence is only a mental abstraction from a thing's existence, then Suhrawardī's criticism no longer applies. The thing does not exist before existence is added to its essence because its existence and essence are instantiated in reality together as one thing with the latter being only a mental representation of the type of

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[33]Ibid.

[34]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 93 -96, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 2, Chapter 2; Jawādī Āmulī, *Raḥīq-e Makhtūm: Sharḥ Ḥikmat Muta'ālīyah* (Qom: Markaz Isrā, 1375H.S.), vol.1, 300-302.

[35]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 24-27, Fourth Prehension; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Asfār*, vol.1, 40.

existence it has. It is only in the mind that the concept of existence is considered as being distinct from the essence of a thing and then predicated to it. In reality there is no priority, posteriority and simultaneity in regards to existence and essence because nothing can be prior, posterior or simultaneous to itself.[36]

Mullā Ṣadrā discusses the existence, uniqueness and unicity of God in several of his works. Like Ibn Sīnā, his argument for the existence of God depends on his analysis of being and its division into possible and necessary. In fact, it will not be farfetched to say that his argument is a development of Ibn Sīnā's Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. Mullā Ṣadrā frequently refers to Ibn Sīnā's arguments and interprets the latter correctly as an existentialist philosopher.[37] However, Mullā Ṣadrā's argument is different from Ibn Sīnā's argument in a fundamental way. His premises rely entirely on the analysis of existence of different beings (i.e., possible and necessary) rather than their essences. Ibn Sīnā's argument also relied on the analysis of being and its division into possible and necessary. But Ibn Sīnā's analysis relied on the way essences showed that the effect was in need of a cause for its existence. Mullā Ṣadrā, on the other hand, argues from the need of the very existence of the possible being for an existential cause. In other words, Ibn Sīnā argues from essence for the need that a possible being has for a cause in order to exist whereas Mullā Ṣadrā argues for the same thing from existence.

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[36]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 27-29, Fourth Prehension. Mullā Ṣadrā considers and replies to several other points raised by Illuminationist philosophers. The points and Mullā Ṣadrā's replies have not been given above. However, they ultimately rely on the points that were analyzed above.

[37]Latin scholastic thinkers tended to wrongly interpret Ibn Sīnā as an essentialist philosopher (in a sense close to that of Suhrawardī). This was not necessarily the case among Muslim philosophers and theologians. In fact, the most famous commentator of Ibn Sīnā, Khāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, was clearly an existentialist philosopher and believed that the objective reality consisted of the existence of things and not their essences. Due to the confusion of some modern Western scholars between the Latin scholastics interpretation of Ibn Sīnā and post-Ibn Sīnian Muslim philosophers-where the former had no influence on the latter-, they tend to make two fundamental incorrect assumptions. The first incorrect assumption is that an existentialist interpretation of Ibn Sīnā began with Mullā Ṣadrā. Although Mullā Ṣadrā's existentialism is different to Ibn Sīnā's and many Muslim thinkers were influenced by Suhrawardī, nevertheless, the arguments and writings of Ibn Sīnā clearly shows that he saw existence as having primacy in comparison to essence. The second mistaken assumption is the incorrect idea that post-Ibn Sīnian Muslim philosophers and theologians viewed essences as being separate from existence in actual existence. However, Muslim philosophers and theologians did not hold such a view.

Mullā Ṣadrā claims that when something comes into existence it is not its essence that receives existence from its cause. It is rather, the very existence of a thing which is the effect of the cause. He states:

> We say: that which is essentially made due to its inner-reality is not what is called essence, as the followers of Stoics, such as The Assassinated Sheikh al-Maqtūl [Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī] and his followers –the scholar al-Duwwānī and his disciples among others–, had claimed; nor is it the becoming of the essence to [the status of] an existent as is known to be held by Peripatetics; nor is it the concept of an existent [applied to what] is an existent as viewed by al-Sayyid al-Mudaqiq.[38]

In *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir,* Mullā Ṣadrā gives eight reasons for his claim that it is the existence of possible beings that are the effect of a cause and not their essences.[39] The essence of a thing is only an abstract concept of the type of existence it has. In reality, once it is established that existence has primacy, it follows as a necessary consequence that it must be existences rather than essences that are the effects of a cause. Hence, Mullā Ṣadrā's arguments for why it is the existence of a thing and not its essence which is the effect of a cause can be regarded as a reiteration of the primacy of existence in addition to replies to other views that do not accept his position on causality. Therefore, the arguments given above for the primacy of existence are sufficient for the elucidation of the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible without the need to consider Mullā Ṣadrā's other arguments. What is important for the subject that is being considered in this chapter is the relationship between the existential cause and its effect as viewed by Mullā Ṣadrā. Mullā Ṣadrā's Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible relies on the description of the causal relationship between the existential cause and the effect.

Like Ibn Sīnā, Mullā Ṣadrā believed that the indifference of a being's essence towards existence and non-existence shows its essential possibility. Essential possibility demonstrates that since it is possible for a possible being to both exist and not exist then

[38]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra,* 46, Seventh Prehension.

[39]Ibid., 46-55. Also see: Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār,* vol.1, 396 -423, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 3, Chapter 1-3.

there must be an external cause that is responsible for its existence or non-existence.[40] The cause of the non-existence of a possible being is the lack of a cause for its existence but not in the sense that non-existence has reality and actually causes the non-existence of the possible being. A possible being is dependent for its existence on the existence of its cause. Hence, the non-existence of the cause means that the effect of that cause (i.e., the existence of the possible being in question) is never actualized.[41]

Mullā Ṣadrā argues that the possibility and need for an existential cause which is proven for a possible being through the essence's indifference to existence and non-existence is an intrinsic property of essences as abstract concepts. Essences as abstract concepts are by their very nature indifferent to existence and non-existence. However, although such indifference can be claimed for the essence of an existent possible being, it cannot be claimed for its existence. That which exists is necessarily existent (i.e., in the sense just that it exists) and cannot be indifferent to existence and non-existence. In the same way, when a possible being is non-existent then it is necessarily non-existent (i.e., in the sense that it does not exist) and cannot be indifferent to existence and non-existence. In other words, it is self-contradictory to say that a thing exists but is indifferent to existence and non-existence.[42]

On the other hand, it is also clear that existence is not necessary for a possible being in the sense that it can either exist or not exist. Furthermore, the analysis of the possible being's essence (i.e., what it is in itself) shows that the possible being because of the essence's indifference is in need of a cause in order to exist and continue existing.[43] Then how can the two claims be reconciled with each other if they can be reconciled at all?[44]

In order to provide a solution, Mullā Ṣadrā proposes a distinction between essential and existential possibility. Since existence has primacy, the relationship between the cause and effect is between their existences not their essences. Essential possibility is the intrinsic

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[40]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 88 -89, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 2, Chapter 1, 206-208, Chapter 13, 221-223, Chapter 15.

[41]Ibid., 215 -217, Chapter 14.

[42]Ibid., 217-218.

[43]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 108-109.

[44]The two claims are: That a possible being needs a cause based on the analysis of its essence and that something which is existent is not indifferent to existence and non-existence.

indifference to existence and non-existence which is characteristic of the essence of a possible being. This intrinsic indifference known as essential possibility is distinguished from the limitation of the existence of the possible being. This limitation is known as existential possibility and describes the condition of the effect in regards to its cause. The fact that a possible being is in need of another in order to exist and continue existing, demonstrates a possible being's limitation. It is from that limitation which the essence and its intrinsic indifference to existence and non-existence is abstracted. Existential possibility refers to the inherent nature of 'being dependent on another' which describes both the possible being's existential mode and the reason for its realization as an existent being.[45] Put simply, the need that is proven through the consideration of a possible being's essence is for the existence of the possible being not its essence which is an abstract mental concept.

Limitation in the existence of a being shows that its existence is not existence *qua* existence (or as Mullā Ṣadrā calls it, Pure Existence) but existence in addition to a condition that is responsible for that limitation. In reality, that condition is not something separate to the existence of the existent being. The condition is inferred from the limitation of the existence of the existent being. Hence, in reality the being is a conditioned (*muqayyad*) or limited existence. Having a conditional existence shows that it does not have existence from itself (because it is not existence *qua* existence) but from another. It has possible existence because it is possible for it to not exist as it does now and to have a greater intensity of existence. It is from that conditional state or limited existence that the essence of an existent being is abstracted and because that essence indicates that the being is not existence *qua* existence (i.e., it does not have existence from itself), it shows that it must need a cause for its existence.[46]

The reason why existential possibility has to be something inherent to the possible being's existence and not an accidental property is clear. If existential possibility is other than the inherent nature of the possible being, it would be an accidental property. This would result in the absurd proposition that the possible being is a necessary being in itself and does need a cause for its existence while at the same time has possible existence

[45]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 86-87, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 2, Chapter 1.

[46]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.3, 444, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage10, Chapter 28, vol.6, 115-118, Journey 3, Interval 1, Part 1, Branch 1, Chapter 12.

attributed to it as an accidental property.[47] Rather, argues Mullā Ṣadrā, the very reality of the possible being is actual neediness and dependence on the cause and not an independent thing which is in need of a cause for its existence. The possible being's necessity of existence (in the sense that given that it exists, it necessarily exists not that it is a necessary being) is also actualized through and is due to its dependence on another. In fact, its existence is pure relation to another (i.e., its existence can only be imagined with the existence of its cause). Stated in a different way, the reality of the existence of a possible being is that it is necessarily existent because of another, something which has already been stated by Ibn Sīnā.[48]

Mullā Ṣadrā clarifies his description of the causal relationship between the effect and its cause by making an analogy between the effect and a prepositional word. Take, for example, the English preposition 'in'. When the preposition 'in' is used in the expression "Jack in the box," its prepositional function is dependent on the nouns which come before and after it. However, when considered as a concept on its own it no longer retains its prepositional function and is treated similar to a noun. Similarly, a possible being has prepositional existence in the sense that its reality is only actualized and sustained in relation to another.[49]

Mullā Ṣadrā also borrows from Suhrawardī's gradation of lights for his Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible. He transforms the principle of 'difference in unity' established by Suhrawardī into an existential notion. One of the principal elements of Suhrawardī's philosophy was that metaphysical lights (*al-anwār al-mujarradah*, literally: incorporeal lights) are united with each other in the reality of being lights but are different from each other in terms of their degree and intensity.[50] Hence, that which unites

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[47]Ṭabāṭabāī, *Tarjome wa Sharḥ Nihāyat al-Ḥikmah*, vol.2, 30.

[48]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 46-47, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage 1, Course 1, Chapter 5, 192, Course 2, Chapter 11, vol.2, 75, Stage 4, Chapter 9; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 109-110.

[49]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 78-82, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 9. Also refer to Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi's (the twentieth century Ṣadrian philosopher) explanation of prepositional existence and existential possibility in: Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 130-139. Alternatively, the term 'relational existence' can be used.

[50]Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 86, 100, also see: 54. As an analogy to the physical light, there are lights which are of varying brightness. All lights share in the reality of

metaphysical lights with each other (i.e., the reality of being a metaphysical light) is also that which differentiates them from each other. Suhrawardī had argued that the distinction between the different metaphysical lights has to be because of their lightness and nothing else. Their differentiation is due to the intensity or weakness of their reality as a light. Light of lights (which is a term he uses for God) is that which produces and illuminates (which is a term Suhrawardī uses to mean give existence to) all other lights while being self-illuminating in itself. Applying the same principle, Mullā Ṣadrā claims that existent entities are united with each other in the sense that their reality is constituted through existence but differ from each other in terms of the degree of intensity in their existence.

For Mullā Ṣadrā, light, whether physical or metaphysical, has an essence that is constituted in reality through existence. Hence, light in the strict existentialist sense of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy does not actually have gradation. Gradation in reality can only describe multiplicity in regards to existence. Essences, for Ṣadrian philosophers, do not have gradation in the sense of having various degrees of intensity because they are independent and distinguished abstract mental concepts.[51] In other words, in order for gradation to take place several conditions need to be met. First, there has to be real objective unity between the different degrees of the gradation. Second, there has to be real objective multiplicity that is represented by the different degrees of the gradation. Third, the aforementioned unity has to be present in the aforementioned multiplicity in actuality. Otherwise there is no reason to say that the different levels of gradation are gradations of the same reality. Finally, the aforementioned multiplicity has to go back to and be because of the aforementioned unity for the same reason given before.[52]

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being light (ignoring for the sake of the analogy the inner physical nature of lights) but differ in terms of intensity.

[51]Mullā Ṣadrā in *al-Asfār* comprehensively argues for what cannot have gradation and he comes to the conclusion that gradation can be applied only to the different degrees of existence. I have not presented his arguments here for the sake of brevity. See: Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 427-446, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage 3, Chapter 5. However, a general note should be made that since everything refers back to existence then gradation must also refer back to existence. That is, any gradation that is observed between different essences in terms of perfection, priority and so forth must refer back to existence.

[52]For the four conditions see: Āmulī, *Raḥīq-e Makhtūm*, vol.1, 257. These four conditions as far as Islamic existentialism is concerned cannot be met in regards to different essences of the same species.

Mullā Ṣadrā like many other Muslim philosophers begins his philosophical discourse with the argument that the concept of existence cannot be defined because there is nothing clearer than the concept of existence and because existence has neither a genus nor a differentia.[53] Furthermore, Mullā Ṣadrā claims that the concept of existence applies with the same meaning to all existent things. There are three ways which the concept of existence can be conceived as applying to existent things. It can be the case that the concept of existence can be conceived as applying to every existent thing differently. In this sense, the concept of a thing's existence is identical only with that thing (i.e., what that thing is in terms of essence and properties) and since things differ from one another the concept of existence applies with a different meaning to each individual existent thing. This is usually attributed in Islamic philosophy to Peripatetics. Or, the concept of existence can apply with the same meaning to things with possible existence but not with the same meaning to the Necessary Being, given that the existence of a Necessary Being is accepted. The concept of existence can also be conceived of applying with the same meaning to every existent being, whether possible or necessary, but relate nothing about their actual existential reality (i.e., whether they are necessary or possible, limited or unlimited, etc.).[54] Mullā Ṣadrā opts for the third way of applying the concept of existence to existent beings. He argues that there is a kind of relation or similarity which is perceived between existent things which is not perceived between existent and non-existent things. Therefore, there must be similarity in the way the concept of 'being existent' is applied to different existent things. Otherwise, the same kind of relation and similarity that is perceived between existent things should be perceived between existent and non-existent things. Since, no such similarity and relation is perceived then existence must apply with the same meaning to every existent thing.[55]

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[53]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 7; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 25-26, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 1. Also see: Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 31.

[54]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 48-53.

[55]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 35-36, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 2. Thomas Aquinas developed the theory that existence is applied in different senses but by analogy to God and creatures. For Aquinas's theory see: Rudi A. te Velde, *Aquinas on God: the 'divine science' of the Summa theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 109-121. Hence, God is existence in itself while creatures participate in God's existence. However, Aquinas is quite strict in making a complete distinction between God's existence and that of the creature. If one was to compare Aquinas's theory with the abovementioned three ways of which the concept of existence can be conceived, Aquinas's view could be categorized under either one of the first two. Aquinas was probably of the opinion that the concept of existence can apply with the same meaning to things

Furthermore, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, existence is divided into 'is' and 'it is'. That is, existence has an 'existential' and a 'copulative' use. The former refers to existence in such propositions as "The table exists." The latter refers to the predication of something of a subject, for example, in the proposition "The table is wooden." Mullā Ṣadrā was of the opinion that existence as represented by 'is' has the same meaning as existence as represented by 'it is'. Hence, since existence in the sense of 'it is' is always used with the same meaning then, existence in the sense of 'is' must also apply with the same meaning.[56] It is important to understand that for Mullā Ṣadrā in such propositions as "The table is wooden," predicating 'wooden' to 'the table' can only have a truth-value if there is an actual existent thing which is a wooden table. Hence, if the proposition "The table is wooden" is a true proposition, then the 'is' in the proposition shows that the proposition is referring to an actual existent thing.

Sabzavārī argues that the concept of existence applies in the same way to all existent things just as the concept of non-existence applies in the same way to all non-existent things. Given that the contradictory of existence is only non-existence then "the contradictory of what is one is one".[57] In addition, in cases where the particularization or determination of a thing is doubted (for example, it is doubted whether a thing is made up of a certain material or has a certain colour) one is convinced of its existence. Therefore, if the concept of existence is abstracted from a thing and its properties then, when that which determines or particularizes a thing is doubted its existence should also be doubted.[58] But

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with possible existence but not with the same meaning to the Necessary Being. Mullā Ṣadrā and Ṣadrian philosophers also argue for the analogousness of existence. Hādī Sabzavārī states, "For, since the concept of "existence" is something shared by all things, while it is evident that one single concept cannot be abstracted from diverse entities in so far as they are diverse, "existence" in different existents cannot be diverse entities; rather, they are degrees of one single "reality" which allows of analogical predication". He goes on to give three "proofs" for the analogousness of existence. First, "existence" is divided into the "existence" of the necessary and the "existence" of the accident and so forth. The principle of division between these different senses of "existence" must be something they share with each other. Otherwise, it is meaningless to make such a division. Second, there is no differentiation in non-existence which is contradictory to existence. Since its contradictory is one, it too is one. The third "proof", is discussed below and argues that in cases where the particularization or determination of a thing is doubted (for example, it is doubted whether a thing is made up of a certain material or has a certain colour) one is convinced of its existence. See: Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 39.

[56] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 36, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 2.

[57] Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 39.

[58] Ibid.

since in such cases the existence of a thing is not doubted then the concept of existence applies with the same meaning to different existents.

To clarify Sabzavārī's point, take as an example, cases where a person might see an actual object A but perceives it to be an object B at first glance. This can be due to the fact that not enough sensory information has been acquired by the person to make a correct judgement and therefore the person makes a judgement from previous experience and associates an image and a set of properties to her object of perception. Sometimes the brain's processing of the sensory information acquired during the first contact with an object is not without further analysis sufficient for making a correct judgement.[59] Mistaken judgements regarding objects of sensory perception can also be observed in cases where a person's sensory or cognitive faculties are not functioning correctly, for example, in cases where there is some kind of damage to sense organs or the brain. In such cases the object of perception actually exists but the properties associated with it by the perceiver are not the actual properties of the existent object. As a result, the concept of existence must apply in the same way to the assumed properties if they were actually existent as it does to the properties that are actually existent in the object of perception at the moment that it is perceived. This is because even if it is doubted whether or not the object of perception has a certain set of properties, it is not doubted whether or not it exists.

Sabzavārī also responds to the Peripatetics by stating that essences are completely different from each other and it is impossible to abstract a single concept from things that do not have any aspect of unification. He points out that if it is possible to abstract a single concept from different things because of the fact that they are different (i.e., different things *qua* different things) without an aspect of unity which can be a referent for the single concept then one is equal to many. That is, the single concept which is equal to many concepts. Hence, because the consequent in the aforementioned proposition is absurd so is its antecedent.[60] Therefore the concept of existence must apply with the same meaning to all existent things.

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[59]An example of such situations is the ways the visual system of human beings misinterprets optical information. See for example: E. Bruce Goldstein, *Sensation and Perception: Sixth Edition* (Pacific Grove: Wadsworth-Thomson Learning, 2002), 212-215.

[60]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 49-51.

Given that the concept of existence applies with the same meaning to all existent things then either the concept of existence refers to all existent things in the same way (for example, similar to that in which the concept of tree applies to the different existent trees), or in a different way. If it refers to existent things in a different way then, how is it that a concept can apply to different things with the same meaning but in a different way? This question demonstrates the gist of one of the most important principles in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, namely, the 'gradation of existence'.

The fact that there are various different existent entities is undoubtable if one accepts the reliability of sensory perception. Furthermore, although the concept of existence applies to all existent things with the same meaning it cannot apply to them in the same way. This is because if a concept applies in the same way to all the existent things that are described by it (for example, similar to how the concept of tree applies in the same way to different trees), then the different objects which the concept applies to must be distinguished from each other through accidental properties. However, if existence has primacy (as it was argued for above) then essences and accidents are all abstract mental concepts and that which exists outside of the mind are only existences. But that would mean that there is nothing to distinguish real existent things from each other outside of the mind which would result in the absurd claim that multiplicity in terms of existent beings is only an illusion. Therefore, although the concept of existence applies with the same meaning to all existent entities it must apply to them in a different way.

As a result, if it is accepted that what is outside of the mind is only existence (which Mullā Ṣadrā believes that it should be accepted based on his arguments) then the multiplicity that exists outside of the mind and the distinction between existents can only be due to some kind of an existential categorization and distinction. In other words, since there are only existences that have objective reality and essences are abstract mental concepts then, what distinguishes one being from another being or a set of beings from another set of beings must also refer back to existence. Existent things have some kind of a unity with each other because of their existence but are also distinct from each other because of their existence. Distinguishing and categorizing things based on their essences is a mental process that reflects existential distinctions and categorizations.[61]

[61]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.2, 99-100, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage 5, Chapter 4.

It is important to understand that for Mullā Ṣadrā the features and properties of the physical world are the mind's abstraction of the kind of existence that things in it have. This does not mean that Mullā Ṣadrā rejects the real features and properties of the physical world. On the contrary, Mullā Ṣadrā claims that the physical world is known through the essences of the things in it. However, such features and properties are rooted in the delineation of their existence.[62] Existence is simple in the sense that it is not composed of parts nor is it part of anything. The reason that existence is neither composed of parts nor is part of any thing is that there is nothing but existence. For Mullā Ṣadrā, since there is nothing but existence then any difference that is seen among existent beings has to be referred back to existence (as it will be discussed below). If existence was composed of parts then either what it is composed of would be existence or something else. In the former case it would only be itself and in the latter case something other than existence would instantiate existence. Both claims, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, are absurd and therefore existence cannot be composed of parts. Similarly, if it is part of something else that something must also either be existence or something else resulting in the aforementioned kind of absurdity.[63] In this sense, existent beings are simple existences and their difference is to do with either their different degrees of existential intensity or the form of existence they have.[64]

Mullā Ṣadrā proposes the idea of the 'gradation of existence' (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) in order to explain the unity and multiplicity in existence.[65] He proposes that existent beings are

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[62]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra,* 43-44.

[63]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra,* 7-8; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār,* vol.1, 50-53, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 6. In *al-Asfār* Mullā Ṣadrā gives the above argument in a slightly different way.

[64]It seems that for Mullā Ṣadrā an object which appears to have a physical composition is not actually composed of parts but represents either a different level of intensity in the degree of existential perfection or a form of existence. It is important to again emphasize that Mullā Ṣadrā does not reject physical compositions and its ability to explain physical objects on an essential level. According to him, such properties are the mind's abstraction of the different levels and forms of existence.

[65]The word *tashkīk* comes from the root word *shak* which means doubt. Hence, the translation of 'gradation of existence' given above is not a literal translation but one that gives the meaning of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical view. It seems the reason Mullā Ṣadrā uses the term *tashkīk al-wujūd* for gradation of existence is due to the confusion that arises from the analysis of existence. On the one side existent things must have some kind of unity in order for the concept of existence to apply to them with the same meaning and on the other side they are also distinct existences and their distinction must go back to their

distinct from each other in two ways. Later Ṣadrian philosophers called these two ways, the 'vertical system of existential gradation' and the 'horizontal system of existential gradation'.[66] In the vertical system, the difference between existent beings is due to the difference in the degree of intensity (*tashaddud*) in their existences. Existences are first categorized based on whether or not they are in need of another for their existence.[67] Those beings that are in need of another in order to exist are categorized based on the degree of intensity in their existences. Existent beings which are located on the higher levels of the vertical system not only have the existential perfection of those in the lower level but also have more perfection due to the higher degree of intensity in their existences. Conversely, existent beings lack the perfection of those that exist in levels above them.[68]

The horizontal system of gradation refers to the differences that exists between beings that although are on the same level of existence (and therefore have the same degree of intensity in regards to their existence), differ from each other in the form of existences they have. Categorization of existent beings in the horizontal system is done by considering their essences.[69]

Existent beings which are located on a certain existential level in the vertical system are limited in comparison to those located on higher levels because they lack the perfection of the latter. However, in comparison to the lower levels of existence, existent beings are not limited in any way. This is because as it was stated above they already contain the perfection of those that are located on the lower existential levels.[70] On the lowest level of the vertical system is prime matter which is pure potentiality. On the highest level is Pure

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existence. Mullā Ṣadrā attempts to solve this 'confusion' through his 'gradation of existence'.

[66]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 124. Alternatively, the terms 'longitudinal system of existence' and the 'latitudinal system of existence' can be used. I believe the terms used above are clearer.

[67]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 55.

[68]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 36, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 2, 45-47, Chapter 5; Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 55-56; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 73.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.6, 116-118, Journey 3, Interval 1, Part 1, Branch 1, Chapter 12.

Existence which has no imperfections or limitations.[71] A being which has pure existence or rather is Pure Existence is not in need of another to exist because it is not limited (or conditional) in any way and it is existence *qua* existence. In other words, Pure Existence has necessary existence. Imperfections or limitations are due to the absence of a certain degree or intensity of existence. Therefore, pure and unconditional existence cannot have any imperfection or limitation because it is nothing but existence.[72] It is at the pinnacle of the vertical system because nothing can be imagined which has more existential perfection than it.

The gradational system of existence is Mullā Ṣadrā's cosmological account of the world. He views creation as emanating vertically in a descending manner from God down to prime matter. It is important to understand that for Mullā Ṣadrā the beings on the lower levels of the gradation cannot by themselves and without the guidance of the Pure Existence ascend towards an existentially more perfect state located on higher levels. This is because they lack the existential perfection of those beings that are located on higher levels of existence.

The Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible does not rely on Mullā Ṣadrā's complete cosmological account. In the vertical system all existent beings that are limited are imperfect and in need of a cause whereas Pure Existence is perfect and free from having a need for a cause. It is possible for limited beings to be more perfect than they are (i.e., have higher degree of existential intensity) and as a result they do not have necessary existence but possible existence. Hence, the argument relies only on his categorization of existences into beings that are needy, dependent and possible and the Being which is free of need, independent and necessary. Hence, for Mullā Ṣadrā the position of Pure Existence at the top of the vertical system is only conceptual. In reality, the relation of Pure Existence to all other existences is that of a being which is completely free from need in comparison to beings whose very reality is complete need and dependence on another. Mullā Ṣadrā and other Ṣadrian philosophers give the example of a shadow in comparison to the object which has caused the shadow as an analogy of the Pure Existence in comparison to needy relational existences.[73] However, Mullā Ṣadrā does use his cosmological account of the

[71]Mullā Ṣadrā also refers to Pure Existence as 'Real Existence' (*ḥaqīqah al-wujūd*).

[72]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.6, 15-16, 23-24, Journey 3, Interval 1, Part 1, Branch 1, Chapter 1; Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 56-57; Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 124-125.

[73]Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 97, 110.

physical world to rule out the physical universe as the Pure Existence. The physical universe is changing and moving towards perfection and therefore it cannot be that being which has all the existential perfections (i.e., Pure Existence). Pure Existence is that which is not limited by form so that it would replace its form with another form.[74] Mullā Ṣadrā argues that anything other than Pure Existence which is free from form and limit is a needy and relational being.

What is clear is the existence of the material world but what needs to be proven is the existence of the Pure Existence. Mullā Ṣadrā constructs his Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible on the principles that were discussed above. That is, the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible is constructed on the following principles:

- Existence has primacy and its necessary consequence that it is existence of beings that is the subject of causality not their essences.
- The need and dependence on a cause constitutes the very reality and limited nature of the possible being whereas the existence of the Necessary Being is equivalent to existential perfection, self-sufficiency and not having any limitation.
- Gradation of the reality of existence. In the sense that existent entities share in the reality of existence but are distinguished from each other based on their degree of existential perfection (i.e., existential intensity and weakness) which describes their existence.

The logical construction of the argument can be stated in the following manner:

Premise 1.	If Pure Existence does not exist then nothing would exist.
Premise 2.	Something does exist.
Conclusion.	Therefore Pure Existence exists.

The logical form and wording of Mullā Ṣadrā's argument (with the exception of the name used for God) is the same as Ibn Sīnā's Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. The difference with Mullā Ṣadrā's argument and that of Ibn Sīnā's is the way

[74]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 54, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage1, Course 1, Chapter 7.

each one attempts to prove premise 1. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, based on the premises already established (i.e., our discussion above) existent beings are either limited, needy existences or the Pure Existence (existence *qua* existence) which is unlimited and free from need. A limited and therefore needy being is existent due to the existence it receives from another and is therefore 'existent because of another'. The very reality and existence of a needy being is neediness and dependence on the other which gives existence to it. Since its very reality is neediness and dependence then it is not capable of imparting anything to another being but dependence on and need for the other that gave it (i.e., the first being) its existence. Consequently, one needy being is not capable of giving existence to another needy being from itself but only to impart on the second being the same need for a cause that constitutes its own reality. Furthermore, it is only capable of imparting that need because of the relational existence it receives from its own cause.

There is no doubt that there are existent beings. Existent beings which are limited and therefore needy necessarily have a relational existence and are dependent on another for their existence. This is the case for the totality of limited beings because none of them whether by themselves or in their totality can satisfy the need which is the intrinsic nature of limited beings. Since relational beings which in their very nature are in need of and dependent on another for their existence exist then the other which has given them existence must also exist. The other cannot be a limited existence for the previously mentioned reasons. Therefore, the existent being which bestows existence and form on all relational beings must be Pure Existence which has necessary existence.[75]

Pure Existence has no limitations and therefore is completely perfect in the sense that it has all the existential perfections. This means that Pure Existence is omnipotent and omniscient because power and knowledge are existential attributes.[76] There can be only one being which corresponds with the concept of Pure Existence. If the assumption is made that there are two necessary beings then one of them would lack a degree of

[75]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.6, 14-16, Journey 3, Interval 1, Part 1, Branch 1, Chapter 1; Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 56-57. Also see: Muhammad Jawād Dhihnī Tehranī, *Fuṣūl al-Ḥikmah: Sharḥ Fārsī bar Manẓūmah (Mabḥas Elāhīyāt)* (Qom: Enteshārāt-e Hādhiq, 1369H.S.), vol.3, 1078-1079. (Arabic text of Sabzavārī's Manẓūmah with Persian translation and commentary)

[76]For God's omnipotence and omniscience see: Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 58, 63-65; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, ed. and trans. James W. Morris (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 104-109; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.6, 24-25, Journey 3, Interval 1, Part 1, Branch 1, Chapter 1.

perfection that is present in the other. Each being is then limited by the degree of perfection present in the other and a dependent existent is not the complete Pure Existence.[77]

Mullā Ṣadrā, like Ibn Sīnā, believes his argument for existence of God is an ontological one and calls it the Demonstration of the Veracious. However, like the demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary, the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible argues for the existence of a being free from need (i.e., Pure Existence) from the existence of needy beings (i.e., attempts to argue from a fact about the world). As a result it too does not meet the criteria of a theistic argument that reasons from the concept of God to the existence of God. Mullā Ṣadrā after giving his proofs for the existence of God and His attributes goes on to argue that God as pure existence is the principle that underlies the existence of all beings in the sense that He is all existences.[78] Therefore, it could be the case that because Mullā Ṣadrā believed that any existence is the manifestation of the one real and pure existence then his argument is arguing from existence to existence. Since, for Mullā Ṣadrā, existence in its pure meaning is God then he argued from God to God. Nevertheless, even from the aforementioned point of view, an incomplete manifestation of what Mullā Ṣadrā calls Pure Existence is not a concept which signifies the complete reality of that which it is manifested from (i.e., the complete reality of Pure Existence) and therefore cannot be an argument that argues from the concept of Pure Existence to Pure Existence.

Mullā Ṣadrā's account of existent beings will be problematic for those who believe that existence simply means instantiation in reality and nothing more. This does not mean that one must necessarily subscribe to primacy of essence similar to that proposed by Suhrawardī. Rather, the view of many Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Sīnā was that even though existence is not an abstract mental concept and describes the reality of an existent thing outside of the mind, existent things are as distinguished from each other outside of the mind as their essences in the mind. The reason that the concept of existence applies with the same meaning to different existent beings is due to the fact that being instantiated in reality (i.e., not being a mere mental concept) is applied with the same meaning to

[77]Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 59-60; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.6, 24-25, Journey 3, Interval 1, Part 1, Branch 1, Chapter 1.

[78]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.6, 110-118, Journey 3, Interval 1, Part 1, Branch 1, Chapter 12; Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, 65-67.

everything that existence outside of the mind. Such a view is held by many proponents from within the Islamic tradition, especially among those from the theological tradition. Nevertheless, the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible can be rationally cogent and prove its conclusion even if Mullā Ṣadrā's existentialist and cosmological views are not accepted on the whole. This is because a being which is in need of a cause to give and sustain its existence is sheer dependence on another in its entire reality and existence and has relational existence. From the dependent and relational nature of a possible being, it can be argued that even if it is a cause for another being's existence, it is an intermediary cause and will also be in need of another for its existence. Hence, the totality of needy beings will need a being which is free from need in its existence in order to exist. However, without Mullā Ṣadrā's existentialist views, the aforementioned argument looks very much like that of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary. On the other hand, the argument does not have to be completely Ibn Sīnian in the sense that it can reason from the very neediness and dependence of the possible being's existence rather than its essence.

5 Ontological Arguments in the Islamic Tradition

The concept of knowing the existence of God through God alone can be found in the Islamic narrative tradition. The Shī`ah traditionists, al-Kulaynī and al-Ṣadūq each include a chapter in their works quoting statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and the Shī`ah Imāms about knowing the existence of God through God alone.[1] Some Qurānic verses have also been interpreted by Muslim theologians and philosophers as meaning that the proof for the existence of God is God.[2] Hence, Muslim thinkers have strived to construct an argument for the existence of God that argues from God alone. It was stated in the previous chapters that both Ibn Sīnā and Mullā Ṣadrā were of the opinion that their arguments (i.e., the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary and the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible) fulfilled such a requirement. They called their arguments *Burhān al-Ṣiddīqīn* (the Demonstration of the Veracious). The term *Burhān al-Ṣiddīqīn* became associated in Islamic philosophy and theology with theistic argument that argue for the existence of God from God only. If ontological arguments are also characterized as arguing for the existence of God from God or concept of God alone (which is how I believe they should be characterised) then the Demonstrations for the Veracious can be regarded as the name given in Islamic philosophy to ontological arguments. It was explained in the previous chapters that both the Demonstration from the

[1]Muhammad ibn Ya`qūb al-Kulaynī, *Al-'Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* , ed. `Alī Akbar al-Qaffārī (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1383 H.S.), vol.1, 85-86; Al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, trans. Muhammad Ali Sultani (Tehran: Armaghān Ṭūba, 1384H.S.), 442-451. (Arabic Text with Persian translation).

[2]Qurān 41:53. This is how Ibn Sīnā and many other philosophers and theologians have interpreted the verse. The specific part of the verse that is interpreted in the aforementioned sense is: "...and is it not sufficient for your Lord that He is witness over all things?" See for example, Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt Wa al-Tanbīhāt: Ma`a Sharḥ al-Khāwjah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī wa al-Muḥākimāt l-Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, ed. Karīm Fayḍī (Qom: Matbū`āt Dīnī, 1383 H.S.), vol.3, 79, Method 4, Metaphysics.

Possible to the Necessary and the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible argue for the existence of God from God's creation and not from the concept of God alone. However, Ibn Sīnā's and Mullā Ṣadrā's arguments did provide the foundation for later theistic arguments developed by Ṣadrian philosophers which fit the description of an ontological argument.

There are many variations on Mullā Ṣadrā's existential argument for the existence of God. There is, however, one ingenious variation formulated by Hādī Sabzavārī (1212A.H./1797C.E.-1289A.H./1873C.E.). The argument is built on Ṣadrian existentialist premises and is even given as an explanatory note for part of Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-Asfār*. Nevertheless, it can be regarded as an independent theistic argument of its own. Sabzavārī presents the argument in the following way:

> The reality of existence which is identical with instantiation in reality is absolute [*mursal*, in the sense that it is not limited] and actual reality [*ḥāq al-wāqi`*]. Non-existence can never enter it and [it] will never accept non-existence [i.e., it can never be the case that it does not exist]. [This is] because one side [of two contradictory terms] will not accept the opposing side [of the same two contradictory terms] and that absolute reality of which the non-existence is impossible [because absolute existence is contradictory to non-existence] is [the existent being which is] necessarily existent in itself. Therefore, [the] absolute reality of existence is necessary existent [i.e. necessarily exists in the sense that it is instantiated in reality] in itself. And this is the result we wanted to achieve.[3]

When talking about the reality of existence, Sabzavārī means pure existence in the sense used by Mullā Ṣadrā. That is, he is referring to existence *qua* existence which is absolutely perfect and has no limitations. He does not have an essence (i.e., His essence is the same as His existence) and cannot be conceived because that which has an essence separate from its existence and can be conceived through that essence is limited by that essence and cannot

[3]Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *Ḥikmat al-Mutaālīyah fī al-Asfār al-`Aqlīyah al-'Arba`ah* (Qom: Maktabah al-Muṣtafawī, 1368H.S.), vol.6, 16, footnote 1, Journey 3, Interval 1, Part 1, Branch 1, Chapter 1.

be existence *qua* existence.[4] The logical form of Sabzavārī's argument can be given in the following way:

Premise 1	Existence *qua* existence does not accept non-existence.
Premise 2	That which does not accept non-existence is necessarily existent.
Conclusion	Therefore existence *qua* existence necessarily exists.[5]

Existence is contradictory to non-existence and what exists cannot be said to not exist at the same time. Limited existence can accept non-existence in the sense that they can either exist through a cause or not exist. Pure Existence, on the other hand, which is nothing but existence (i.e., existence *qua* existence) cannot accept non-existence because otherwise there will be a conjunction of contradictories between existence and non-existence. Therefore, Pure Existence must be necessarily existent.

Interestingly, the criticism that has been directed towards the above argument by Muslim thinkers is based on a distinction made by Mullā Ṣadrā (which was also known to Sabzavārī) between 'primary essential predication' (*al-ḥaml al-awwalī al-dhātī*) and 'prevalent technical predication' (*al-ḥaml al-shāyi` al-sinā`ī*).[6] It will be shown that although ontological proofs are constructed on a different set of premises many of them share a fundamental similarity which might leave them open to the same criticism if they attempt to argue for the existence of God from the concept of God alone.

In any predication there has to be an aspect of difference and an aspect of unity. In prevalent technical predication, there is a conceptual difference between the predicate and the subject while in actual existence the predicate and the subject are one thing (i.e., the predicate and the subject are actualized as one thing in reality or are united in one existent

[4]There is no need to repeat the argument of the previous chapters here. The reader may refer to those chapters for the proof of these claims.

[5]Jawādī Āmulī, *Tabyīn Barāhīn Ethbāt-e Khodā* (Qom: ISRA Publication Center, 1996), 196.

[6]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 292-294, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage 1, Course 3, Chapter 3; Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā), *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra (Kitāb al-Mashā`ir)*, trans. Parviz Morewedge (Tehran/New York: The Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences, 1992), 48, Seventh Prehension; Hādī ibn Mahdī Sabzavārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 166-168. Morewedge translates the two kind of predication as 'primary and essential predication' and 'empirical predication'. However, I don't believe Mullā Ṣadrā intended to limit prevalent technical predication to empirical predications only.

being). Hence, the aspect of difference is conceptual and the aspect of unity is existential. Such predications include those where essences like 'human' are predicated of an individual, for example, in the proposition "Jack is human". They also include propositions where an accident is predicated of a substance, for example in, "The table is red", or where an accident is predicated of another accident such as in the statement "The agile runner".[7]

On the other hand, in primary essential predication, the predicate and the subject are one both in actual existence (i.e., outside of the mind) and conceptually. The difference between the predicate and the subject in primary essential predications is conventional (*i`tibārī*). For example, in some cases of primary essential predication the difference between the subject and the predicate might be that one has a more concise meaning whereas the other contains a more detailed account such as in the proposition "Human is a rational animal" where both 'Human' and 'rational animal' have the same meaning. Propositions where the genus is predicated of the species or the specific difference is predicated of the species also fall under this type of predication. Another example of primary essential predication includes tautological propositions where the difference between the subject and the predicate is suppositious, for example, in the proposition "Human is human", where the supposition is made that one is less clear than the other.[8] This is because the statement "Human is human" is not a concept but a proposition which has a truth-value. However, in order to assign truth to a proposition there has to be a difference between the subject and the predicate. Hence, in the proposition "Human is human" it is supposed that there is a kind of difference between the subject and the predicate (i.e., one supposes that one is not acquainted in the same way with the subject as one is acquainted with the predicate) whereas in actuality there is no such difference in their meaning.

Contradiction can only occur if the middle term of the major and the minor premises are the same. After making the above distinction it becomes clear that the middle term can only be the same in both the major and the minor premises if the type of predication is the same in both cases. Hence, if in the minor premise the predication is of the primary essential type whereas in the major premise the predication is of the prevalent technical

[7]Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tarjome wa Sharḥ Nihāyat al-Ḥikmah*, ed. and trans. Ali Shirwani (Qom: Dār al-Fikr, 2007), vol.1, 534-536. (Arabic text with Persian translation)

[8]Ibid.

type then no contradiction occurs. To put it simply, Mullā Ṣadrā is arguing in his logical terminology that just because something is necessarily the case by definition there is no reason to accept it without further proof that it is the case in actual existence.

Mullā Ṣadrā uses the distinction to solve a number of philosophical problems such as, for example, why the concept of the partner of God (*sharīk al-bārī*, which refers to a being or a second God that has all the attributes of God) despite having necessary existence by essential predication does not have necessary existence by prevalent technical predication or why absolute non-existence despite being absolute non-existence by essential predication has mental existence by prevalent technical predication.[9] In regards to God's partner, for example, its concept by definition also has necessary existence. But the necessity of existence is predicated of God's partner by primary essential predication. The fact that further proof is needed to show that God's partner cannot actually exist shows that what by definition must necessarily exist does not have to actually exist.[10] In the argument given above Pure Existence (i.e., existence *qua* existence) does not accept non-existence through primary essential predication because everything is necessarily itself in its essence. However, in the absence of further proofs there is no reason to accept that something which does not accept non-existence through primary essential predication must also not accept non-existence through prevalent technical predication. In other words, Pure Existence must by definition have necessary existence but without further proof one cannot conclude that it must actually exist (i.e., if Pure Existence exists then it must have necessary existence).[11]

There is an important point that needs to be mentioned here. Mullā Ṣadrā's distinction between the above two types of predication is not the same as David Hume's argument that things cannot be proven to exist through *a priori* arguments.[12] Mullā Ṣadrā was not an

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[9]Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol.1, 148, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage 1, Course 2, Chapter 6, 188, Chapter 10, 346-347, Journey 1, Method 1, Stage 2, Chapter 4. The concept of the 'partner of God' refers to any number of gods in addition to the God of the theists who also has necessary existence.

[10]Another example can be that of the necessarily existent physical universe. By definition, a necessarily existent physical universe must have necessity of existence but arguments (such as the ones given in the previous chapters) can be given for why it is impossible for the physical universe to have necessary existence.

[11]Jawādī Āmulī, *Tabyīn Barāhīn Ethbāt-e Khodā* (Qom: ISRA Publication Center, 1996), 196.

[12]David Hume, "Dialogues concerning natural religion," in *Dialogues concerning natural religion and other writings*, ed. Dorothy Coleman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 64, Part 9.

empiricist in the Humean sense and it would be a mistake to think that he was. Rather, Mullā Ṣadrā is of the opinion that proving the existence of a thing needs more than the consideration of its essence and needs additional proof whether that proof is *a priori* or empirical.[13]

The objection against Sabzavārī's argument based on Mullā Ṣadrā's distinction between primary essential predication and prevalent technical predication seems to apply to many ontological proofs that attempt to argue for the existence of God from only the concept of God. The reason seems to be that proofs that argue for the existence of God from the concept of God alone will have to argue on the basis of a definition. For example, let us assess Anselm's ontological argument and Plantinga's modal argument with the same criticism that was directed to the arguments above. Here I will present a modified version of Anselm's ontological argument given by Stephen Davis with slight change in text that spells out Davis's abbreviations and indicate how the conclusion follows from the argument's premises. The argument is presented in the following way:

Premise 1	Things can exist in only two ways: in the mind and in reality.
Premise 2	The Greatest Conceivable Being can possibly exist in reality, i.e. is not an impossible thing.
Premise 3	The Greatest Conceivable Being exists in the mind.
Premise 4	Whatever exists only in the mind and might possibly exist in reality might have been greater than it is.
Premise 5	The Greatest Conceivable Being exists only in the mind.
Premise 6	The Greatest Conceivable Being might have been greater than it is. (From Premise 4)
Premise 7	The Greatest Conceivable Being is a being than which a greater is conceivable. (From Premise 3 and Premise 6)
Premise 8	It is false that the Greatest Conceivable Being exists only in the mind. (Due to the contradiction that results as shown in Premise 7)

[13]For example, in the two arguments given in the previous chapters the proof includes not just a definition but also the consideration of the actual existence of possibly existing beings which cannot exist unless there is a being with necessary existence that necessitates and sustains their existence. The arguments can be given even if a person considers her own self known to her not empirically but through knowledge by presence to be an actually existent possible being.

Premise 9 Therefore, the Greatest Conceivable Being exists both in the mind and in reality.[14]

A careful consideration of the above argument shows that the criticism which was based on Mullā Ṣadrā's previously mentioned distinction between the two types of predication also applies to Anselm's argument. That is, the Greatest Conceivable Being is by definition (or by primary essential predication) the greatest conceivable being and is a concept in the mind. However, the fact that by definition it is the Greatest Conceivable Being says nothing about it being the Greatest Conceivable Being in actual existence (i.e., by prevalent technical predication). This can be shown due to the fact that the contradiction that is apparent in Premise 7 applies even if the Greatest Conceivable Being did exist. If the Greatest Conceivable Being did exist it would still be greater than the concept of the Greatest Conceivable Being in the mind and therefore the concept would still not be the Greatest Conceivable Being.[15] It has to be remembered that Anselm's argument relies on the contradiction demonstrated in Premise 7. But if the contradiction in Premise 7 remains whether or not the Greatest Conceivable Being exists, then the entire argument collapses because it depends for its cogency on that contradiction. What the argument needs to show is that the concept of the Greatest Conceivable Being which by definition (or by primary essential predication) is the greatest possible being actually exists (i.e., the Greatest Conceivable Being exists). But Anselm's argument does not do that.

Alvin Plantinga's modal ontological argument does not fare much better against the criticism that it fails to make a distinction between primary essential predication and prevalent technical predication. That argument also argues from a definition without showing that the definition has actual existence. The premises for Plantinga's argument can be presented in the following manner:

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[14]Stephen T. Davis, "The Ontological Argument," in *The Rationality of Theism*, ed. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (London: Routledge, 2003), 94.

[15]The counterargument might be given that if the Greatest Conceivable Being exists then the concept of the Greatest Conceivable Being is a representation of it and not a concept independent of it. In reply, it can be argued that even if such a claim withstands the arguments that can be given for why the essence of the Greatest Conceivable Being cannot be conceived by limited non-great being, it would only be an argument from some kind of intuition or direct experience of God not an ontological argument for the existence of God.

Premise 1	There is a possible world in which maximal greatness is instantiated.
Premise 2	Necessarily, a being is maximally great only if it has maximal excellence in every world.
Premise 3	Necessarily, a being has maximal excellence in every world only if it has omniscience, omnipotence, and moral perfection in every world.[16]

Premise 1 uses the term 'possible' in the sense of being contradictory to impossibility and therefore in a broader meaning than Ibn Sīnā's usage of the term. The conclusion that Plantinga draws from the above premises is that based on premise one it is not impossible for the maximally great being to exist (i.e., there is a possible world in which it can exist). But a maximally perfect being would not be maximally perfect if it did not have maximal greatness in every possible world. This is because if its greatness was limited to only one possible world (or even a number of possible worlds) then, it would be possible for it to be greater than what it actually was which is contradictory to its having maximal greatness. In other words, that which can be greater than what it is does not have maximal greatness. Therefore, since it is not impossible for a maximally great being to exist and if it has maximal greatness it must exist in every possible world then, a maximally great being exists in the actual world. That is, a maximally great being exists in our world which is one of the possible worlds.[17]

Like the previously mentioned ontological arguments, Plantinga's argument argues from a definition. By definition, if a maximally great being exists, it must exist in all possible worlds including the actual world (which is really just another way of saying that it is not limited by any possible world and it has necessary existence), but that reason alone is not sufficient for proving its existence in the actual world.

It seems that the ontological arguments given up to this point in the discussion are subject to the criticism that they do not distinguish between primary essential predication and prevalent technical predication. There is one argument given by the twentieth century Muslim philosopher and theologian Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1281H.S./1901C.E.-1360H.S./1980C.E.) which according to its proponents withstands the objections that are

[16]Alvin Plantinga and James F. Sennett, *The analytic theist* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 70.

[17]Ibid.

usually directed towards ontological arguments.[18] Although Ṭabāṭabā'ī was an Islamic existentialist he constructs his Demonstration of the Veracious on the basis of the concept of reality alone and therefore avoids the criticism that might be directed against existentialist concepts. Ṭabāṭabā'ī argues that the proposition that "There is a reality" is necessarily true and cannot be doubted. Therefore its denial which amounts to complete scepticism regarding reality (i.e., there is no reality at all) is necessarily false. The fact that there is a reality is so clear that its negation still affirms its truth. He argues that the sceptic who denies reality (*wāqi`īyah*) absolutely believes that she has not just denied the concept of reality or has denied it imaginatively. She believes she has in 'actual fact' denied reality and that things are in 'actual fact' non-existent.[19] Hence, according to the sceptic there is a reality which is such that in that reality nothing is real. Therefore, the sceptic confirms the fact that there is a reality by denying it.

Furthermore, the proposition "There is a reality" can never be denied even if the current reality is denied. Therefore, the proposition "There is a reality" has eternal necessity. If one imagines that the current reality is somehow all of a sudden destroyed in one go there is still a reality in which the current reality is destroyed. This is because the current reality would in 'actual fact' have been destroyed.[20] If W represents the current world (or universe) then the following statement is true:

1) There is a reality in which W is instantiated.

Now if one imagines that W is somehow destroyed in one go then the following statement will be true:

[18]The most comprehensive account of Ṭabāṭabā'ī's argument is given in: Āmulī, *Tabyīn Barāhīn Ethbāt-e Khodā*, 216-224. Āmulī quotes and explains Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Demonstration of the Veracious. This is the source which I will mostly use for Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Demonstration of the Veracious. Also see: Murtaḍā Mutahharī, *Majmū`ah-ye Āthār: (Jeld Dowwom az Bakhsh Falsafah) Uṣūl Falsafah wa Rawesh Realism*, vol.6. Tehran: Ṣadrā, 1380H.S., 982, 992-994.

[19]In Arabic and Persian it would be said that he has 'really' (*wāqi`an*) or 'in reality' denied reality which would make the point clearer. However, the statement "Something is the case in actual fact" is synonymous to the statement "Something is really (or in reality) the case".

[20]Āmulī, *Tabyīn Barāhīn Ethbāt-e Khodā*, 219.

2) There is a reality in which W is not instantiated.[21]

Whether or not statement 1 or 2 is true the proposition that "There is a reality" remains true. The question that can now be asked is whether or not limited realities can be that reality which can never be negated and which has eternal necessity. In other words it can be asked: Can the current world be that reality which has eternal necessity?

According to Ṭabāṭabā'ī limited realities cannot be that reality that can never be negated because they have possible existence. Any proposition which affirms that there is a limited reality does so to the extent of the limitation that is characteristic of that reality. In other words, a proposition which affirms the reality of W can only affirm the reality of W and not the necessary proposition "There is a reality". The actual world is a limited reality and as a result cannot be that reality which cannot be negated and is not the extension of the necessary proposition "There is a reality". One can also rule out the alternative that all limited realities together make up the extension of the necessary proposition "There is a reality". First, multiple limited realities in contrast to the actual reality are not real and they exist only as concepts in one's mind. Second, the combination of possible realities is only a mental phenomenon and does not have a reality in addition to the individual realities.[22] It is possible for none of those limited realities to exist. Therefore, the reality which can never be doubted and is the extension of the necessary proposition "There is a reality" cannot be limited realities or their combination. The necessary eternal reality which is the extension of the necessary proposition "There is a reality" is an unlimited reality.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī's argument requires further proofs to show that a limited reality such as the actual world becomes existent because of the necessary eternal reality and that the necessary reality has the attributes of a theistic God. However, once it has been proven that there is a necessary unlimited and eternal reality then it can be shown that limited possible beings can only become existent if that reality brings them into existence. It can also be shown that there cannot be more than one unlimited reality and that not having limitation

[21]This can be presented in many ways such as, for example, there is a reality in which there is not W but there is W^n (which includes W^1, W^2, W^3, ...).

[22]Āmulī, *Tabyīn Barāhīn Ethbāt-e Khodā*, 220.

means that it is perfect in every existential sense.[23] Ṭabāṭabā'ī's ontological argument does not aim to prove the existence of God but to show to the individual that the truth of the proposition "God exists" is something which is indubitable and which is known through primary knowledge.[24]

I would like to conclude this chapter with an ontological proof of my own. The proof is based on a fundamental premise that underlies any argument for the existence of something. Underlying any proof that attempts to prove the existence of something is a hidden assumption that one needs a reason to accept the existence of something. This is due to the fact that taken in the naive way it is reasonable to doubt that things exist. Because it is reasonable to doubt a thing's existence then it is reasonable to require proof that something does actually exist. However, anyone who rejects complete scepticism (i.e., the idea that nothing at all exists) believes that there are at least some things which their existence cannot be doubted and therefore belief in the existence of such things does not require proof. Belief in the fact that one has existence himself or herself is one such belief that requires no justification. It was shown by Ibn Sīnā and other Muslim thinkers that one cannot prove to one's own self that one exists. An individual must and should accept her existence despite not having any justification. Muslim philosophers call this kind of knowledge 'knowledge by presence' the truth of which is known without requiring further proof. Therefore, there are some cases where it is not reasonable to doubt that something exists in the first place so that one would require proof for its existence.

Given the aforementioned introductory note one can go on to construct an argument based on what constitutes reasonable doubt. If it is not reasonable to doubt the existence of a thing then its existence must be accepted.[25] A thing's non-existence is due to two

[23]For Ṭabāṭabā'ī's arguments for the uniqueness and other attributes of God see: Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tarjome wa Sharḥ Nihāyat al-Ḥikmah*, ed. and trans. Ali Shirwani (Qom: Dār al-Fikr, 2007), 227-394. (Arabic text with Persian translation).

[24]Āmulī, *Tabyīn Barāhīn Ethbāt-e Khodā*, 217.

[25]It is important to understand that I am not claiming that it is unreasonable to doubt that anything exists. My argument as it will become clear is that things can be categorized into that which is reasonable to deny its existence, that which is reasonable to doubt its existence and that which is unreasonable to doubt its existence. The existence of an impossible being can be reasonably denied. The existence of a possible being can also be denied if one has knowledge of its non-existence, for example, the non-existence of a Bigfoot in front of me. The existence of a possible being can be reasonably doubted if one does not have knowledge of its existence or non-existence. It is, however, unreasonable to doubt the existence of a possible being that one knows

reasons. One reason a thing does not exist is because there is an inherent contradiction in the concept that represents it, for example, in the case of a square circle. The other reason is that even though it is possible for a being to exist it does not exist because of a lack of a cause. Neither of these two alternatives can be the case in regards to God. God has necessary existence or alternatively exists due to His own essence.[26] It is not impossible for God to exist. Furthermore, God defined as a being that has necessary existence (or exists due to itself or exists through His own essence) would not exist through a cause so that a lack of a cause would result in its non-existence. Therefore, God must exist.

The argument is in accordance with the description of an ontological argument in the sense that it argues from the concept of God alone. The only thing that remains in order not to leave any doubt for the proof's cogency is to explain the premises. It is important to understand that the argument is not constructed on the premise that if one does not have proof for a thing's non-existence then it must exist. For example, one might not have proof for the non-existence of the tooth fairy but that does not mean that the tooth fairy exists. Any argument based on such a premise is subject to the criticism that the burden of proof is on the one making a claim about the existence of something to show that it exists. Rather, the ontological proof I have given above is constructed on the premise that the burden of proof for proving the existence of something is only in regards to claims about things the existence of which can be reasonably doubted. It is known that impossible beings such as square circles cannot exist. It is also reasonable to doubt the existence of a being that can exist possibly (in the Ibn Sīnian sense) if there is no proof (for example, through sensory perception or a rational argument if one can be given) that it was brought into existence.[27]

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exists. It is also unreasonable to doubt the existence of the Necessary Being for the reasons that are given below.

[26]Alternatively it can be stated that the Necessary Being exists due to its own essence and then argue based on the arguments given in the previous chapters that the Necessary Being must have certain attributes.

[27]As a reminder a being has possible existence in the Ibn Sīnian sense if it is not necessary for it to exist but also it is not impossible for it to exist. Necessary existence is that which it is neither possible nor impossible for it to exist. Hence, in this sense possibility of existence is contradictory to impossibility and necessity of existence (i.e., possibility of existence is contradictory to impossibility and necessity of existence taken together but contrary to each taken independently), necessity of existence is contradictory to possibility and impossibility of existence and impossibility of existence is contradictory to possibility and necessity of existence.

It should be remembered that if based on the arguments given in chapter three and four it is accepted that a possible being needs a cause in order to exist then it can be said with certainty that the role of sensory perception or any other proof for a possible being's existence is only to confirm that it exists because a cause has brought it into existence. The original doubt regarding its existence is due to the fact that it is possible for it not to exist. That is, the original doubt regarding its existence is because it has possible existence and therefore can both exist and not exist. Sensory perception or a rational argument (if one can be given) confirms that the possible being was indeed brought into existence by a cause and leaves no room to doubt its existence.

However, since it is neither the case that God needs a cause for His existence nor is it impossible for God to exist then there are no reasonable grounds for doubting His existence. If there are no reasonable grounds for doubting God's existence it is unreasonable to claim that God does not exist and therefore one should accept as a matter of fact that God exists.

The claim of the proof is not just that the atheist does not have a reason to believe that God does not exist. An atheist who does not have a reason to believe in God's non-existence can always argue that the theist has no reason to believe that God exists. The argument rather claims that she does not have a reason to doubt God's existence. With this latter case the argument cannot be given that one needs to also prove that God exists and it is not sufficient that one does not have proof for God's non-existence. If there are no reasonable grounds to doubt God's existence in the first place then his existence should be accepted.[28] In this sense knowledge of God's existence is of the special kind that needs no justification but cannot be reasonably doubted either and the ontological argument given serves only the purposes of drawing one's attention to that fact rather than providing a discursive argument for God's existence. Therefore, the ontological argument shows that God exists by drawing one's attention to the fact that his existence cannot be doubted.

Proofs for the unicity, uniqueness, simplicity and perfection of a being which has necessary existence (or alternatively exists through its own essence) presented in the previous chapters will be sufficient for proving God's attributes.[29] Hence, the ontological

[28]For the same reason one believes in one's own existence. That is, one believes that since there is no reasonable ground to dismiss one's own existence then it must be accepted as a matter of fact that one does in fact exist.

[29]The arguments given in the previous chapters argue only from the concept of the Necessary Being showing that it cannot have parts, that it must be unique and so forth.

argument presented above cannot be criticized on the basis that it does not rule out the universe as the being which has necessary existence. Through such arguments it can be shown that there are reasonable grounds to not only doubt but also to negate the claim that there is more than one being that has necessary existence and that the universe is not a necessary being. Also again based on the previously presented arguments it can be shown that possible beings can only exist if they are brought into existence through a cause and that cause must have necessary existence.

It might be argued that the ontological argument I presented might also face the criticism that a being which has necessary existence must by definition (i.e., by primary essential predication) necessarily exist but further proof is needed to confirm that it actually exists. The response which can be given to such a criticism is that one needs further proof for a concept's existence (i.e., a concept's actual existence outside of the mind) other than the concept itself if it is reasonable to doubt its existence (i.e., its actual existence) in the first place. Since no reasonable doubt exists for the existence of God according to the above proof then the argument does not face the abovementioned criticism. I believe that the argument manages to withstand the criticism given above and seems to be a good candidate for a sound ontological argument.

Concluding Remarks

The reoccurring theme in the proofs given for the existence of God in this study has been the distinction made between a thing which when considered in itself can both exist and not exist and a thing which when considered in itself must necessarily exist. In the exposition of the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary the aforementioned distinction is made through the consideration of the essences of beings. A being whose essence is indifferent to existence and non-existence cannot have existence from itself and needs another to necessitate and sustain its existence. On the other hand, a being which has necessary existence must have existence from itself and it is impossible for it to not exist. The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary then argues that the existence of the universe is indifferent to existence and non-existence and needs the being that has necessary existence to necessitate and sustain its existence. Necessitating a thing's existence is to give something existence. Therefore, the Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary concludes that the Necessary Being is the cause which brought the universe into existence out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Such a conclusion in theological terminology is called 'creation' (i.e., the Necessary Being created the universe).[1] The argument then shows that the Necessary Being must have certain positive attributes which indicate its perfection and certain negative attributes which negate limitation from it. It was then suggested that a being with such attributes is what is called in monotheistic theology, God.[2]

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[1]The Demonstration from the Possible to the Necessary actually shows that all possible beings are in need of the Necessary Being for their existence. Hence, for Muslims and people of a number of other faiths who believe in worlds additional to the physical universe, those other worlds are also created by the Necessary Being.

[2]It can be argued that not all monotheistic religions accept that God has the same attributes as those proven for the Necessary Being. Some, for example, might argue that God has a body or is comprised of parts and so forth.

In the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible the distinction is existential. The argument shows that the very existence of a being is either of the kind which is from itself or of the kind which is dependent on another. The being which has existence from itself is one which is free from need and is pure existence. The being which its existence is dependent on another is a needy existence. The Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible argues that the world is in need of another for its existence. That other is Pure Existence. According to the proponents of the Demonstration from the Neediness of the Possible, Pure Existence is God since it has all the positive and negative attributes of God.

The various versions of the Demonstration of the Veracious presented in this study makes use of the distinction made in the above mentioned theistic arguments and then attempts to show that through the consideration of the idea or concept of the being that has existence from itself one can reach the conclusion that such a being exists. Even Plantinga's ontological argument relies on distinguishing God from other beings through its necessary existence which it has because of His perfection.

Therefore, it can be said that without a doubt the distinction made between a being that has necessary existence and one that has possible existence (in the sense of being indifferent to existence and non-existence) is one of the greatest contributions to the development of proofs for the existence of God in the Islamic philosophical tradition. Through the consideration of such a distinction and the analysis of the relationship between the Necessary Being and the possible beings, one can cogently argue for the existence of a being with attributes which make it deserving of the title God.

The theistic arguments presented in this study are not ones that merely give a sufficient reason to believe in God. They are intended to show that the statement "God exists" is necessarily true and its contradictory statement "God does not exist" is necessarily false. Whether or not the proponents of the arguments succeed in reaching such a necessary conclusion must ultimately be decided by the individual through the consideration of the evidence provided.

Transcription System

A	ا	Ḍ	ض
B	ب	Ṭ	ط
P (Persian only)	پ	Ẓ	ظ
T	ت	`	ع
Th	ث	Gh	غ
J	ج	F	ف
Ch (Persian only)	چ	Q	ق
Ḥ	ح	K	ک
Kh	خ	G (Persian only)	گ
D	د	L	ل
Dh	ذ	M	م
R	ر	N	ن
Z	ز	W (For Arabic)	و
Zh (Persian only)	ژ	V (For Persian)	
S	س	H	ه
Sh	ش	Y	ی
Ṣ	ص	’	ء

Long vowels:

Ā	آ
Ū	و
Ī	ي

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The Arabic definite article al- has been disregarded in the alphabetizing of entries.

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Index of Terms

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Arabic

English

Latin

Persian