

Unity, Multiplicity, and Predication

1 Unity and Multiplicity

Unity (*waḥdat*), which, in all places and from all points of view has a specific congruity with existence, is, like existence, without need of any kind of real or descriptive definition (*ta'rīf-i ḥaddīyā rasmī*), and, incidentally, the definitions which have been proposed for unity face the very same difficulties which occurred for the definitions of existence. Thus, in the transcendent philosophy (*falsafah-yi muta'āliyyah*), unity has been defined, like its close relative, by lexical definitions (*sharḥ lafẓī*) such as 'the absence of any possibility of division or equivalent'.

The interesting point is that, not only from the point of view of the meaning of the word, but in reality also, unity does not lose any of the privileges and particularities of existence, because, in spite of the generality and obviousness which its concept possesses, the understanding of its reality, like the perception of the reality of existence, is outside the domain of the faculty of perception. The cause of this fact—as has been made clear from the philosophical research undertaken by Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn—is that unity in the external world is nothing other than existence; and if we conclude from a comparison of unity and existence that unity is the same as existence and existence the same as unity, we should realise that, basically, the similarity is the consequence of a verbal difference, and that this difference is apparent only in the words 'unity' and 'existence', and not in their reality and essence which is nothing other than true oneness and sameness. From the point of view of philosophy there is nothing which needs to be feared in having complete congruity, entirely devoid of multiplicity, between two different concepts in their specific essence and reality. And, certainly, the concepts of unity and existence and individuality are among those things, which all clearly denote one simple reality.

In any case, unity, which has been defined as the absence of any possibility of division insofar as it is unity, and considering the common origin it has with the intellect and the objects of intellection, manifests itself in the intellectual stages of the soul more apparently, more especially and more clearly than in the faculties of particular apprehension like imagination (*khayāl*) and estimation (*wahm*), because intellectual apprehensions are generally from common facts (*umūr-i 'āmmah*) which correspond to all or most of the facts of existence, and each one of the common facts is a simple, general and

all-embracing fact when it is first looked at by the intellect, which becomes divided and separated after becoming compounded with, and added to, other intelligibles whose extent of correspondence with reality is less. But multiplicity is always apprehended in the domain of sensory objects, which are traced out in the faculty of the imagination (*quwwah-yi khayāl*) in such a way that what is drawn out in the imagination is a sensory object not an intellectual one, and a sensory object is something which cannot be thought of as one and simple, without examination and analysis. So we deduce that unity is basically clearer and more evident in the realm of the intellect, whereas multiplicity is more easily and obviously perceived in the *milieu* of the imagination.

One of the cases in which unity is apparently the same as existence is repetition in the degrees of number which someone looking with the eyes of a gnostic (*‘ārif pīshah*) can perceive to be a clear example of the manifestation of existence in quiddities in a way which is connected to the origin of multiplicity in unity. For ‘one’, by repetition, or by its manifestation in the degrees of number, creates the fixed order of the defined states and different and infinite forms of the numbers, just as the Absolute Creator, by His manifestation and theophany and infinite pure blessing, bestows being, life, movement, and the power to produce effects on quiddities and essences of things with the most wonderful order which cannot be changed or rivalled. If we find that all numbers, with the different degrees and infinite multiplicities that they have, yet present the essential property of being in specific harmony with one and its repetition, we must also clearly perceive that the infinite multiplicities of existence all originate from one Active Source and Everlasting Will, Who efficiently rules throughout the entire world of existence and casts rays of light on all existent things, who, by the manifestation which each of them has in the field of existence, removes the veils from the mystery of creation.

Some have sought to present unity as one of the philosophical secondary intelligibles, which are mentally conceived entities, and to prove their claim they invented this pretext. If unity were one of the fundamental realities, they reasoned, it would surely, like other realities, be qualified by unity, and this attribute, since it has been supposed to exist among the numbers of the realities, would automatically have the individuality and unity which it calls for. In this way an infinite number of things would become fundamental for one finite unit outside the realm of what is mentally conceived. However, remembering the fundamental sameness of unity and existence, it is not difficult to find a solution for this kind of complexity. As it happens, this very same matter was brought up in the discussion of the fundamentality of existence by the person who thought that existence was something created in the mind [i.e. Suhrawardī], and in the same way it was protested that an infinite regress

in existence would come about for a fundamentally real existence. In our opinion, this resemblance is another proof of the perfect union and congruity of existence and unity whose harmony will not be given up even when the enemy attacks. Now, since this criticism is the same, the correct and definite answer is also the same as that which was given in the section on existence. In brief, then, the matter is as follows: just as existence is essentially existent, so real unity is also essentially one, and something which is one by its own essence does not need to have unity ascribed to it.

The only thing that can be said is that unity, in its conceptual form of being one, is something conceived in the mind and separate from external existence which has no fundamental individuality outside the mind, and it is one of the philosophical secondary intelligibles whose occurrence takes place in the mind, but whose attribution of application to the thing which displays it takes place in the outside world.

Against the theory of the oneness of unity and existence, Abū 'Alī b. Sīnā, in his *Shifā'*, took recourse to a logical objection to prove their separateness. He reasons in the following way:

'Many', insofar as it is many, certainly exists; and, without doubt, no plurality, insofar as it has multiplicity, can be one. Therefore, we reach the conclusion that since not every existent, insofar as it is existent, is one, so unity must be something other than existence.

Now it must be observed that this proof, although it was thought up by the brain of a great thinker who rightly holds the highest of titles among logicians, is, nevertheless, not free from all weak points, and for this reason it does not arrive at the certain conclusion that it has revealed the separateness of unity and existence. For, if 'many' really exists, for the very same reason as it exists, it must also be one; and if truly, as the Grand Master imagined, we can deny that unity is an existent which is called 'many', then we have automatically denied its existence. Therefore, with care and a little investigation of the major and minor premises of the syllogism, it becomes clear that the major premise cannot be accepted by reason, because 'many', if it exists, insofar as it is existent, is surely also one. And if an independent existence cannot be contemplated for 'many', we must necessarily say that the minor premise is not true. In either case, the weak point of the Master's proof becomes clear.

Believers in the separateness of existence and unity have pursued their purpose in another way. They say that a body, which is one interconnected unit, certainly has, prior to its analysis and division, one ipseity and one individuality, and, in the end, one existence and one unity. But after analysis, although it has completely given up its interconnected unity, and, through

becoming divided up, has taken on multiplicity, it can never be said that it has also denied individuality and existence for itself. Therefore we must be of the opinion in this case that existence is different from unity, and thus it is proved that existence is not always and everywhere the same as unity.

The convincing answer to this is that whenever the interconnected unity of a continuous body disappears, the existence and individuality of that body will also undergo a change in ipseity, and just as two continuous and interconnected units newly come into existence, so also two new existences and individualities will also become apparent. Thus according to this intellectual reality, not only is the above idea not a sure proof of separateness, but it must also in all fairness be said that the oneness of unity and existence has been proved by an even more interesting method.

The result that we obtain from the sum of our enquiry is that unity, individuality, ipseity, existence and necessity are all words for which, although it must be acknowledged from the aspect of their lexical meaning that they are not synonyms, it is nevertheless sure that, however much we search in the world of reality, we will never find more than one reality.

2 Divisions of the One (*wāḥid*) [That is to say an investigation into how many ways things are said to be 'one']

'One' can be divided into two kinds, real and non-real, and for each of them separate divisions can be described.

As for the real 'one' (*wāḥid-i ḥaqīqī*), it is something, which has no need of any intermediary in its qualification (*ittiṣāf*) by unity. This means that if we call it 'one', this quality (*ṣifat*) is essential to it; in grammatical terminology it may be described as being in a 'state of essence' (*bih ḥāl-i dhāt*)—that is to say it is 'one' in its own right—and not in a 'state of attachment' (*bih ḥāl-i muta'alliq*)—in which case it would be called 'one' only incidentally; but as for the non-real 'one', if there is qualification by unity, it is surely not possible except by accidental or figurative attribution, because in reality it is 'many'. For the same reason, it is said that in the case of the 'real one' there is a real unity yet also a multiplicity conceived of in the mind, while in the 'non-real one' there is a real multiplicity yet also an imagined or mentally-conceived unity.

However, the 'real one' is not identical and with one meaning in all its divisions, for sometimes it is used for an essence which has the attribute of unity, and, at other times, essence or the attributing of something does not come into it at all, but rather, in the same way as existence itself is called existent, unity itself also becomes pure 'one'. However, unity which is called real,

essential 'one' (*wāḥid ḥaqīqī bi al-dhāt*) may possibly be used merely for the verbal concept of unity which is the same as the absence of divisibility, or it may possibly be used for true, precise unity which is totally real. In any case, any essence or quiddity which is at variance with this attribution cannot be included in this division, but must be fixed in other divisions of the real 'one', because it involves the attributing or qualifying of unity, and the attribute of unity is made as an addition to the essence.

Specified 'one' (*wāḥid bi al-khuṣūṣ*), and generalised 'one' (*wāḥid bi al-unūm*) constitute other divisions of real 'one'. The difference is that generalised 'one' is sometimes used in the case of concepts which have generality and univocity (*ishtirāk*), and sometimes it means 'unfolded existence' (*wujūd-i munbasit*), all-embracing existence, from the particularisations and epiphanies of whose unlimited and unconditioned essence all contingent beings come. In this case the meaning of generality is the 'extent' (*si'ah*) or 'scope' (*iḥāṭah*) of being, which is used in the philosophical terminology of the Illuminationists just as the ideas of the 'universal' and the 'absolute' are used with this same meaning. But generalised 'one' is a concept which shares the same fivefold division into which universal logic has divided it. As opposed to generalised 'one', we find specified 'one', which has been divided into various kinds according to that which is qualified by it, for the thing which is qualified by unity is perhaps a distinct thing which can be analysed and divided up, or perhaps it is something without the property of divisibility, like a single point, or a soul, or a single intelligence, none of which can be divided up by anything.

All of the above divisions were of real 'one' (*wāḥid-i ḥaqīqī*), which is truly qualified by this description. If it happens that the possibility of multiplicity exists in some of its divisions, this multiplicity must be understood to be hypothetical (*farḍī*), or mentally conceived (*i'tibārī*), in the terminology of philosophy. Moreover, this kind of multiplicity can be regarded in another respect as being a kind of unity which is not at variance with real unity.

But non-real 'one', which is really multiple and accidental, and for which unity is conceived in the mind, has divisions, among which are, for example: 'one' with regard to species, 'one' with regard to genus, 'one' with regard to differentia, 'one' with regard to quality, and 'one' with regard to quantity.

The thing which it is necessary to mention here is that 'one' with regard to genus, or with regard to species, or accident, is very different from generic 'one', and so forth, for 'one' with regard to species and its relatives are divisions of non-real 'one' which acquires unity by figurative attribution, while specific 'one' and its relatives are divisions of real, generalised 'one', which can truly be attributed with the quality of unity.

3 Predication (*ḥaml*)

Just as existence has accidents like ‘necessity’ and ‘individuality’, which are derived from the reality of existence, so, also, unity has specified accidents, which its reality requires in every way and in every conceivable degree.

The identity of something with something else (*ḥūḥūwīyyat*), whose definition in philosophy is ‘union’ (*ittiḥād*), is counted as a point of division of predication and one of the accidents and concomitants of unity, just as opposition (*mughāyirāt*), which is the origin of the divisions of oppositeness, is one of the accidents of multiplicity. According to this, everywhere that union and identity occur, a true and suitable predication will occur, and everywhere that multiplicity and division are produced, opposition and ultimately valid negation will certainly occur.

The identity of something to something else, which has been used in the terminology specifically for union in existence—of course in common predication (*ḥaml-i shāʿīʿ*), not in primary essential predication (*ḥaml-i awwālī dhātī*)—stands exactly for the contents of a predicative proposition whose predicate forms a relation of union with the subject. Since the agreement of union must surely take place between two real things, when the predicate is looked at from an aspect other than that of unity, opposition of a certain kind will also become a natural necessity for the meaning of union in the predication. If we suppose that we deny opposition in the reality of the predication, there can be no doubt that it enters into it in the actual way the proposition is put together and used.

4 Division of Predication

The true divisions that can be used for predication are based on the principle that, since predication is nothing but the union and oneness of the subject and the predicate, the divisions that can be conceived of for it derive from the aspect of the quality of the union that exists in reality between the two sides of the proposition. On the basis of this principle, when there is a case of pure union in existence, there will be common predication, and this kind of predication is common in the speech of ordinary people and in all sciences and technical subjects, and it is for this reason that it is called common predication (*ḥaml-i shāʿīʿ*).

In common predication the connection is on the common basis of ontological union. Now, sometimes an existence which is based on union has an essential connection or ascription without intermediary both for the subject and for the predicate; sometimes its connection is essential and without in-

termediary only to the subject, while it is accidental and with an intermediary to the predicate; and sometimes its connection is not essential on either side. Examples of each of these respectively are:

1. 'Aristotle is a man'.
2. 'The man is a writer'.
3. 'The writer is a thinker'.

Whenever there is also a kind of union between the concepts of the subject and the predicate over and above the ontological unity between them, primary essential predication will be said to have occurred. This kind of predication is only used for predication of essence with essence, or of a quiddity with its essential parts. But it should be remembered that in union, and ultimately, in predication in whatever form it is envisaged, there is a singular thing which is the basis of the predicative proposition, and without it, evident confusion would take place among all predicative propositions, namely, existence. Even the establishing (*thubūt*) of essence for essence, whose predication is primary and essentially necessary, is not possible without existence, for essence which has not been granted existence not only is unable to be granted existence, but is also deprived of every thing, even its own essence and essential parts, and it is for this reason that logicians have qualified all the necessities of an essence as being 'as long as there is existence' (*mādām al-wujūd*).

4.1 *Author's Opinion*

As opposed to what is generally believed in philosophy, in our opinion, primary essential predication (*ḥaml-i awwalī-yi dhātī*) is not limited to cases of predication which contain conceptual union between the subject and the predicate, because sometimes predication—although it may be primary and essential—in no way displays union of the two concepts of the subject and the predicate when we look at them closely. This happens when we get an essential instance (*fard bi al-dhāt*), which is the real existence of the predicate without it being mixed with accidents and characteristics of the subject of the proposition, and we predicate the predicate, which is the essential title (*ʿunwān-i dhātī*) of the same reality, as an essential necessity. For example, if we predicate 'white' for a body which has whiteness, it will surely be a common predication; and if we make the universal quiddity of whiteness the subject and 'white' its predicate it will be an essential conceptual predication. But if we separate a real, individual whiteness from its body and the rest of its accidents, and conceive of it as the subject of a proposition, and then predicate 'white' for that whiteness which is an essential instance of it, it will certainly be a primary essential predication, without there being any question of conceptual union. If it is said

that a particular whiteness gives up its particularity when it is separated from its subject and the rest of its concomitants, and the universal nature of whiteness remains, which has conceptual union with 'white', not ontological union, we shall answer that existence is the only common basis for individuality and distinction, and it is that which gives realness and individuality to a universal nature, and not the things which are attached to it; and we can separate real whiteness from all the things attached to it while keeping its individuality and existence, and make it the subject of a proposition, just as it is possible to separate one of the contingent realities from its quiddity and make it in the same way the subject of a proposition whose predicate is the concept of existence. Now this is a scientific reality, through whose discovery we can overcome many of the difficulties in philosophy, as well as many of the problems which occur in the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fīqh*).

4.2 *Another Division*

Another division which has been proposed for predication is from the point of view of the derivation (*ishtiqāq*) or absence of derivation of the predicate which divides the predication into derivative predication (*ḥaml ishtiqāqī*) or non-derivative predication (*ḥaml muwāṭātī*). Sometimes it can be observed that the predicate of the proposition is connected to, and, as a result, predicated of, the subject without any need of derivation (or recourse to the idea of possession), although in some other cases this is not possible without derivation or compounding. For example, if we say 'Ḥasan is a man', or 'Man is an animal', we relate the predicate to the subject and predicate it without there being any derivation or compounding, and the sense (*madlūl*) of this proposition is its predicative identity (*huwa huwa*), or, in other words, it can be said to be univocal (*muwāṭātī*); but if we want to establish philosophy for Aristotle, or knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence for al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī, we must first of all produce philosophy and knowledge of jurisprudence in the form of a derivative concept like 'philosopher' or 'jurisprudent', or in a compound form with 'possessor of...' (*dhū*). Then we can predicate it of its subject and say 'Aristotle is a philosopher', or 'al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī is a jurist', or 'Socrates was a possessor of wisdom', and this predication is known in philosophical terminology as derivative predication (*ḥaml-i ishtiqāqī*).¹ This is also the case when one wishes

1 Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ḥasan b. Sadīd al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī b. al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (648–726 AH / 1250–1325 CE), known as al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī, played a considerable role in shaping Shī'ah theology and jurisprudence. Born in Ḥillah, Iraq, he studied with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, among others. For more biographical information see the introduction to al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī's, *Foundations of Jurisprudence: An Introduction to Imāmī Shī'ī Legal Theory*, introduction, translation, and Arabic critical edition by Sayyid Amjad H. Shah Naqavi, Leiden, 2016 [Editor].

to employ the exaggerative form (*mubālaghah*) in Arabic in a statement such as: 'Zayd is justice' (*zayd 'adl*).²

Then there are other divisions which classify predication according to the form of the proposition into various categories, in such a way that all the logical divisions of the proposition can be referred back precisely to divisions of the predicate. Just as propositions are conditional or predicative, so predication is similarly either with a certain uncertainty and qualified by a condition, or else it is in a state of definiteness. In the state of definiteness, it either has the meaning of simple 'is-it?-ness' (*halīyyat*) or compound 'is-it?-ness', and since we have introduced and explained the meaning of simple and compound 'is-it?-ness' in a previous section, there is no point in repeating ourselves here. The only point to be borne in mind is whether the principle which states that ascribing something, *A*, to something, *B*, presupposes the existence of *B* but not of *A*, and which is known as the principle of presupposition (*qā'idah-yi far'īyyah*), can be applied to simple 'is-it?-ness' which is no more than one quiddity and one existence, or whether it is only applicable to compound 'is-it?-ness'; and, assuming that it is applicable to simple 'is-it?-ness', whether or not a way has been thought of to solve the problem of the infinite regress that would come about if a quiddity were established before it had existence.

The correct answer is that, by analysis and careful comparison of the meaning of the principle and the contents of simple 'is-it?-ness', it becomes clear that the principle of presupposition does not apply to that kind of proposition which only informs us about the establishing of a quiddity. Now, the only thing we get from simple 'is-it?-ness' is the establishing of something—i.e. the giving of existence to it—and it is perfectly clear that the establishing of something is very different from the ascribing of something to something else, which is the precise meaning of the principle of presupposition. Here, also, the answer to the second question is to be found, and it is that with the true description of the quiddity and the existence, and with the fact that existence in the outside world is exactly the same as the actualisation of the quiddity, there can be no place for an objection about an infinite regress.

2 In the first edition, p. 78, this statement is incomplete: *zayd 'adl kih bi 'urwān-i mubālaghah guftah mīshawad*. However, this is corrected in the second edition: *zayd 'adl nīz kih bi 'urwān-i mubālaghah guftah mīshawad az īn gūnah ast*. The translator left this portion blank. We have added this sentence from the second edition. [Editor].

5 Multiplicity (*kathrat*), Alterity (*mughāyirat*), and Opposition (*taqābul*)

The counterpoint to unity is multiplicity, one of the essential accidentals (*‘awāriḍ*) and attachments (*muta‘allaqāt*) of which is alterity (*mughāyirat*). Two things, which are different from each other, which are in a contrasting aspect with one another (*jihat mukhālīf*), and whose co-presence in one place and one time and one mode is impossible, are called, in philosophical terminology, two opposites (*mutaqābilayn*). Thus multiplicity is the fundamental source of alterity, and alterity is the point of division for the varieties of opposition.

In order to explain the different divisions of opposition, it must be said that when two existing things acquire opposition to each other as a result of their being different, and when their opposition is of a kind that in their very opposition the intellection of each one is not only connected to, but dependent on, the intellection of the other, co-relative opposition (*taqābul taḍāyuf*) is obtained. And if two existing things have maximum separation and difference between each other without being intellected in relation to each other, they will be contraries (*mutaḍādd*). In the case of the opposition of an existing thing with a non-existing thing, if the possibility and propensity (*isti‘ādā*) for the existence of the non-existing thing in the logical subject of that thing is being thought of, like blindness (which is the non-existence of sight) for a man, who should have the faculty of sight, it is called the opposition of non-existence and disposition (*taqābul ‘adam wa malakah*); but if the non-existence of a quiddity is being compared to its existence, without that non-existence being thought of in an existent logical subject (*mawḍū‘i mawjūḍī*), and without the possibility of its existence in that subject being taken into account, there is opposition of privation and necessity (*salb wa jāb*), which is the most intense of the divisions of opposition.

Another thing beyond dispute is that the root of the divisions of opposition is exactly this privation and necessity, which the intellect can distinguish without reflection or enquiry into the difference and mutual incompatibility (*tanāfi‘*) of their essences, while the other three—opposition of contraries, opposition of non-existence and disposition, and co-relative opposition—are not so obvious to the intellect. Indeed, after the investigation and consideration of the latter divisions, it will be observed that their opposition springs from the essential mutual incompatibility of privation and necessity, which is the point to which all differences and divisions of opposition return.

A kind of opposition sometimes occurs between two propositions which is given the name of contradiction (*tanāquḍ*), and the explanation which the logicians have given for this is that from the truth of either one of them, the falsity of the other necessarily follows, which also means that it is never

possible for two contradictory propositions to be present together, both true or both false. Sometimes this opposition can occur between two individual concepts which can in no sense be said to be propositions, and about which we cannot use the criterion of truth and falsity which was used in the above definition by the logicians.

By way of example, consider the mutual incompatibility that exists between 'man' and 'not-man', which are certainly not propositions. These must surely be counted as examples of the opposition of privation and necessity. In this connection, privation and necessity, which are opposite one other without the formation of any proposition, must, according to the Grand Master's, be called simple opposition (*taqābul basīṭ*) and not contradiction, because of the limits imposed by logical terminology. But if we choose not to be hindered by logical terminology, we may, as a result of careful consideration and investigation, say that essential mutual incompatibility, even in propositions—which is 'contradiction' in the terminology of the logicians—is basically only between the negation and affirmation which take place in those propositions—i.e. between p and $\neg p$, in symbolic form. For otherwise a proposition, which is composed of a subject, a predicate and the copula between them, could have no essential mutual incompatibility with its contradictory proposition. In this way, in every instance where this kind of mutual incompatibility occurs, whether it is in propositions or in individual concepts, there will definitely be opposition of privation and necessity, which is contradiction.

One of the properties of the opposition of privation and necessity is that its reality is something perceived only in the intellect. Afterwards, it is possible to make this intellectual reality manifest and understandable in a spoken form in the verbal world by employing terms that are especially used for negation and non-existence. But since one of the two sides of this opposition is negative and non-existent, it must never be thought that this kind of opposition can become in any way manifested beyond the bounds (*muhīt*) of the mind (*dhihn*) and words (*alfāz*).

Another particularity (*khāṣṣiyat*) is that no corporeal (*jismānī*) or non-corporeal object can ever be free of privation and necessity, because everything, however it is thought of, is either existent or non-existent. It is only at the level of quiddities that we can, by analysis, separate the idea of a quiddity from both existence and non-existence and conceive of their difference from quiddity.

A final point which can be added in this section is that logicians considered various unities (*waḥdāt*) for contradiction which are in general one of the characteristics of logical contradiction and can only be attributed to propositions which clearly have privative and necessary mutual incompati-

bility, and these are known as the 'eight unities'. Şadr al-Muta'allihīn Shīrāzī added to these unities a further one, the unity of predication, and established this as a foundation for some of his original research. We have referred to one of his discoveries based on the unity of predication in our section on mental existence.