

The Doctrine of the Primacy of Being: An Ontological Turn

As a dedicated and critical thinker, Mulla Sadra investigated deeply into almost the entire corpus of philosophical, theological and mystical Islamic thought. Under the influence of his teacher, Mir Damad, he became one of the followers of Illuminationism.¹ Like his teacher, he was also interested in Ibn Sina's ontology and studied Ibn 'Arabi's theosophy. Suhrawardi, Ibn Sina and Ibn 'Arabi had a notable impact on Mulla Sadra's thinking and played a significant role in facilitating his ontological turn from the doctrine of the primacy of essence to the primacy of being and in his development of a new ontological system. Mulla Sadra's ideas were formed in the matrix of the dominant philosophy of Suhrawardi in the school of Isfahan. As discussed previously in Chapter Two, Suhrawardi held the metaphysical view that being was a mere mental concept and that essence was the only reality. Human knowledge of an object was also possible only through the revealing of its essence. A relationship was suggested between Suhrawardi's Illuminationism and Plato's metaphysics; this relationship was seen as important in comparing Mulla Sadra's ontology with that of Heidegger.

From the second period of his intellectual development, Mulla Sadra began to express dissatisfaction with the metaphysics of Illuminationism, in particular with the doctrine of the primacy of essence and declared, on the contrary, the doctrine of the primacy of Being. This ontological turn could not have occurred without the influence of Ibn Sina and Ibn 'Arabi. Mulla Sadra's teacher, Mir Damad, also tried to combine Suhrawardi's *ishraqi* thought with the Peripatetic Neoplatonic philosophy of Ibn Sina. The philosophical tradition of the Isfahan school could not be characterized by blind imitation of Suhrawardi's Illuminationism. There was an inclination towards newly creative ideas and an attempt to amalgamate Suhrawardi's thought with that of Ibn Sina. Mulla Sadra, however, crossed the boundary set by the official interpretation of Islamic thought when he expressed his interest in Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*). In addition to the influence of this doctrine, another visible influence on Mulla Sadra was the psychological-eschatological role of the realm of images. In this realm, according to Ibn 'Arabi, images are as real as they are perceptible. The images in the human soul in the hereafter, since they are not attached to material objects, are more vivid and real than the images in the material world. This idea was used by Mulla Sadra to prove his view on bodily resurrection in his eschatological doctrine.²

For Ibn Sina, existence and essence were both real. Existence was of two kinds: necessary and contingent. He illustrated the difference between them in two ways. First, the necessary being is dependent on itself to exist and its existence is inseparable from its essence, or rather it is pure existence. By contrast, contingent beings are not self-dependent and derive from necessary beings. Their essences are also separable or are additional to them.³ Following Ibn Sina's ontological division and his distinction between existence and essence, the problem of whether existence or essence constitutes reality emerged in subsequent philosophical debates among Muslim thinkers. Suhrawardi, as one of the followers of Platonism, argued against Ibn Sina's ontology and insisted on the non-reality of existence and advocated the idea that essence was the only reality.⁴ Mulla Sadra contradicted Suhrawardi's doctrine and rejected the Platonic-Illuminationist metaphysical view that nothing in the real world corresponds to existence or nothing exists but ideas or essence. He, on the contrary, believed that nothing is real but existence.

In seeking to clarify the similarities between Mulla Sadra and Heidegger in relation to the doctrine of Being, it is important to note three points:

- Mulla Sadra and Heidegger stress the principality of Being and the reality of Being as a pre-ontological condition for the existence of all beings.
- Both thinkers argue against Plato's metaphysics, which reduces everything to ideas or their essences.
- They hold the view that Aristotle's logic and rationalist cognition are incapable of revealing the meaning of Being. As a result, a new cognitive instrument is required to apprehend the meaning of Being.

Mulla Sadra conceived of no more difficult task than marking a departure from the dominant philosophical tradition of his time and developing a new ontological system capable of rendering being meaningful. The task could be accomplished, however, by being essentially critical as well as creative through challenging Illuminationism. A new philosophical beginning was required, which should begin with a shift to the doctrine of the primacy of Being. In Chapter Three the shift in the direction of his thought from the second period of his intellectual development was described as a 'turn' from the core elements of Suhrawardi's metaphysics which neglected fundamental philosophical questions in favour of investigating the nature of something less fundamental or grounded that could not exist by itself. Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (1927), similarly sought a new ontological system based on understanding of the meaning of Being as the most fundamental philosophical concern. In order to prove this, Heidegger argues that the post Aristotelian thinkers accepted the dogma of negligence or the abandonment of Being. They withdrew themselves from the genuine philosophical question about the meaning of Being, for three reasons. First, they thought that Being was the

most universal concept, and that its universality 'transcended' any universality of genus. Second, since Being is the most universal concept, and is not an entity, it is therefore indefinable and escapes all attempts to define it in accordance with the rules of 'definition' provided in Aristotelian logic. Third, Being is self-evident.⁵ Heidegger rejects these three presuppositions and argues against the post Aristotelian thinkers that the universality of the concept of Being does not guarantee the clarity of its meaning, and that the meaning of this concept is still the darkest of all. He also, like Mulla Sadra, says that Being is not an entity and is thus indefinable, and that Aristotle's definition by genus and difference, '*definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*' or connotative definition, which is the most important kind of definition, is not applicable to it but appropriate only for defining beings. Heidegger also believes that the indefinableness of Being does not invalidate the question of its meaning, and should not hinder us from investigating that meaning:

Being cannot be derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones. But does this imply that 'Being' no longer offers a problem? Not at all. We can infer only that 'Being' cannot have the character of an entity. Thus we cannot apply to Being the concept of 'definition' as presented in traditional logic, which itself has its foundations in ancient ontology and which, within certain limits, provides a quite justifiable way of defining 'beings'. The indefinability of Being does not eliminate the question of its meaning; it demands that we look that question in the face.⁶

To clarify Mulla Sadra's view on the indefinableness of Being, Mulla Hadi Sabzawari states that even the positive attributes by which we try to define Being will neither render a definition nor a description, because whatever attribute is employed is not applicable to this reality. Sabzawari's argument is based on the notion of the 'simplicity' of Being. Since Being is simple, it has no differentia or genus on which its definition will become possible. Attaching positive attributes to Being cannot be a description because Being has no accidental properties to ascribe to it.⁷ As a result, Sabzawari suggests that the meaning of Being will be understood through negative attributes. Being, for example, is neither a substance nor an accident. Substance is essence and since it has no substratum cannot be an accident. Another way of understanding the meaning of Being is that Being has neither an opposite nor anything with similarity, because Being has no genus or *differentia*. It is not distinct or different from anything. That is why there is nothing to be opposed to it. Because Being also has no essence to share with another being, it is not possible to think of anything similar to Being. We can also say that Being is not a part and has no parts.⁸ The negative attributes listed here reveal some aspects of the nature of Being; but again, like positive attributes, these are neither definitions nor descriptions of Being.

Mulla Sadra describes the metaphysics of Suhrawardi in his book *al-Masha'ir* (the illusion of darkness, or the concealment of the truth):

Existences are genuine [determinate] realities and essences are the eternal 'thisnesses' which have never inhaled the perfume of real existence at all. These existences are merely the rays and reflected lights of the True Light and of the Eternal Existence—Exalted Be His Sublimity! However, each of them has essential predicates and contains intelligible concepts called essences.⁹

The 'darkness of illusion' is indicative of Suhrawardi's metaphysics. It is the state of untruth that reigns over the whole of reality in such a way that the meaning of Being remains unattainable and concealed. For Heidegger, the 'darkness of illusion' is the 'abandonment of Being', which led to 'nihilism' in the occidental thought of Plato, whom Suhrawardi considered the master of Illuminism, and finally of Nietzsche. It represents a history of negligence of the most fundamental philosophical question. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger states:

Where is nihilism really at work? Where men cling to familiar *essents* and suppose that it suffices to go on talking about *essents* as essents, since after all that is what they are. But with this they reject the question of being and treat being like a nothing (*nihil*) which in a certain sense it is, insofar as it has an essence. To forget being and cultivate only the essent – that is nihilism . . . By contrast, to press inquiry into being explicitly to the limits of nothingness to draw nothingness into the question of being – this is the first and only fruitful step toward a true transcending of nihilism.¹⁰

In *Contributions to Philosophy (Enowning)* Heidegger explains this metaphysical position in detail and points out four forms of nihilism: actual nihilism, the greatest nihilism, the most disastrous nihilism, and finally crude nihilism.¹¹ These forms of nihilism have no historical sequence as any one can emerge in one historical epoch together with the abandonment of Being. Nihilism is also described as the epoch of total lack of questioning in which

problems will pile up and rush around, those types of 'questions', which are not really questions, because their response dare not have anything binding about them, insofar as it immediately becomes a problem again. This says exactly and in advance that nothing is immune to dissolution and that deconstruction [*Auflösung*] is only a matter of numbers regarding time, space, and force.¹²

The reconstruction of new metaphysical thought based on the principality of Being means destroying the foundation of nihilism; this should be the priority of this project for Mulla Sadra as well as for Heidegger. Ontology needs to become the foundation of philosophical thinking; even philosophy has to be defined as an inquiry into the meaning of Being: 'Initially and throughout the long history between Ahaximander and Nietzsche, inquiring into being is

only a question concerning the being of beings.’¹³ Both Mulla Sadra and Heidegger developed, by revolting against the dominant Platonic tradition, a new ontology at two different times and against two different cultural backgrounds. At the end of this revolt, Suhrawardi for Mulla Sadra and Nietzsche for Heidegger represent the final stage in the development of an antagonistic metaphysical tradition. The ‘darkness of illusion’ or ‘abandonment of Being’ is not simply an effacement for these two thinkers, but a serious philosophical problem that reigns over the whole domain of thinking in such a way that the truth of Being recedes into the darkness or, as Heidegger states, into the ‘disintegration of truth’ and finally the thinking of Being as essence.¹⁴ Beginning with Plato, Being was understood as ‘Idea’ and was interpreted as mere representation in the domain of thinking. As a consequence, in Plato’s metaphysics, the Being of beings as a whole was relegated to darkness. In Heidegger’s view, the concealment of truth about the reality of Being in the history of occidental thought from the time of Plato is like ‘the process in which the light of a star that has been extinguished for millennia will gleam but its gleaming nonetheless remains a mere appearance’.¹⁵ Overcoming this type of metaphysics is possible only by turning to, and not in a mere conversion of, the metaphysics of Being by positing the most fundamental philosophical question concerning the meaning of Being and its principality. It is possible to turn to the metaphysics of Being, as described by Heidegger in *Being and Time* and *Contributions to Philosophy*, by making Being the grounding question and by allowing the re-emergence of the truth of Being as the only inner reality of all ontic beings. For Mulla Sadra, as he writes in *al-Masha’ir*, this is a departure from the ‘darkness of illusion’ to the daylight of the Truth.

The theme of ontology in Mulla Sadra’s philosophy is the sum of the multiplicities of being grounded on the principle of unity. In this kind of system, in which unity and multiplicity are taken into consideration, the relation of unity to multiplicity and of identity to difference is decisive. In this system of ontology, the principal reality, Being, unlike Plato’s universal Forms in the ideal world, is not multiple. It is a unity or identity manifesting itself in multiple gradations (difference). In this case this unity in multiplicity or identity in difference is best understood in the light of Hegel’s dialectic logic rather than Aristotle’s, because it is not abstract identity. It is not a simple unity of Being with itself but a relation to itself. By virtue of this relation of identity, beings or the multiple modalities of Being exist, and Being becomes the unified ground for them. In identity, Being and the modalities of Being belong together. This metaphysical principle is one of the most general and encompassing determinations on which all modalities of Being depend. Precisely, it indicates that Being functions as the foundation on which we can grasp the nature of the relationship between unity and multiplicity. It shows that unity and multiplicity are two different aspects of the same reality. Unity

contains multiplicity and vice versa. But taking Being as a unified ground of grounded multiplicity resembles to a great extent Aristotle's understanding of Being in the *Metaphysics*. For Aristotle, general ontology must study unity and its varieties. He insists that there is a unity beneath the diversity of phenomenal objects and that unity is Being *qua* being. There is also a single science known as 'general ontology', which investigates Being as well as its varieties. But the difference between Aristotle and Mulla Sadra arises with the doctrine of the categories and the rationalistic apprehension of this unified ground or Being *qua* being. Aristotle listed ten categories, of which the most fundamental was substance. The other categories, such as quality, quantity, relation, place, time, posture, state, action and passion, are dependent on substance to exist and cannot be by themselves. Meanwhile, these categories are classes or genera and their applications render our knowledge of the phenomenal world possible.¹⁶ In Mulla Sadra's ontology, Being, as the principle of the unity beneath the multiplicity of the phenomenal objects, is beyond the domain of the applicability of these categories. Hence Being remains indefinable. It is not a genus, *differentia*, species or a common and specific accident. In this case, understanding the meaning of Being cannot be based on anything other than itself:

It [existence] cannot be described [defined], because description is due to either a definition or a [distinguishing] mark. Thus, it cannot be described by definition. Since it has neither a genus nor *differentia*, it does not have a definition. Nor can it [be described] by a distinguishing mark, since its understanding cannot be supplied by anything more manifest and prevalent than it. It is a mistake to attempt to describe existence, for it would need to be described by something more hidden than the [entity] itself – unless the aim were to [approach it by] either an indication or a notification, or some description; the latter is merely a syntactical [lit. linguistic] inquiry.¹⁷

Being is then not conditioned by any sort of determination and limitation. If it is defined it is limited and conditioned by its determinations, for every affirmation is a negation. Kant, in the second and third part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, draws a similar conclusion. He limits the application of the categories to the multiple forms of the phenomenal world, and the 'thing-in-itself' or *noumenon* is kept beyond the applicability of the categories of human understanding and hence remains unknowable. These two conclusions look similar as each recommends the employment of the categories for revealing beings rather than their inner reality; but Mulla Sadra and Heidegger disagree with Kant on the unknowability of reality. For them, the shortcoming in the application of the categories to the realm of Being does not hinder an investigation into the meaning of Being. The unknowability and indefinability of Being, as indicated here, refer to the inherent shortcoming of Aristotle's logic and rationalistic apprehension, which becomes an explicit

problem in the epistemological inquiry of Kant. Nevertheless, this shortcoming does not negate the task of ontological inquiry. Mulla Sadra and Heidegger searched for a new epistemological tool and methodology that was different from the Aristotelian form of cognition. Mulla Sadra, in particular, relied on intuitive knowledge or knowledge by presence for investigating the meaning of Being. It is a cognitive tool associated with the mystic way of apprehending the reality:

As it has been stated, the reality of existence is neither genus, nor species, nor accident, since it is not a natural universal. Instead, its inclusion happens in another mode of inclusion, and no one has gnosis of it except the mystics; i.e. those who are firmly grounded in mystical knowledge. Sometimes it is interpreted as the spiritual soul [i.e., Holy Spirit], other times as the grace 'which extendeth to all things'. Sometimes [it is interpreted as the] 'Reality from which beings have been created', according to the mystics. [Also, it is] the expansion of the light of existence to the structures [lit. figures] of contingent beings, and the essences which are receptive to it; finally, [they speak of] its descent towards the abodes of inner-natures.¹⁸

For Heidegger, the universality of Being is also not a natural universal like the universality of 'whiteness'. Its universality 'transcends' any universality of genus. Those who follow Aristotle's rule for definition arrive at a negative conclusion in defining Being, simply because Being is not a genus and has no *differentia*. But does this mean that no further attempt should be made to understand the meaning of this indefinable reality? Indeed, if the horizon of thinking is limited by Aristotle's doctrine of the task and application of the categories, the answer to this question is in the affirmative. Mulla Sadra and Heidegger, although inspired by Aristotle's ontology, denounced his logic and his rationalistic apprehension of Being. An inquiry into the meaning of Being is not in the scope of rational epistemology or regional ontology, because Being is distinct from beings. Similar to Aristotle's First Principle, it is a prior condition not only for beings but also for all scientific inquiries, yet it cannot be studied scientifically. 'Fundamental ontology', which takes Being into account, is substantially distinctive and its subject matter is neither this nor that kind of being but Being *per se*: 'Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its own most aim, if it has not adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task.'¹⁹ Mulla Sadra also believes that the question of the meaning of Being becomes a prior condition and the foundation of all kinds of scientific discourse and knowledge:

The question of existence is the foundation of the principles of wisdom, the basis of philosophical theology, and the nexus of [concern] of those in the circle [lit. the millstone; i.e., the centre] of the sciences of unity, the resurrection of souls and

bodies, and of much else that only we have developed and articulated. It gives them a synthesis [lit. a unity] through its explication. Anyone who is ignorant of the gnosis of existence is also ignorant of the major subjects and most significant quests and misses the refinements of gnosis and its subtleties, the science of the divine and the prophets, the gnosis of the soul, and its connection and return to the [primordial] source and destiny [i.e., *telos*].²⁰

As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, in *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi acknowledges his debt to Plato and considers him to be one of his spiritual masters and a great Illuminationist sage and thinker. However, Mulla Sadra's attack on Suhrawardi's philosophy is a direct criticism of Platonism.²¹ In addition, while Mulla Sadra and Heidegger came from different cultural backgrounds, the similarity in their thought is within the framework of their ontology and criticism of Platonism; that is, represented by Illuminationism of Suhrawardi in Persia and the nihilism of occidental thought. These two philosophical traditions, one Eastern and one Western, belong to Platonism, which has led to the 'abandonment of Being'. They stand in opposition to the type of metaphysics founded and advocated by Mulla Sadra and Heidegger.

The new ontological enterprise of Mulla Sadra is explained in the first journey of *al-Asfar* and is continued in *al-Masha'ir* and *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. Mulla Sadra was convinced that Being is self-evident; in *al-Masha'ir*, in the Third Prehension, under the title 'An Analysis of the [Extra-Mental] Existence Having a Determinate [Concrete, Fully Determined] Status', he tried to prove the principality of Being in eight ways or by eight arguments that he called evidences.

The First Evidence

'The reality of anything is its existence, which ranks with its effects and implications. Existence, therefore, must be the most real of all things for it is the possessor of reality, because whatever possesses reality possesses reality only due to it.'²² Being in this evidence becomes an *a priori* ontological condition for the existence of all things. Everything finds its way into the light of being or the objective reality only through Being and by relying on Being rather than its essence.

The Second Evidence

In this evidence, Mulla Sadra states that when the principality or the reality of essence is affirmed there will be no distinction between external and mental realities, but that 'this however is absurd'. He also states that if something exists in the external world or intellectually, it does not signify that these two

domains (external and intellectual) stand for that thing as containers in which the existence of that thing is established. It simply means that it has an existence from which some effects and consequences are derived.²³

The Third Evidence

If the reality of things is in their essences, then it is impossible to predicate essences of one another. Predication is the union of two concepts. This implies that when one thing is predicated of another, the two will be united in existence but be different from one another in their essences:

If things exist by their essences and not by the [mediation] of something else, it would not be possible to predicate them on each other, such as 'Zaid is an animal' or 'Man walks'. It is so, because the use and the truth of predication is a union between different concepts in existence. Thus the judgment made of something predicated on something else is an expression of their unity in existence, though they be diverse as concepts and in terms of their essences.²⁴

If the reality of a thing is its essence, then there will be no distinction between a subject and its predicate on the bases of unity and diversity.

The Fourth Evidence

Here Mulla Sadra supposes that if Being is non-existent then nothing has existed. Since the non-existence of things is false, the non-existence of existence is necessarily false. Also, if we think of essence as not in a union with existence, then it is non-existent in any mode. If there is no existence, then the predication of an essence is impossible, as affirming a predicate presupposes the existence of the subject. The adjunction of a non-existent thing to another non-existing thing has no validity.²⁵

The Fifth Evidence

This evidence is another version of the previous evidence. Before, Mulla Sadra states that without Being nothing can exist; here he holds the view that if Being has no concrete form or external actualization, then no species will have particulars or individuals: 'If existence is not realized in the individuals of a species, no one of the [individuals of the species] is realized in the external realm.'²⁶ For the actualization of an individual a species is required, which also relies on existence to be, and nothing (for example, another universal concept) other than existence can qualify as a necessary condition for this purpose.

The Sixth Evidence

Again, in proving the principality of Being, Mulla Sadra argues that there are two kinds of accidents: accidents of existence such as ‘whiteness’ for a body, and accidents of essence such as *differentia* for a genus. Some thinkers believe that the qualification of essences by existence, and the presentation of existence to the essences, is not a case of an external type of qualification or an occurrence of an accident to its subject, because this implies that the object of qualification enjoys a certain degree of reality. The occurrence of accidents of essences (*differentia* to genus) does not contradict their unity in the real world. This can be held true for the relationship between existence and essence. Existence as an accident of essence must be united with it, and this implies that existence as an objective reality should be realized: ‘Existence, therefore, must be something by the mediation of which an essence exists and with which it is united in [the externally determined realm of] existence.’²⁷

The Seventh Evidence

In this evidence, the reality of existence is explained through the relationship of an accident with its subject. It is believed that the existence of an accident is nothing in itself but is something for its subject; that is, the existence of an accident is ‘identical with its incarnation [i.e., instantiation] in its subject’.²⁸ This incarnation of an accident in its subject takes place in the real world. It is also clear that the subject of an accident is not included in its essence or its definition but in its existence. The category of accident depends on something other than itself, namely a subject, to be manifest. Keeping this in mind, we can conclude that if existence (the subject) is not real, then the accident is a mental concept. The existence of blackness, for example, would be a concept rather than an incarnation in a body, which is an actual base for the meaning of blackness. This also leads to the denial of the separation of existence from essence in the realm of accident, whereas the reality of this separation has already been agreed upon.²⁹

The Eighth Evidence

Again, if existence is a mental concept and not real, as stated by Suhrawardi and other *ishraqi* thinkers, then ‘an infinite number of species could be realized between any two limits’. There would be no specific number of specific essences, and no specific number of species would be realized between any two limits of intensity, which is necessarily false. According to Mulla Sadra, the doctrine of the primacy of Being offers a solution to this

problem, because it advocates the idea that the structure of all essences stands on the foundation of a single unity (i.e., Being) and one incessant form. In this incessant form, the unity of being is actual and its multiplicities will be in the potential mode without opposing or negating one another.³⁰

It is worth mentioning that these evidences do not explain the meaning of Being but only its principality. Being, which reflects the reality of all things, cannot be known rationally or conceptually. It can only be experienced intuitively. Mulla Hadi Sabzawari also restated these evidences of Mulla Sadra for the primacy of Being, but reduced them to six. According to Dinani, there is a slight difference between Sabzawari and Mulla Sadra in the evidences. In reality, the material used by the former is same as that developed by the latter.³¹ Sabzawari also presented six arguments to prove the validity of Mulla Sadra's doctrine of the primacy of Being; some of them are not significantly different from those of Mulla Sadra's evidences. In the first argument, Sabzawari insists that the self-evidence of Being becomes the fountainhead of all values in human life because values are not attributed to concepts, which are mentally posited. The second argument is the realization of the distinction between external and internal (mental) modifications of Being: 'So if existence is not realized, and if what were realized were quiddity – and quiddity is kept in both modes of being without any difference – there would be no distinction between the external and the mental. But since this consequence is absurd, the antecedent must also be the same.'³² The third argument deals with the priority of cause to its effect in relation to the reality of Being. The cause, as we know, necessarily precedes the effect logically as well as in time. If we suppose that Being, as stated by the *ishraqi* thinkers, is not real but is mentally posited, then a specific quiddity of fire as a cause would be prior to the specific quiddity of fire as the effect, which becomes posterior. In this manner the generic quiddity of a substance as a cause would be prior to a posterior substance, which is caused by the former. This will necessitate a priority–posteriority relationship in the quiddities. In the doctrine of the primacy of Being, Being is considered to be real, and things, which are prior or posterior, are quiddities; yet only Being can confirm their priority or posteriority.

Arguments four and six of Sabzawari are similar. Each deals with the reality of Being as a unity beneath the scattered quiddities and multiplicities of beings. In the fourth argument, the primacy of Being is established on the gradual increase in the evolutionary movement of the world. This movement, in which various species with quiddities are posited, is both continuous and infinite. If the philosophical position of Illuminationism is true and Being is mental, then the species will be bound by the beginning and the end, because Being is one and many in accordance with the things from which the concept of being is abstracted. In this case, Being will not be present as a single reality and unity and the quiddities will be dispersed without a connection among

them.³³ The sixth argument takes Being as uniting the multiplicity in the phenomenal world of beings. It argues that Being should be fundamentally real in order to be a unitary ground for all beings.³⁴ In the fifth argument, Sabzwari says that if Being is a mental reality, then ‘what could have made the quiddities leave the state of equality, and by what have they come to deserve the predicate “existence”?’³⁵

Being is the primordial reality on which everything stands; but the reality of all things cannot be described in common language as something that exists, because it is not an ontic existent but the Being of beings or ontological reality. It is simply existence *par excellence*.³⁶ What is real in everything is its being rather than its essence. In this sense, Being is equivocal, not univocal. It is a common characteristic of all things or the Being of them but with different intensity and weakness. The Being of beings and beings are not two different realities, but one and the same. The reality of Being is, therefore, objective or an ontological reality of all beings. It is what constitutes the very Being of everything. For Mulla Sadra, Being, unlike beings, and unlike the view of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, is not something accidental occurring to its essence. Accidents are caused but Being is uncaused and nothing is prior to it. If we think of Being as something accidental, then it should have a cause. The cause must also be prior to it. If a being that is caused by another being is unified with it, the being that is caused is prior to itself as a cause, or is *causa sui*, which will lead to an infinite regress.³⁷

Since Being is not this or that ontic being, it has no describable property. Its abode is not the mind but outside the human mind; it has a dynamic character that creates all modalities of ontic beings, which results in the rise of essences in thinking. Essence, by contrast, is a mental factor and exists for the mind when beings are comprehended.³⁸ Although Being is that reality without which nothing is possible, its meaning is still obscure. It requires further investigation for Mulla Sadra as well as Heidegger. But in my opinion, Heidegger’s understanding of the meaning of Being is beset with ambiguity. It is for this reason that Heidegger’s commentators have discussed and understood the meaning of Being in different ways. Kockelmans interprets Heidegger’s Being as a process, an activity in which its self-manifestation becomes a truth:

As the clearing process which sheds light on itself and on beings by the very fact that it illuminates everything, Being may thus be correctly called truth. Yet the term truth here obviously does not mean “agreement”; rather, it means clearing, illumination, original self-manifestation, the emergence of Being and of all beings.³⁹

Kockelmans is convinced that Being, like the *Geist* in Hegel’s philosophy, is a dynamic ontological reality, which has the character of a happening that comes to manifest itself as a truth.

This interpretation can be supported by Heidegger's own understanding of the meaning of Being in *On the Essence of Truth* (1930), in which he states: 'The primordial disclosure of being as a whole, the question concerning beings as such, and the beginning of Western history are the same; they occur together in a "time" which, itself immeasurable, first opens up the open region for every measure.'⁴⁰ The interpretation by Kockelmans becomes adequate and reasonable when Heidegger's understanding of 'Time' and 'Temporality' is taken into account: 'In contrast to all this, our treatment of the question of meaning of Being must enable us to show that the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenology of time, if rightly seen and rightly explained, and we must show how this is the case.'⁴¹ If Being is conceived in terms of time, then it should be dynamic and eventful; it only becomes concealed in this temporal character and its concealment is an active process through the ecstatic projection of *Dasein*. Dreyfus rejects Kockelmans's interpretation. He does not believe that Heidegger regards Being as a process or a happening: 'Heidegger must have been aware of this danger, since at the point where he says being is not an entity, he writes in the margin of his copy of *Being and Time*, "No! One cannot make sense of being with the help of these sorts of concepts". To think of being in terms of concepts like entity, or process, or event is equally misleading.'⁴² Richardson takes the view that in the early works of Heidegger, 'Being' and the world were considered to be equivalent.⁴³ At the same time he suggests that, in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), Being is understood as the pure horizon of meaning, within which the process of the clearing described by Kockelmans takes place.⁴⁴ The notion of 'Pure', which is mentioned here and is used again by Heidegger in 'Letter on Humanism', can be understood in the Kantian sense. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant presents a list of pure categories of understanding within which all material collected by sensibility (*Anschauung*) becomes thought and acquires meaning.⁴⁵ For example, the sensuous notions of colour, taste and odour can be kept in the pure category of 'Quality'. Quality is called pure because it is independent of all empirical experiences. It is neither redness nor sweetness, but a category transcending all empirical notions.

When we say that Being is pure, we simply mean that Being transcends all empirical beings, and that the possibility of understanding the meaning of an empirical entity is conditioned by understanding the meaning of Being. Zimmerman has another interpretation: Being for Heidegger is history shaping ways in which beings can reveal themselves and become real.⁴⁶ Okrent tried to connect this 'shaping ways of Being in history' with the pragmatic signification of each kind of being that shows itself to us.⁴⁷ On the question of Being (*Seinfrage*), Heidegger claims that the question of the meaning of Being constitutes a philosophical inquiry about the meaning of what is asked about. It presupposes guidelines or knowledge, which are

already available to us in some way or another. But raising this question is an indication of our intellectual dissatisfaction with available guidelines, and available knowledge. Being, at this stage, is known and yet not known, or it is obscure and concealed.

Heidegger explicitly states that the subject matter of this inquiry is the Being of beings, which is not an entity.⁴⁸ One cannot think of Being as an entity like a tree, a table, a horse or a mountain, and hence it cannot be grasped in terms of empirical concepts; meanwhile, it is also not the *summum genus* of Aristotle's First Philosophy. For this reason, Being is transcendent and a presupposition, for nothing can be presented to us without having been articulated in its Being.⁴⁹ As a consequence of this, in order to understand an entity, we need to look into its Being. Our philosophical knowledge is incomplete without apprehending the meaning of its Being. By saying that Being is not an entity, we draw an ontological distinction between Being and beings, but at the same time Being cannot be distinct because no entity can exist without it. In 'Letter on Humanism', Heidegger raises another meaning of Being, defining it as power: 'As the element, Being is the "quiet power" of favouring-enabling, that is, of the possible'.⁵⁰ He also tries to use Hölderlin's elegy "Homecoming" to interpret the meaning of Being. Finally, in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger states,

All things we have named are, and yet, when we wish to apprehend beings, it is always as though we were reaching into the void. The being after which we inquire is almost like nothing, and yet we have always rejected the contention that the *essent* in its entirety is not. But Being remains indefinable, almost like nothing or ultimately quite so.⁵¹

Elsewhere, Heidegger takes the view that our attempts to understand the meaning of Being are futile because Being is inaccessible and its meaning cannot be apprehended completely. The reason for this lies in the way Being reveals itself to *Dasein*:

Manifestly, it is something that proximally and for the most part does not show itself at all: it is something that lies hidden, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as it constitutes its meaning and its ground.⁵²

In this paragraph, Heidegger clearly states that the meaning of Being is completely inaccessible, because it 'for the most part does not show itself at all'. This hiddenness of Being is not something insignificant or temporary that will not influence our philosophical understanding of reality; rather, it is essential and constitutes its meaning. The hiddenness of Being cannot be neglected, but at the same time we find ourselves helpless in our search for its

meaning as the greatest part of it 'does not show itself at all'. In addition to this hiddenness, Being can be obscured. Further, a phenomenon that is uncovered at some point can deteriorate to the point of being obscured again. This deterioration or recovering of Being leads to disguise: 'and the most dangerous, for here the possibilities of deceiving and misleading are especially stubborn'.⁵³ Despite the perplexity of this issue, Heidegger suggests that the meaning of Being can be revealed in an existential analysis of an entity that has an ontic–ontological significance. That entity is the being of *Dasein* and has the power to question the meaning of its own being and Being as such. This inquiry into the meaning of Being, unlike Mulla Sadra's ontological inquiry, begins with a particular type of being. The hermeneutic circle of this inquiry moves from a part to the whole, or, more specifically, from the being of a particular entity, namely *Dasein*, to Being in general. This can be seen as the line of demarcation between the ontological inquiries of Mulla Sadra and Heidegger. No matter how similar the two inquiries are, they still differ in methodology and metaphysical conclusions. For Heidegger, the existential analysis of the being of *Dasein* reveals the structure of fundamental ontology. An investigation into the meaning of Being thus explains the existence of *Dasein*. The hermeneutic circle then moves from *Dasein* to Being and from Being to *Dasein*.

In rejecting the Cartesian analysis of human existence as a thinking substance, Heidegger describes human being as '*Dasein*' (being-there), because *res cogitans* presupposes its own ontological ground and there can be no thinking without being. *Dasein* is an entity that intends itself and understands its own being. This attitude of *Dasein* is at the same time the realization of its own possibilities, and its existence is always towards these possibilities. For that reason, and in order to make a clear distinction between *Dasein* and other beings, Heidegger ascribes 'existence' (*Existenz*) to *Dasein* rather than '*Existentia*', which describes the being of other beings. *Existenz*, not *existential*, captures the unique meaning of human existence because it is incomplete and dynamic and is a being towards possibilities. On the contrary, *Existentia* signifies the being of a static existence, a term used by medieval metaphysicians to describe something actual. With *Dasein*, its being is at issue; it has to decide about its own being and then comports itself towards that. In opposition to *res cogitans*, *Dasein*'s authentic existence is possibility, not actuality. This terminology and subdivision of Being into *Existenz* and *Existentia* is not found at the beginning of Mulla Sadra's ontological inquiry. Instead he uses common philosophical terminology such as Necessary Being, contingent being, existence, essence, substance, cause, effect and accident. Unlike Heidegger, he did not try to invent a new philosophical language for establishing his new philosophical system and accomplishing his break away from the philosophical tradition of his time.

Mulla Sadra rejects the idea that Being is an entity; the being of an entity is not different from the entity itself. He is also against the description of

‘Being’ as a universal concept, because a universal concept cannot be used to represent the being of particular beings. This would be equal to saying that ‘whiteness’ is a white entity.⁵⁴ The reality of the relationship between Being and beings is not like that between universals and particulars. The reason for this, as explained earlier, is that Being does not stand as a genus or species for ontic beings. If Being is a genus, it will become an abstract universal concept which can then be apprehended rationally. Mulla Sadra argues from the very beginning of his ontology that Being is neither a concept (such as genus, species, *differentia* or accident) nor conceived rationally: ‘and no one has gnosis of it except the mystics, that is, “those who are grounded in mystical knowledge”’.⁵⁵ The reality of every ontic entity is in its being. Being is therefore the real ground of everything, including essences. Essences are determined not by their own inner structure but by Being.⁵⁶ This, at the same time, claims identity between Being and beings or between beings and their Being. The dynamic movement of Being in modifying itself and manifesting all ontic beings with their essences also determines its completion. The more we move towards Being, the less of essence is exhibited. Essence is then the negation of Being.⁵⁷ In my opinion, Mulla Sadra borrowed this idea from Ibn Sina, who described God (the Necessary Being) as an existence without essence. More specifically, we can say that God’s essence is inseparable from His existence. Only in case of contingent beings can essences be distinguished from their existences. Existence is positive and real while essence is negative and unreal. For this reason it is more correct to say ‘This is a tree’ than ‘Tree exists’, because essence does not exist by itself. It should be attached to existence.⁵⁸ However, this interpretation of the relationship between existence and essence should not be understood in terms of metaphysical dualism. For Mulla Sadra, essences are not real beings. They come into existence when Being creates its own modalities or ontic beings, and then essences arise as the result and are joined to them. In the downward movement of Being, when the multiplicity of ontic beings emerges, these beings exhibit diverse essences. With the upward evolutionary movement, this duality gradually disappears until, at the end, being can be grasped in its absolute positivity without essence. According to Fazlur Rahman, this view marks a distinction between Mulla Sadra’s ontology and that of the Aristotelian–Neoplatonic Muslim thinkers. The latter believed that a concrete being is the combination of existence and essence. Each of these two aspects of a concrete being is real and could exist by itself.⁵⁹ Mulla Sadra advocates ontological monism. For him, there are not two realities such as existence and essence, but only existence. It is worth mentioning that Suhrawardi is also a monist thinker, but for him the single reality is essence rather than Being.

Having established the principality and reality of Being, Mulla Sadra deals with the modality or individuation of Being in his philosophical system. This, in my opinion, should be seen as similar to Heidegger’s attempt to divide

Being into various ontological regions because every system of ontology requires this division. Generally speaking, in the ontological division of Mulla Sadra there are three modalities of Being: the realm of unity and simplicity includes the Necessary Being, heavenly spheres and the intellect in human existence; the modalities in the realm of diversity and multiplicity consist of the ontic beings and the perceptive soul in human existence; finally, at the lowest level of ontological division, there is the realm of matter with pure potentiality to receive forms. This realm also includes the human body. Human existence is shared by all three modalities. The human intellect is in the first realm, the perceptive faculty belongs to the second, and the body to the third.

The modality of unity and simplicity is the realm of Being, which is identified with God. Being, for both Mulla Sadra and Ibn Sina, is Pure Being because it is without essence and at the same time it is the Being of all beings in the two lower realms of existence. At the rank of Pure Being multiplicity is dissolved, and everything merges into a unity or into a 'simple' and 'One' mode of Being.⁶⁰ It is also important to mention that for Mulla Sadra ontology is not separate from theology because he thinks of Being as the highest ground above all beings, as the grounding ground and cause of all being without having a cause or a ground for itself. This grounding ground of all beings is also at the same time conscious of both itself and beings and determines their destination. This can be seen as the distinction between Mulla Sadra's ontology and that of Heidegger. Here, Mulla Sadra's ontology could be described as onto-theology, a Heideggerian term used to define this type of metaphysics.⁶¹ In Heidegger's ontology, Being is neither transcendent in this sense nor a rational cause for all beings. It is the Being of beings and their inner reality. God does not enter into Heidegger's metaphysics; his metaphysics remains as ontology.

In the second division, or the modality of diversity and multiplicity, there are ontic beings such as heavenly bodies, souls, animals and inanimate beings. This is the realm of individual beings.⁶² Every ontic being in this realm is in constant flux and evolutionary change towards a higher realm to achieve perfection. These beings reach perfection in human existence, as human beings are more intelligent than animals. Some human beings reach a higher rank of existence and become more perfect in their intelligence than others; this is the highest form of Being in the realm of multiplicity beneath the realm of unity.⁶³

The lowest degree of modality of Being is the realm of prime matter, which is nothing more than the potentiality to receive forms.⁶⁴ Following the doctrine of emanation introduced earlier by some Muslim thinkers such as the members of Ikhwan al-Safa (The Brethren of Purity), al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra believes that prime matter is emanated from Being eternally because Being is not in time. Prime matter represents the lowest level of existence and

becomes existent through receiving specific forms in the evolutionary process from potentiality to actuality. It is also the beginning of the movement towards perfection in the universe, which will be explained in Chapter Five in the discussion on trans-substantial change (*al-haraka al-jawhariyyah*). The two lower realms, namely the realms of potentiality and diversity, originated from the realm of unity and are dependent on that realm ontologically:

All contingent beings, whatever their distinctions and their ranks of [relative] deficiency and perfection, are existentially dependent, being indigent in their inner-realities towards It, and enriched by It. Thus, these contingent beings are contingent by virtue of their own inner-realities. Due to the First Necessity, The Exalted, however, they are [conditionally] necessary. They are inoperative and perishable only from the perspective of their own inner-reality [and thus are not categorically necessities]. They become a reality due to the Absolute Reality [*aletheia*], [being] the One and the Only: 'Everything that exists will perish except His own face'. His relation to other beings is like sunlight, such that [in itself] it depends on its own inner reality, [while other] bodies are enlightened by it; [they, however] are dark from [the perspective of] their own inner-reality.⁶⁵

Mulla Sadra's division of the ontological realms attributes principality and priority to the realm of unity. To clarify the principality of this realm, he explains three ontological positions, in each of which the nature of this principality is vindicated. He argues that the relationship between being and essence should be understood in three different ways: we think of Being as prior to essence or posterior to it or we state that both of them co-exist simultaneously. When Being is thought of as prior to essence, it simply signifies that Being is independent and can stand by itself without relying on essence. If the primacy of essence is accepted, as stated in the second case, then essence would exist independent of Being and be prior to it, but then for essence to exist it needs existence to rely on and this is a vicious regress. The third position is that essence co-exists with Being simultaneously, and not in it; therefore it relies on another existence for its existence. As a consequence of this, essence cannot be without prior existence:

If being exists [lit. if the being of existence were an existent], then either it is prior to the essence or posterior to it, or they are simultaneous. If the first is the case, its realization necessarily follows independently without the essence. This implies that priority of the attribute is prior to the subject of its attribution as well as its realization without it. If the second is the case, it necessarily follows that essence exists prior to it [existence] before being, which implies a vicious regress. If the third is the case, it necessarily follows that essence exists with it [i.e., existence] and not in it. Therefore, there would be another existence for it [i.e., for essence]; this [state] implies what has been mentioned. The falsity of the consequences always implies the falsity of the antecedents.⁶⁶

After arguing for the primacy of Being, Mulla Sadra stresses the view that essences belong to the realms of potentiality and multiplicity and are insepa-

rable from beings ontologically. Their separation is only an intellectual fact, which occurs in the realm of thinking. Beings and essences are united in the world but separated in thinking:

What has been said earlier is sufficient to refute this claim, for, existence is identical with essence in the external [realm] but different from it mentally. Therefore, there is no relation between them except in intellectual consideration. In [such an intelligible] consideration, the relation will have existence which is in its inner-reality is identical with it, but is different from it in the realm external [to the mind]. This kind of *ad infinitum* is stopped when the intelligible consideration is ceased.⁶⁷

However, it is clear that the only ontological position accepted by Mulla Sadra is the affirmation of the primacy of Being and the intellectually posited status of essence. What he has argued here, then, or has tried to prove, is that Being, not essences, is the sole reality. Essences exist in the mind or only in thinking, not in the external world. The dualism of existence and essence arises only when we think to define a being or understand its nature. More precisely, essences emerge when Being modifies itself in the downward process of further diversified ontic beings. We can talk about essences when these ontic modes of Being are perceived or thought about. But gradually essences disappear when we move upwards to apprehend Being in its pure absoluteness. According to Fazlur Rahman, this view draws a line of demarcation between Mulla Sadra's ontology and that of the Muslim Peripatetic Neoplatonic thinkers.⁶⁸ The latter accepted the reality of existence and essence outside the domain of thinking and did not insist on the subjectivity of the latter.⁶⁹ In contrast, essence here is considered a mode of Being that exists only in thinking; that is, it has mental reality. It is the intellect that conceives essence and separates it from existence; otherwise, there is only existence and nothing else as an ontological reality and the foundation of all ontic modes. It may be possible to find a resemblance between this view of the ontological status of essence and the subjective categories in Kant's philosophy. Our knowledge of the phenomenal world, as described by Kant, is produced through the application of these subjective categories that define the essence of every phenomenon with the assistance of sensibility. This claim is an obvious contradiction with Suhrawardi's metaphysical conviction, in which essence has become real and Being a mere mental concept having no ontological reality of its own. Mulla Sadra, again in his arguments against the doctrine of the primacy of essence, insists that Suhrawardi's conviction can be taken into account when the dual reality of essence and existence is accepted.⁷⁰ For Mulla Sadra, Being is real and essence unreal; Being is positive, light, and makes all essences exist, whereas essence is negative, darkness, and imposes limitation on beings. The essence of each Being, which is other than Being, does not exist by itself. It exists by virtue of Being.

Being is, then, an ontological reality while essence lacks that reality and this rank of existence.⁷¹ The problem that arises in describing essence as subjective is with the possibility of understanding essence as something illusory. What does Mulla Sadra mean by insisting on the principality and reality of being? Is there a unity of being and essence in reality? Does that unity make them one real thing? Does that unity presuppose their previous ontological distinction? In answering these questions the ontological status of essences and their relationship to Being can be seen from two perspectives: first, the essences are illusory or images in the mind and have a mental existence like the subjective categories of the faculty of understanding in Kant's epistemology; second, the essences are real and their reality is of the second degree and is not equal with the reality of Being.

The first perspective is also found as a mystic point of view and analogous to the metaphysical position of some Indian thinkers who consider the world to be *maya* or unreal. Based on this type of metaphysical belief the essence of an entity or its being in the sensible world is seen as an illusion. But is this Mulla Sadra's position? Does this Muslim thinker say that the essence of the table I am now using for writing is only mental and has no reality outside my mind? In my opinion, Mulla Sadra's understanding of this problem belongs to the second perspective, which is similar to the view of Ibn Sina and to Hegel's interpretation of unity and diversity. Indeed, even explaining some similarities between Mulla Sadra's interpretation of the meaning of Being and its relationship with essence with that of Kantian metaphysical dualism will not be of great help here. The best way to approach this problem is through Hegel's analysis of the external reality and his interpretation of the world as the self-manifestation of *Geist*. In other words, we need to understand Being as an objective reality that exhibits itself in various forms and gives rise to the multiple beings and their essences. Being in this sense is a dynamic fountainhead of all things as well as their essences. This view is also shared by Heidegger, with the exception that Heidegger's ontology leaves no room for a rational teleology. Also, Hegel's concept of essence should not be taken for the Platonic Forms or the Kantian *noumena*. It is the negation of Being and is derived from the last category in the sphere of Being in dialectical logic. Essence, therefore, cannot exist by itself without relying on Being, but unlike Being, which is immediacy, essence is mediated and known through reflection or understanding.⁷² This discussion, in some ways, brings us closer to Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the unity of being. Mulla Sadra also wrote on the graded unity of being in order to justify his doctrine of the ambiguity of Being (*tashkik al-wujud*). In his discussion on the relationship between cause and effect he draws a conclusion on the personal unity of being in line with Ibn 'Arabi.⁷³ This discussion on the causal relationship also leads to the ontological division of Being stated by Ibn Sina, because Being that is a cause for its own multiple modality or the emergence of the effects becomes a

Necessary Being as in Ibn Sina's ontology and the effects of possible beings. The existence of a cause does not rely on its effects, because it is independent and self-subsistent. Dependence and reliance on something other than itself is the character of the effects. The effects become both necessary when they are accompanied by their perfect cause and impossible in the absence of this perfect cause. When a cause produces an effect, that effect gives rise to its own essence in the mind, and in this way essence is derived from the existence of the effect. An effect, for example the world, is real when it is seen only in its relationship to its cause. This relationship is described as that of a speech to the speaker. The moment the speaker halts speaking, speech becomes impossibility.⁷⁴ The necessary relationship between a cause and its effect determines the existence of the effect but the cause (Being) remains without relying on anything for its existence. Can we say that Being causes essences? What is important to remember here is that essences have no reality for Mulla Sadra. They exist in the mind or intellectually. Being as a perfect cause gives rise to its effects or possible beings, and essences affect the possible beings and emerge only in the mind when the possible beings are thought about or conceived. Essences have no existence at all, either primary or attributive.

Essences belong to contingent beings in the realm of diversity and multiplicity. These contingent beings emanate from Being and give rise to essence in the mind.⁷⁵ Existence and essence, as mentioned in *al-Masha'ir*, are not separate in the external world; their separation is merely mental. This, however, does not mean that existence and essence are two different realities having a unity. Mulla Sadra plainly rejects the external reality of essences. For him, essences belong to contingent beings; if these beings have more essences they possess less being. Yet their being will never vanish, as nothing can exist as pure essence. The essences become 'concepts' through which we come to know about contingent beings. It is worth mentioning here that Suhrawardi is right in stating that what is known is essence not existence. But in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, knowledge is preconditioned by Being, or epistemology by ontology. Essences, as internal realities, are dependent on the external reality of Being. Although at the highest level of the hierarchy of Being there is pure Being, a kind of existence without essence, we cannot state that at the lowest level there is pure essence or essence without existence. Essences are always with ontic beings and do not exist in themselves. Their relationship as universal concepts to ontic beings (phenomena) remains; as long as one particular or ontic being exists, the essence will also exist. This can be seen as a one-to-one relationship.⁷⁶

The ontological division of Being in Mulla Sadra's philosophy does not depict the world as an aggregate of ontic beings or a container of them. Mulla Sadra sees the world as an organic body in which the evolutionary process of trans-substantial change takes place towards perfection. When an ontic being is described as something 'in' the world, this spatial relationship is not

external like the case of a table in the room. The existence of the table is not dependent on the room, while its existence as an ontic being is unthinkable without its being in the world. Mulla Sadra's understanding of the relationship between Being and beings has similarity with Heidegger's existential analysis of *in-der-Welt-sein*, where being-in-the-world becomes an ontological condition for the existence of *Dasein*.⁷⁷ Yet this condition does not constitute the essence of this entity. This relationship between Being and beings is often elucidated metaphorically. As stated by John Quinn, for example, it is like the relationship of ink to written words.⁷⁸ One is usually not aware of the ink while reading the words. But in reality it is the ink that is seen and the words do not exist without it. Beings are similarly dual in nature. They have the character of identity as, like the words, they share the ink, but at the same time they represent multiplicity as the words are different from one another in form and meaning. Every being is then identical and different, eternal and temporal, divine and profane, because they are the intensive modifications of Being. By reflecting on this distinction and the ontological difference between the realms of Being we find a way to Being. This is Mulla Sadra's objective in *al-Asfar*. His aim is to move away from the 'darkness of illusion' to the daylight of the truth of existence.

or the imam, which he himself did not deny. His new movement was regarded by the official 'ulama as a threat to authority and dangerous. He was summoned to Teheran, where he was arrested then executed. One of his followers, Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri, developed Babism further, establishing a new sect called Baha'ism, after which he assumed the name Baha'ullah. Baha'ullah was arrested in 1852 and imprisoned in Teheran. Later, in 1853, he was deported to Baghdad and claimed to be a new prophet. He was subsequently confined by the Ottomans in Adrianople and then in Acre in Palestine (now 'Akka, in Israel). The followers of Baha'ism were mainly Iranians; today many of them live in Western countries such as the United States of America, Canada and Australia.

59. Algar, 'Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran', p. 726.
60. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'The Metaphysics of Sadr al-Din Shirazi and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Iran', in Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds), *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change 1800–1925* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 177. See also Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy*, pp. 99–100.
61. Ibid.
62. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatab'i, *Kernel of the Kernel: Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journey of the People of Intellect*, compiled, edited and expanded by Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihirani, translated by Mohammad H. Faghfoory, foreword by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York, 2003), in the foreword, p. xiv.
63. Nasr, 'Sadr al-Din (Mulla Sadra)', p. 960.
64. Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, translated by Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York, 1977), p. 12. Sabzawari's autobiography is translated by Paul Sprachman from the Persian introduction to an Arabic text, taken from an article by Dr Kasim Ghani published in *Yadgar*, No. 3, pp. 45–47.
65. Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, p. 13.
66. Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London, 1993), p. 358.
67. Ibid., p. 361.
68. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West* (New York, 1996), p. 126.
69. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr (eds), *Shi'ism: Doctrines, Thought, and Spirituality* (New York, 1988), p. 348.

Chapter Four

1. See Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 43. Mulla Sadra also wrote *Hashiyya 'ala sharh hikmat al-ishraq lil Suhrawardi* on Suhrawardi (published in 1898), and *Hashiyya 'ala al-rawashi lil sayyid Damad* about his teacher.
2. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 12.
3. Ibn Sina, 'On the Nature of God', in *Avicenna on Theology*, translated by Arthur J. Arberry (London, 1951), p. 25.
4. Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 46.
5. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 22–25.
6. Ibid.
7. Sabzawari, *The Metaphysics of Subzawari*, p. 31.
8. Ibid., pp. 70–71.
9. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 43.
10. Heidegger, Martin, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 203. See also *Contributions to Philosophy (Enowning)*, translated by Perviz Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington, 1999), pp. 96–98, 'The Question of being (Letter to Ernst Junger "Concerning "The Line"') (1955)', in Manfred Staseen (ed.), *Philosophical and Political Writings* (New York, 2003), p. 143.
11. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Enowning)*, p. 97.

12. Ibid., p. 86.
13. Ibid., p. 299.
14. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 46.
15. Heidegger, Martin, 'Nihilism', in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York, 2000), p. 849.
16. Kant has provided a table of twelve categories based on twelve possible judgments. The categories for Kant are subjective forms of the faculty of 'understanding', which generate our knowledge of the phenomenal world with the assistance of 'sensitivity'. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by F. Max Muller (New York, 1960), p. 71.
17. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, pp. 6–7.
18. Ibid., p. 9.
19. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 31.
20. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, pp. 3–4. See also Mulla Sadra, 'Risalat isalat ja'il al-wujud', in *Majmu'at rasa'il falsafi Sadr al-Nut'ahilin*, Hamid Naji Isfahani (Teheran, 1997), p. 182.
21. Suhrawadi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 2.
22. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 10.
23. Ibid., p. 13.
24. Ibid., p. 14.
25. Ibid., pp. 15–16.
26. Ibid., p. 17.
27. Ibid., p. 19.
28. Ibid., p. 20.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 21.
31. Gholam Hossein Ebrahim Dinani, 'The Evidences of the Principality of Existence', in *Islam–West Philosophical Dialogue, The papers presented at the World Congress on Mulla Sadra (May 1999, Teheran)*, vol. 5 (Teheran: Sadra, 1999), p. 241.
32. Sabzwari, *The Metaphysics of Subzwari*, p. 34.
33. Ibid., p. 35.
34. Ibid., p. 37.
35. Ibid., p. 36.
36. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 39, see also Mulla Sadra's 'Risalat isalat ja 'l al-wujud', in *Majmu'a rasa'il falsafi Sadr al-Nuta'ahilin*, pp. 182–183.
37. Sabzwari, *The Metaphysics of Subzwari*, p. 47.
38. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 49, see also Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 38.
39. Joseph, J. Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Bloomington, 1984), p. 54.
40. Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth', in *Basic Writings*, p. 127.
41. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 40.
42. Hubert. L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Massachusetts, 1991), p. 11. Professor S.M. Khamenei has mistakenly used the Heideggerian term *Dasein* for the particularization of Being. He states that 'although existence is indivisible and even indefinable reality, its degrees of radiation upon objects could create several existences, each different from the other, and each possessing a specific definition and some features such as time and space. We might call each of them a Dasein'. See S.M. Khamenei, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Teheran, 2004), pp. 57–58. In Heidegger's ontology the term *Dasein* is used to describe human existence only and not the particularization of Being in all ontic beings. Heidegger clearly states that 'Being which is an issue for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine. Thus *Dasein* is never to be taken ontologically as an instance or special case of some genus of entities as things that are present-at-hand. To entities such as these, their Being is "a matter of indifference"; or more precisely, they "are" such that their Being can be neither the matter of indifference to them nor the opposite. Because *Dasein* has in each case mineness

[*Jemeinigkeit*], one must always use a *personal* pronoun when one addresses it: 'I am.', 'You are.'" See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 67–68. Elsewhere, Heidegger also states that 'Dasein is not a "thing" like a piece of wood not such a thing as a plant—nor does it consist of experiences, and still less is it a subject (an ego) standing over against objects (which are not the ego). It is a distinctive being [*Seiendes*] which precisely insofar as it "is there" for itself in an authentic manner is not an object-in formal terms: toward-which of a being-directed toward it by mean-ing it.' See Martin Heidegger, *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, translated by John van Buren (Bloomington, 1999), p. 17.

43. William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague, 1963), pp. 147–152.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A79: B104.
46. Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity, Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington, 1990), p. 116.
47. Mark Okrent, *Heidegger's Pragmatism. Understanding, Being, and the Critique of Metaphysics* (New York, 1988), p. 7.
48. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 26.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
50. Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', *Basic Writings*, p. 220.
51. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven, 1959), pp. 35–36.
52. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 40.
53. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 59.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 9.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
57. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 36; see also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 30.
58. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 87.
59. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 31.
60. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 69.
61. Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', in *Identity and Difference*, translated with an introduction by Joan Stambaugh (Chicago, 2002), pp. 54–55.
62. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 229.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
65. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, pp. 60–61.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
68. Although Ibn Sina is considered a Peripatetic thinker, in my opinion his philosophy is an amalgamation of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ideas. I prefer to call him Aristotelian–Neoplatonist.
69. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 31.
70. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 60.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.
72. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic*, vol. 1, translated by W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers, with an introductory preface by Viscount Haldane of Cloan (London, 1929), p. 389.
73. Abbas Yazdani, 'The Doctrine of the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*) in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy', in *Islam—West Philosophical Dialogue, The papers presented at the World Congress on Mulla Sadra (May 1999, Teheran)*, vol. 2, p. 66.
74. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 216. It is also important to mention that Mulla Sadra in *Al-Asfar* states that the multiplicities and the ontic beings are illusory or shadows of reality. If this is the case, the ontological relationship between the reality of Being and the ontic beings will be proved to be false. See Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 47.

75. Ibid., p. 56.
76. Ibid., p. 8. See also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 45.
77. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 92.
78. John F. Quinn, 'Mulla Sadra's Theocentrism and Trans-Substantial Motion: A Critique of Western Cosmologies', in *Islam-West Philosophical Dialogue, The papers presented at the World Congress on Mulla Sadra (May 1999, Teheran)*, vol. 3, p. 27.

Chapter Five

1. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated with an introduction and notes by J.B. Baillie (New York, 1967), p. 800.
2. Ibid.
3. See Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, pp. 55–56 and see *al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 35.
4. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 61. Heidegger also mentions gradations of unhiddenness or the truth in his lectures on Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave'. See Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, p. 25 and pp. 48–53.
5. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 61.
6. Ibid., p. 86.
7. Ibid., p. 80.
8. Ibid., p. 81.
9. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 12.
10. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masha'ir*, p. 86.
11. Ibid., p. 81.
12. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (9 vols, New York, 1993), vol. 1, p. 39.
13. Ibid., p. 58.
14. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 61, see also Mulla Sadra, *Al-Mazahir al-ilahiyyah*, with an introduction by S. Muhammad Khamenei (Teheran), 2000, p. 65.
15. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 96.
16. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Lambda, translated by Richard Hope (Michigan, 1992), p. 249.
17. Ibn Sina, *Fann-i sama-'i tabi'i*, translated by Muhammad Ali Furuqi (Teheran, 1982), p. 123.
18. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, second edition with revised text and notes by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1985), p. 255.
19. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 64.
20. Ibid., p. 80.
21. Ibid., p. 84.
22. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 117.
23. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell (New York, 1944), p. 38.
24. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 3.
25. George Atiyeh, *Al-Kindi: The Philosopher of the Arabs* (Rawalpindi, 1966), p. 53.
26. Nasr, 'The School of Isfahan', in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 916.
27. Ibid.
28. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 141.
29. Ibn Sina makes a distinction between two concepts of time derived from two different types of movement. The first type of movement is not observable, such as continuity or motion from beginning to the end. This movement for him is subjective and a mental image. The second type, such as the movement of a body from one point to another in space, is observable. The first movement gives rise to the idea of time as an extension because the observation in this case is concerned with time-instances. He also refuses to call time an extension or subjective. Time is continuity like the measure of the moving body in space. See Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 95.

Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy

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