



# A Critical Study of Ayatollah Fayyazi's Idea of Divine Essence

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**Abstract:** *The problem of Divine Essence is one of the most significant issues discussed in Islamic philosophy. In the debates of theology in the special sense the philosophers begin with the demonstration of God's existence and after it they continue to discuss the affirmative and negative divine attributes. One of the negative attribute of God is his having no essence. This Divine Attribute is closely related with Divine Simplicity. The philosophers contend that contrary to the contingent beings who have essence God does not have any essence (quiddity) in the particular sense of the word. Professor Fayyazi believes that according to rational proofs (including the proof of the distinction of God from other creatures and the originality of the Divine and inconspicuity of the truth of Necessary Being) God like other beings has an essence in the particular sense and the reality of having an essence is not an exclusive property of the contingent beings. The current essay reflects on the proofs of professor Fayyazi and concludes that these proofs are not flawless and cannot demonstrated God's having an essence.*

**Keywords:** *Essence-God-Incorporeality-Existence-Necessary Being-Contingent Being-Fayyazi*

## INTRODUCTION

The problem of demonstration or denial of an essence for the Necessary Being is one of the key issues of philosophical theology and it is closely related with the debate of simplicity of Divine nature. Shahid Motahari traces this debate back to Bu Ali and Farabi (Shahid Motahari, Collected Works, vol. 9: 161). The philosophers have discussed this problem in two domains once in the chapter allocated to the general ontology that is devoted to the discussion of existence and essence where the philosophers seek to reach to a being who does not have any essence and is pure existence and once in the chapter allocated to theology in the special sense in which first the Divine Existence is demonstrated and then His attribute are discussed and this is followed by the demonstration of the simplicity of Divine Essence and denial of the idea that God is composed of existence and essence. Mulla Sadra is one of those who has discussed this issue both in general ontology and in theology in special sense (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 96; vol. 6: 48). Mulla Hadi Sabzewari has also followed the paces of Mulla Sadra but Bu Ali in his Shifa has only discussed this issue in the chapter of theology (Avicenna, 2006: 367).

Now after delineation of the place of this problem we need to give an outline of the titles that have been used by philosophers to discuss this issue. Sometimes this idea is expressed through the maxim that the essence of Necessary Being is his very existence (Sabzewari, 2005, vol. 2: 97); some other time it is stated as follows: the existence of the Necessary Being is his very essence (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 96; vol. 6: 48). These rephrases of the issue express the same point to the effect that the Necessary Being does not have any essence or quiddity in the particular sense. In other words, in the same way that contingent beings all enjoy an essence and their essences are always associated with them the Necessary Being does not have any essence because

having an essence is a flaw for Him. Then, although these phrases, e.g. the essence of Necessary Being is his very existence, are all affirmative their real intention is the denial of essence in the special sense of the word in God that has been expressed in the form of the demonstration of the quiddity in general sense<sup>1</sup>. The phrase “the essence of Necessary Being is his very existence”, thus conceived, suggests that the essence of God is the same with his unique, simple and absolute existence. In other words, divine existence is his very absolute essence. However, the theologians approach this issue in another form. They begin their discussion with the question that if the essence of Necessary Being is identical with his existence or an addendum to it? Accordingly, this suggests that theologians believe in an essence in special sense for the Necessary Being and they are concerned merely of the mode of this essence. As to this latter issue, the author of *Mawaqif* has attributed the idea of identity to the philosophers and the idea of additonality to the theologians (Mir Sayyid Sharif Ijii, 1907, vol. 8: 18, 19). Then the chief problem of this research is that whether Necessary Being has an essence in the special sense or not?

Although the debate of the primacy of existence and essence was generally pursued in the time of Farabi and Avicenna this issue was not raised as a philosophical issue. Even in the time of Sheikh Eshraq there was no discussion of the issue primacy of existence and essence rather Sheikh Eshraq discussed this philosophical issue under the title of non-additionality of existence versus the essence. The first philosopher who has highlighted the debate of primacy of existence and essence as a philosophical issue was Mir Damad (Shahid Motahari, *Collected Works*, vol. 5: 160). After providing an outline of the history of the debate we will discuss the meanings of the essence in order to know which essence is at issue and which one is impossible to be attributed to God.

Essence has various meanings and our contemplation of them can cast light on the controversial point. Three meanings have been mentioned for the essence:

First meaning: essence as what is given as the answer to the question of the what-ness of a thing. For example, when one asks what thing is a human being the answer will reveal the essence and what-ness of man. Essence in this sense is called essence in the special sense. It is indeed an innate determination and essential differentiation of a thing that distinguishes it from other things around. The term essence is usually used in this sense in the philosophical sciences.

Second meaning: essence in the sense of the thing that represents the reality (truth) of the thing. Essence in this sense is called essence in general sense because in addition to the essence in general sense it also includes existence, existential attributes, non-existence and its properties and for this reason it is general.

Third meaning: essence in the sense (in every sense but existence) that can be described as existent (in the particular sense).<sup>2</sup> This sense of essence is more general than the first type of essence because besides essential notions it does also includes philosophical concepts but existence like cause vs. effect. However, it is more specific as compared to the first sense because it does not contain existence versus nothingness and its attributes (Nabawian, 2017, vol. 2: 205-206).

Given these senses of essence we need to know that in the current context the first sense of the essence (essence in its special sense) is intended and it is the same sense that has triggered continuous controversies

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<sup>1</sup> We will discuss the subcategories of essence in coming debates.

<sup>2</sup> For existence, two senses have been proposed: 1- existence as an infinitive in the sense of an existence that is conceived along with the subject; such an existence is also known as abstract existence. Here in this context this existence is not intended. 2- Existence as a verbal noun (gerund) which itself is of two mode: first, existence refers to the objective reality of existence without presupposing any attribution and this is the Being that is deemed by philosophers as the subject-matter proper of philosophy. And it is exactly this very existence that is intended here (existence in special sense of the word) (Mulla Sadra, *Iqaz al-Naemin*, pp. 9-10; idem, *Al-Mashaer*, p. 7; idem, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 453). Second, existence has a general sense that includes both its particular sense and the non-existents and mentally-positated entities (comments of Professor Fayyazi as quoted by Seyed Mohammad Mahdi Nabavian, *Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 157).

among Islamic thinkers because the second and third sense of essence exists in God and no one has any objection to it.

Now we know that which sense of essence is the conflict area. Then we can argue that all thinkers before Professor Fayyazi all did take the lack of essence in God for granted. They all were unanimous on the fact that the impossibility of essence in the special sense for God is self-evident and this is why they did not offer any further argument or proof for it. The present essay seeks first to provide a comprehensive debate of the rational proofs of the demonstration of the Divine Essence for God which has been less considered in previous researches. Secondly, it will be shown that every judgement of the divine essence has different effects and requirements as regards the problems of theology, philosophy and mysticism and this doubles the necessity of the current debate.

### **Professor Fayyazi's Stance**

Professor Fayyazi contrary to other renowned philosophers contends that the Necessary Being, i.e. God, does also have essence in the special sense like any other one of the creatures in the universe. To put it otherwise, in the same way that God has the essence in the second and third senses he also has the essence in the first sense as the answer to the question of the what-ness. The majority of philosophers believe that essence is the limit of existence and has no other property but representation. In other words, it is a mental notion and in the outside world there is nothing but existence and essence is not anything more than a limit and in fact essence exists in the form of a genitive non-existence, i.e. non-existence of a being more than it and nothing more (Seyed Mahdi Nabavian, 2017, vol. 1: 179).

Professor Fayyazi argues that the essence of an object is its internal determination and essential differentia and believes that because everything has a distinct existence that distinguishes it from other objects then it should have an internal determination and essential differentia that has caused that distinction and it is the essence. Since God has a distinct existence of his own that distinguishes Him from other beings then He should have an essential differentia. Of course since God is simple and not composed, then the essence that is deemed for God will be also different. In other words, contingent beings are composed of genus and differentia while the Lord does not have such a composed essence. Moreover, everything exists in the same way that its existence requires and whereas God has a simple existence for this reason his essence will be simple too. The fact that Necessary Being is a simple reality of various meanings suggests that mind reaches this reality with some analytical activity on the concept of Necessary Being through which it abstracts the notions of existence and essence insofar as the concept of existence refers to Being while the concept of essence represents what-ness – internal differentia and determination of the Necessary versus other creatures. Then, both existence and essence exist in the outside world in a simple form in the sense they are not two entities rather the essence of Necessary Being exists as part of the total simple reality of the Necessary Being and it is this mind that abstracts one existence and one essence from it. It is indeed existence that essentially fills the outside but essence does also exist in the outside world as an integrated part of a simple Being not in accidental form so that we should consider it a limit and just a representation of the outside. Professor Fayyazi has articulated this issue in his Being and Quiddity as follows:

Essence is consisted of the nature and the innermost aspect of a being and in other words, essence is the internal determination and what-ness and essential differentia of an object that is externally and extensionally identical with it and distinguishes it from other objects. On the other hand, although Necessary Being is infinite His nature is so that He is different from other entities and this essential difference is indeed the essence of Necessary Being. To put it otherwise, we do not have any indeterminate being and every being has its specific determination and this essential determination distinguishes it from other beings. As to Necessary Being this determination is the identity of His existence and essence both of which are infinite in God (Fayyazi, 2008: 80-81).

Of course when we say that essence exists in the outside world in an ancillary form we do not mean the essence in pure form because everyone knows that such an essence exists in accidental form rather what is

intended by Professor Fayyazi when he states that essence exists in ancillary form it is the essence that exists in the outside world that exists indeed relying on the existence of the being in the outside world not anything else.

According to Professor Fayyazi, God like other beings has an essence but since Divine Essence is infinite no creature is capable to know Him and it is only Him who can know his own essence. This of course should not make us to say that if Divine Essence cannot be known then He does not have any essence. Not at all. God surely has an essence and his infinite essence is identical with his existence even if no one is capable of knowing it as the verse “no knower can know it” (Taha: 110) suggests. Now we turn to the proofs that have been proposed by Professor Fayyazi to demonstrate the existence of Divine Essence:

First Proof: Essential Difference between God and other Creatures:

Premise One: a thing is distinguished from other things with the thing that it holds and the differentia of something as against other things is its predicate. Now this predicate is either essential or accidental. If it is essential it is not out of three possible modes in the sense that it is either a genus or a simple species (like accidents) or a compound species (close differentia) only the latter two modes are essential differentia. But as regards the predicate if it is accidental it can be differentiating only if it has the specific inclusion.

Premise Two: every differentia certainly has a genus and it distinguishes its owner from other species that are examples of the genus. Generally speaking, genus and close differentia are called complete definition and consist together the essence. Then we have two types of essential differentia: firstly, it is either essence (if it is species) and or it is not separated from the essence (if it is close differentia).

Premise Three: the definition that is provided in response to the question of what-ness is an essence but not every essence is a definition. For example, species is an essence but it is not a definition.

Objection: If you say that the complete definition is an essence why both partial definition and description are called essence?

Answer: The partial definition and description are called essence in view of their implicit connotation that is an essence (Khaje Tusi, 1996, vol. 1: 30, 72; Mulla Sadra, 1983, 11; Allame Helli, 1992: 221).

Given these three premises the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1- Necessary Being is the cause of every single being in the universe and every cause is different from its effect then the Necessary Being has a special existence distinguished from those of all the rest.
- 2- When it is different every difference has its origin in a distinction.
- 3- Then God is distinct and distinguished from the creatures there should be something in its existence by which He can be distinguished from others otherwise it is impossible to be any distinction without a basis for the distinction.
- 4- Now this basis for the distinction is either essential or accidental.
- 5- In both cases God should have an essence.
- 6- Because if the distinction is essential there is two alternatives as we mentioned in the premises to the effect that it is either the species that is an essence or it is a close differentia which is itself not separable from the essence. Then if it is essential in both cases the essence is demonstrated for the Necessary Being. And this basis for distinction is accidental in this event the Necessary Being will be an effect because every accident has a cause regardless of whether this causes is external or analytic. Anyway if it is an effect it will be an effect of another. In other words, God will be dependent on other thing and this is surely inconsistent with the existence of Divine Essence because Necessary Being has essential necessity. If the effect is accidental in this case the cause can no longer be the shared point between the Necessary and the contingent because in such a case the basis of distinction should the same as the shared point and it is impossible as the effect will not obey the cause. Then when the cause cannot be the shared point between the Necessary and the contingent we should believe in essential differentia. That is to say that we should say that the accidental differentia returns to an immanent thing otherwise there would be circle and regress. Thus if it returns to the immanent it is

either species or the close differentia and as a result in both cases God will have an essence (Lecture Pamphlet, Higher Assembly of Theosophy).

**Criticism and Review:**

First Objection: The fourth premise of the argument is wrong because although God as the cause of the rest universe should be distinct from the creatures this distinction is not essential rather it is existential as the Divine Essence is distinct from the creatures with all His existence. In other words, Divine Essence does not share anything with other beings in the essential domain and there is no need for having a differentia through which we may distinguish it from other beings sharing the same genus or species with it rather separation and distinction is in two forms: 1- if two things share the essential things with each other their separation is either through differentia or by accidents; 2- if the common ground between two things is not an essential thing the distinction will not be save with the whole existence. Since God does not have any essential commonality with other beings rather His commonality is existential we cannot conceive any essence for Him as it has been articulated by Khaje Nasir al-Din Tusi (Khaje Nasir al-Din Tusi, 1996, vol. 3: 61-66).

Objection: We accept that God is distinct with His whole being but this whole being is essential not existential.

Answer: This is a *petitio principii* because we need first demonstrate the existence of an essence for God and then we could argue that the distinction is with whole essential being.

Second Objection: Given existential gradation the distinction of beings is a matter of their existential perfection and deficiency and has nothing to do with their essence as suggested by Allame Tabatabaei and Mulla Sadra (Tabatabaei, *Fundamentals of Metaphysics*, p. 65; Mulla Sadra, 1981: 135). Because the necessary existence of God is more perfect than the existence of contingent beings then their requirements differ and God is without essence while the contingent beings have essences.

Second Proof: Specific and Essential Attribute of God

Premise one: every being in the world is an extension of multiple concepts – for example, being is itself an extension of existence, contingency, eternity, stability, change and so on and so forth.

Premise Two: all these concepts exist as one being as in the doctrine of primacy of existence in Mulla Sadra it is said that existence is a unique and simple concept the extension of which represents numerous meanings and concepts.

Premise Three: some of these multiple concepts are shared by all creatures like existence while some others are specific quality of a special being because every being is specified and no specification is possible without a specifier.

Premise Four: although Necessary Being has a specific simple existence He is still an extension for multiple concepts and existence is common between Him and other creature then we have a series of specific concepts that belong just to God.

Based on these four premises one can draw the following conclusion: a) Necessary Being is a specific being; b) if He is a specific being then He should have a specific attribute; c) this attribute in turn is either essential or accidental because the attributes are predicated in ordinary technical form and what is the subject of ordinary technical predication is either essential or accidental and in both cases God should have an essence; d) because if this attribute is essential it is either a species or a close differentia, according to the explanations given in the first proof, and in both cases it is the essence or something that cannot be separated from essence for every differentia should be associated with a genus; and if this attribute is accidental it is either a separated differentia or a necessary accident; if the former is the case then it will be an effect and since God is Necessary He cannot be an accident and this is against what we have supposed and if the latter is the case and the essence itself has created it this is also rejected because firstly, Divine Essence either lacks that attribute or has it if it lacks it needs to get it from the other and the same question should be asked from the other and circle and regress occur both of which are impossible. The other thesis would be that God has had

the attribute in advance in which case accidentality is meaningless. Secondly, if we take it as a necessary and required accident the cause of the accident cannot be a common thing shared by the Necessary and Contingent then this accidental should end up in an immanent element in which case it should be yet either a species (essence or a close differentia (an inseparable element of the essence). In both cases the Necessary Being will have an essence (Professor Fayyazi has noted this proof in his pamphlet of the Higher Assembly of Theosophy).

#### **Criticism and Review:**

Your fourth premise is wrong because firstly, you have said that every being is an extension of multiple concepts some of which are shared by all creatures and after that you argued that these concepts are essential. Then believing in a divine essence is not valid because you have confused a secondary philosophical intelligible with an essential one. Yes, existence is shared by the beings but what is specific is philosophical not essential. Then in your argument the essence in general sense (every concept save existence like attributes and so on and so forth) has been demonstrated for God not the essence in special sense.

Secondly, their common ground (existence) and the difference is the same in the sense that existence is common between the Necessary and the Contingent and it is this existence that according to Sadra's gradational system distinguishes the beings from each other because the same shared existence requires necessity in God while it requires contingency in other beings. Then the requirements of these two beings should be different in the sense that in the Necessary Being there should not be any essence while the latter is a requirement of the contingent beings. Thus, existence itself is the basis of the distinction of beings not anything other.

Third proof: necessity of polytheism or paradox

If the existence of God is void of essence, then it is either due to God's nature or something less both cases of which are invalid.

The invalidation of first case: if the absence of essence in God is due to God's nature itself in this case all other beings should also have no essence because the essence of God is identical with His existence and since this existence exists in equal form in other creatures too then the nature's attribute of incorporeality should also exist in other creatures as it is impossible something of a certain nature to lack what is required by the nature at issue. And if every being is void of essence then all creatures will be Necessary because the prerequisite of necessity is said to be being void of essence. Renowned men of thought state that every being that has an essence it is necessary by the aid of something else and is contingent and thus is not essentially necessary and we do not suppose a fellow for the Divine Essence. However, this is invalid because of the arguments of monotheism and God does not have any fellow. Then, God cannot be void of essence rather there is an essence for Him even if we cannot find it.

Invalidation of the second case: if the attribute (being void of essence) is an effect of another thing, the Divine Essence would become dependent upon another in this attribute and since the condition for necessity of God is having this attribute (being void of essence), then He will be dependent on another thing in this attribute. Thus, He will be dependent on another because what is dependent on something that is dependent on that thing is itself dependent on the former thing but the latter consequence is invalid because it is against what has been supposed before. Then, God is essentially necessary and He cannot be dependent on something else. We should conclude that the Necessary Being is not void of essence (Fakhr Razi, *Al-Mabahith al-Mashriyyah*, 1991, vol. 1: 31-32; Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 108).

#### **Critical Assessment:**

First Objection: the main objection is that here we have confused the concept with the extension because when we say that existence is a shared meaning in the sense that every existent being should have an equal share of the requirements of the concept of existence. What is shared by beings is the concept of existence but this sharing requires not all creatures to share every judgement rather the beings have their own hierarchy. Then conceptual sharing does not require extensional sharing and these two have been confused.

Second Objection: In the first case the nature of existence has been deemed to be homogeneous both in the Necessary and the Contingent and for this reason their requirements should also be the same even if this is not correct. For none of the philosophers has argued in favor of this theory. The Peripatetic philosophers who believe in the diversity of the beings and say that every creature has a distinct existence. Thus, according to these philosophers, existence is not a homogeneous property in all existents and we cannot argue that being free from essence is an attribute that can be found in every creature.

Transcendent Theosophy of Mulla Sadra and his pupils believe in the gradation of existence in the sense that existence is shared by the Necessary and Contingent beings and at the same time they differ in terms of intensity and weakness. Then an intense being might have requirements (e.g. being void of essence) that do not exist in weak being. This objection has been first raised by Fakhr Razi who had thought that if we consider existence a shared meaning we need to deem the nature of existence homogenous and this the basis on which he has propounded his own critiques to the philosophers.

Fourth Proof: Being the Origin of the Contingent Beings

Premise One: Necessary Being is the origin of the contingent beings.

Premise Two: If Necessary Being lacks an essence then his being the origin for the contingent beings cannot be deemed unless in three forms. Either this state of being the origin is a property of the very nature of God or it is a property of the nature of God along with the condition of his being void of the essence or it is a property of God's nature with the condition of being void of essence in all three cases of which God will be limited. As to the first case this property is deemed to belong to the nature and existence of God because this existence is considered as the shared quality between the Necessary Being and Contingent beings. Then even the contingent beings can also be the origin and cause. In other words, they can be both the cause of their own existence and also the cause of the existence of other creatures. Accordingly, in the first case the precedence of the thing over itself occurs and in the second case there will be a circle and both of these are impossible.

But as to the third case where the state of being the origin of other beings is deemed to be for the Divine nature and existence though with the condition of being void of essence, one should say that since the condition is outside the conditioned then this existence is shared by all and the same objection regarding the precedence of something over itself or circle occurs. As to the second case where the state of being the origin for the nature and existence with the condition of being void of essence, since the condition is part of the conditioned against the condition itself the First Origin (Transcendent Necessary Being) will be composed of an incorporeal and corporeal element and if the First Origin is compound firstly, it will be contingent because every compound object is contingent and no contingent being can be an origin because there should be a cause before it to bring it about and that cause should be simple but the latter consequences is invalid because we have supposed that Necessary Being is essentially simple and if we deem Him to be compound that is against what we have supposed.

Secondly, if First origin is composed of being void of essence and other things one of its parts will be a non-existential thing because the state of being void of essence does not have any meaning but being void of essence and deprivation. Then it is non-existential and if one of the two parts of a compound entity is non-existential in this case it will be non-existential because a compound thing will be perished with the annulment of one of the parts but the latter consequence is invalid because we have supposed that God is essentially necessary and this necessity is not consistent with annulment (Fakhr Razi, *Al-Mabahith al-Mashriqyah*, 1991, vol. 1: 34; Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 109).

#### **Critical Assessment:**

First Objection: Here the nature of existence has been deemed to be homogeneous in the sense that it means the same both in the Necessary and the Contingent and this is to say that their requirements are the same too but this premise is not correct because none of the philosophers have argued in favor this hypothesis. For example, peripatetic philosophers believe in the diversity of beings and do not accept the unity and the

followers of Transcendent Theosophy accept gradation in existence and state that the Necessary Being is more intense than the Contingent and for this reason their requirements are different.

Second Objection: It is not correct to suppose that Necessary Being is compound and every compound thing is contingent because this non-simplicity is in conflict with the essential necessity and causes the contingent to be dependent on an object in the outside but if this composition is analytical and mental is not in conflict with the essential necessity and does not lead to contingency. Of course there are some compositions in God but they are not external rather they are analytical. For example, combination of nature and attributes or combination of existence and essence or combination of the essential and accidental none of which is in conflict with the essential necessity.

Fifth Proof: Difference of the Requirements of the Divine Essence and Contingent Essence

Premise One: If the Necessary Being is void of essence the whole reality of the Necessary Being should be filled with existence.

Premise Two: If the whole reality of the Necessary Being is composed of existence then due to the homogeneity of existence all contingent beings should be identical with the Divine Essence in their reality.

Premise Three: If they are identical in their reality there should be no difference between the requirements of the Contingent and the Necessary because such difference is in fact rooted in the difference in reality then they cannot be identical in their whole reality rather God does also have essence (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 109; Fakhr Razi, 1987, vol. 1: 306).

**Critical Assessment:**

First Objection: as it was mentioned in previous proofs, existence is a shared meaning not a homogenous nature and it cannot be equal in all entities and after it we can argue that since in the contingent beings the essence is associated with existence then in God we have both existence and essence rather since the existence of the Necessary Being is intense it has its own requirements in the same way that the existence of contingent beings has its particular requirements. Thus, the existence of Necessary Being requires not to be associated with essence just contrary to the existence of contingent being that should be associated with essence.

Second Objection: This objection is based on the peripatetic philosophical outlook according to which existence in Necessary Being is not of the same sense with the existence in the contingent beings (diversity of beings) rather they share the general concept of existence as a secondary intelligible. Although this concept has a unique meaning it has its own external requirements and according to the unity of the requirements the required things are not supposed not to be different too.

Sixth Proof: Inclusion of the General Sense of Existence in Special Existence of God

Premise One: Necessary Being has a special existence and beingness means existence and actuality.

Premise Two: then when God has special existence this existence does either includes beingness that is the very nature of existence in general or not.

Premise Three: If we say that it does not include in that case we should say that we have no being because a being does not have any other meaning but its beingness and actuality. Then this is not acceptable because we have supposed that God is necessary and this is against our supposition and is invalid.

Premise Four: And if we say that special existence includes beingness in the sense that this general meaning can be found in the essence of this being because what is included by the nature that thing will be essential.

Premise Fifth: then when this beingness is the same essence of God it is either part of the nature or the whole nature itself and in first case it is genus and in the second case it is species and one of the universal essences. Thus, this beingness turns to the essence of nature. As a result, God will have an essence and its denial will be impossible (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 111).

**Critical Assessment:**

In this proof a number of things have been confused the reflection on which is the answer to the problem.



1. Expression of the difference between the concept of absolute and the universal discussed in the chapter of Isagoge (discussion of categories).
2. Difference of concept and extension; existence is not a universal in order to include the special beings too rather it exists in fluent form existing in all levels of existence. Although this general existence is also included in the special existence its meaning is not essential because existence is other than essence and it is not impossible for God to be composed of a nature and an analytic property. Then this absolute concept is against the extension of God that is identical with His essence rather this is outside His essence.

Seventh Proof: Imperceptibility of the Reality of God and Perceptibility of His Existence

Two arguments can be offered to demonstrate this.

1. The reality of Necessary Being is not known to us but existence is known then the reality of Necessary Being is something other than existence.
2. If the reality of Necessary Being is existence, this reality should be known to us because the existence is one of the self-evident notions but the consequence is invalid because the innermost nature of God is unknown to humans. Thus reality of Necessary Being is something other than existence (Fakhr Razi, 1987, vol. 1: 301; idem, Al-Mohasil, 1991: 179; idem, 1984, vol. 1: 202; Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 113).

### **Critical Assessment**

First Objection: In the opening chapter of his *Matalib al-Alyah* Fakhr Razi states that I am surprised of those who believe that Divine Essence is unknown while His attributes are known. Whether the attributes are something different than the essence. Then one should say either that both are unknown or both known. It is correct that we do not have any knowledge of Divine Essence but this is not an evidence that we do not know anything of it at all.

Second Objection: It is also invalid to say that existence is known to us because the existence of God is special and this special existence is unknown and what we know is just the general notion existence that is found both in God and other creatures (Nasir al-Din Tusi, 1985, p. 98; idem, 1996, vol. 3: 36). In fact, here the concept and extension have been confused. Then if the concept of general existence is at issue we all believe that it is something additional as compared to Divine Essence but the objective special existence of God is not known to us.

Eighth Proof: Existence as the Generic Unity

Premise One: Existence is the generic nature. In other words, it is a unique reality and for its being a shared meaning it equally exists in all individuals (Necessary and Contingent) and is predicated in unique way.

Premise Two: A nature that is generic we have no difference in its requirements rather whatever that is proven for the nature it is also the case with all extensions of the nature. Then, individual beings have the same effect not different.

Premise Three: Existence is not out of three cases. It is either required not to be predicated to essence or it is neither required to be predicated nor required not to be predicated or it is required to be predicated to essence.

As to the first case that it is required not to be predicated, given the identity of existence in all every being should be void of essence while the contingent beings are composed of essence and existence.

As to the second case where there is no requirement at all, if we want to say that all contingent beings have essence and the Necessary Being lacks essence we need to provide a proof for each one because existence as such does not have any requirement and if we are supposed to offer a proof for it we need to believe in its being an effect and in this case God will be dependent on something else in His necessity and this is against what we have supposed because we have taken necessity for granted in this context.

As to the third alternative where the existence requires to be predicated to the essence, all beings including Necessary Being will have essence (Fakhr Razi, *Al-Mabahith al-Mashriqyah*, 1991, vol. 1: 35; 1987, vol. 1:

295-296; cf. 1984, vol. 1: 201-202; Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 120). Thus, God like all other beings has an essence in the specific sense of the word.

### **Critical Assessment**

First Objection: since this proof has been offered by Peripatetic philosophers who believe in the diversity of beings we should retort it based on the same peripatetic principles.

a) Your premise one is not correct because existence is not of the same nature as essence in order to have a generic nature rather there is a gradation in existence while essence cannot be graded. Then existence is an essential accident for the beings.

b) Beings are diversified realities because some of them need to be void of essence (Necessary Being) and some of them are required to be associated with essence (Contingent Beings).

c) The unity of the meaning of existence is not in the sense of the generic nature because a unique meaning is either existence or essence. If it is essence, it is an essence with the essential predication. If it is a concept it can never be a generic nature because the concept has extensions and for this reason a concept can be applied to various individuals and since extensions of existence have different natures one of the extensions like Necessary Being requires to be void of essence while the other should be associated with essence. Then proof raiser believes that every shared meaning is homogenous while it can be both homogeneous and graded. Of course, the proof that has been offered by Khaje here is based on the conceptual gradation and is different with the existential gradation in Sadra.

Second Objection: Existence is a unique reality that is graded. In other words, existence despite its unity and simplicity is in a way that its various determinations and specifications are associated that have different levels some of which are contingent and one of the levels is necessary. The necessary level is void of essence while the contingent is associated with essence as has been suggest by Mulla Sadra in Asfar. This proof is on the gradation of existence not as regards conceptual gradation (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1: 120).

In fact, Fakhr Razi's negligence of existential gradation has led him to confusion in rational analysis and a major logical mistake, his rational confusion of concept and extension. He has used denial of the verbal unity of existence and demonstration of its unity of implication and conceptual unity to infer the unity of reality of existence while the unity of notion of existence cannot serve as a reason for demonstration of the equality of the reality of existence and requires rather the denial of the gradation of its extension.

### **Conclusion**

Among the proofs that have been resorted to by Professor Fayyazi only two proofs are his exclusive proofs and the rest have been proposed by previous philosophers including Fakhr Razi. Firstly, he offers a different definition of essence in special sense and based on it seeks to provide a new interpretation of the issues of Primacy of Existence (of course he attributes this sense of essence to Mulla Sadra). He does not define essence as an existential limit and believes in an essence for God while as we suggested earlier Mulla Sadra and his pupils consider essence as the limit of existence.

Secondly, he does not accept the idea of Mulla Sadra regarding gradation of existence according to which the unity and difference both are rooted in existence and argues that unity has its origin in existence while the difference is the result of individuals and extensions. Thus, he demonstrates that the Necessary Being and Contingent Beings are different. They have different essence but we said that difference can be existential and this gradation is vertical and existence has levels that are same.

Generally speaking, the proofs of Professor Fayyazi are not complete and cannot prove any essence for God because God is a simple and pure being whose essence is his existence and if we conceive an essence for Him we would align Him with the Contingent. As a result, every being who has an essence is an effect and needy both of which are not consistent with God's nature.

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