

## The Principle of *Al-Wahid*: The Foundation of the Unity of Existence in Islamic Philosophy

Kholid Al Walid, Rosmaria Sjafariah Widjajanti

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Email: kholid.alwalid@uinjkt.ac.id



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**Abstract:** *The Principle of Al-Wahid serves as a foundational concept in Islamic philosophy, asserting the oneness of reality and that all existence originates from a single, unified source. Diversity does not stem from multiple origins but rather from the varying degrees of distance that levels of existence have from the Absolute Source of Being. This absoluteness negates the possibility of plurality within the Primary Cause itself. The principle has been a subject of discourse since the early history of Islamic philosophy, although some philosophers trace its roots back to Greek philosophy. This study employs a library research methodology with a Burhani (rational-analytical) approach. The findings of this research demonstrate that existence is fundamentally one; plurality arises not from multiple causes, but from the weakness of the effects, which leads to various limitations and, consequently, plurality. The study confirms that the principle of Al-Wahid is rational, supported by strong arguments, and serves as evidence for the most fundamental Islamic principle, al-Tawhid.*

**Keywords:** *Al-Wahid, Oneness, al-Wujūd (Existence), al-Tawhid (Monotheism).*

**Abstrak:** *Kaidah Al-Wahid merupakan kaidah yang menjadi dasar dalam Filsafat Islam untuk menunjukkan ketunggalan realitas dan realitas berasal dari sumber yang Tunggal. Keberagaman terjadi bukan karena sumber asalnya beragam namun karena jauhnya level eksistensi yang beragam tersebut dari sumber keberadaan yang mutlak Tunggal. Kemutlakan ini menghilangkan kemungkinan adanya pluralitas pada diri sebab Utama. Prinsip telah di menjadi diskursus sejak awal Sejarah Filsafat Islam sekalipun Sebagian filosof menunjukkan bukti bahwa prinsip ini lebih jauh berasal dari filosof Yunani. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi Library Research dengan pendekatan Burhani. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bukti bahwa eksistensi adalah Tunggal, pluralitas terjadi bukan karena sebab yang plural namun karena lemahnya akibat sehingga menghasilkan ragam keterbatasan yang menyebabkan terjadinya pluralitas. Penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa kaidah al-Wahid adalah kaidah rasional dan memiliki*

*argumentasi yang kokoh serta menjadi bukti prinsip paling mendasar dalam Islam yaitu al-Tawhid.*

**Kata Kunci;** *Al-Wahid, Ketunggalan, al-Wujud, al-Tawhid).*

## **Introduction**

One of the fundamental problems in both modern physics and philosophy is the question of how the universe came into existence. Many modern physicists, influenced by the paradigms of positivism and materialism, tend to deny the existence of an absolute cause, which is the cause of the existence of the universe. Within this paradigm, the emergence of the universe is frequently regarded as a product of mere chance. This perspective stands in sharp contrast to that of Islamic philosophers, who have offered rigorous arguments affirming the existence of a Necessary Being as the source of all existence. Furthermore, Muslim thinkers have developed detailed philosophical explanations of how the Plurality of the universe originates from a single, unified Essence.

The development of Islamic philosophy traces its origin to the encounter between Islam and Greek philosophical thought, which began approximately a century after the rise of Islam. This encounter gave rise to a new intellectual tradition, namely Islamic philosophy, a rational and systematic inquiry into the nature of God, humanity, and the universe. Its emergence marked a significant turning point in the scientific and intellectual advancement of the Muslim world, primarily due to the inherently rational nature of philosophy. This rational orientation often generated a distinct discourse that, at times, stood in tension or even conflict with theological and mystical thought. This tension culminated in a major polemical dispute between two prominent figures: Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd. Al-Ghazali, a leading theologian and Sufi, launched a scathing critique of Muslim philosophers in his seminal work, *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), accusing them of straying far from Islamic doctrine. His criticism focused on three philosophical claims that he regarded as heretical: 1. The belief in the eternity of the world. 2. The denial of God's knowledge of particulars, primarily human actions. 3. The rejection of bodily resurrection in the afterlife. In addition, Al-Ghazali identified seventeen other philosophical doctrines he regarded as problematic, further asserting that

these positions led to disbelief.<sup>1</sup> In response, Ibn Rushd composed a detailed rebuttal titled (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), in which he defended the philosophers and systematically refuted Al-Ghazali's arguments.

The principle of al-Wahid has long been a subject of intense debate between philosophers and theologians. Despite its origins in Greek philosophy, this principle occupies a central position within the structure of Islamic philosophy and, intriguingly, serves to reinforce the fundamental Islamic doctrine of *al-Tawhid*, which lies at the very heart of the Islamic teachings. The principle is commonly stated as *الواحد لا يصدر عنه إلا الواحد* (from the one, only one proceeds). Its philosophical meaning is rooted in the metaphysical conception of *Wājib al-Wujūd*, who is understood to be an absolute, simple, and devoid of any composition—pure existence itself. Within this framework, *wājib al-Wujūd* is completely singular and indivisible. Such absolute oneness, by its very nature, cannot give rise to Plurality directly, since Plurality presupposes a plurality of causes or aspects. Therefore, it is argued that it is logically impossible for genuine Plurality to emanate directly from that which is utterly one.

Muslim philosophers have employed the principle of *al-Wahid* as a foundational argument for the oneness of the absolute cause within the broader framework of the unity of existence. This principle has served as a basis in the philosophical systems developed by Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, and Mulla Sadra. Although these philosophers differ in their specific theories regarding the emergence of Plurality from the one, they all affirm the validity of the principle. Al-Farabi articulated the well-known theory of emanation through the Ten Intellects (*al-Aql al-Asyrah*), positing a hierarchical ontological structure. Ibn Sina developed a nuanced model that distinguishes between vertical unity and horizontal Plurality, often referred to as the theory of *Tul al-Ardhiyah*. Mulla Sadra, in turn, advanced the theory of *Tasykik al-Wujūd* (the gradation of existence), which conceptualizes existence as a single reality manifesting in varying degrees of intensity. However, this principle was firmly rejected by many Muslim theologians, most notably Fahrūrozi and Al-Ghazali. From a theological perspective, the principle was seen as conflicting with the doctrine of Divine Omnipotence. According to

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<sup>1</sup> Abdurrahman Badawi, *Al-Mausu'at al-Falsafat*, (Beirut: Al-Mu'asasat al-Arabiyyat Li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1984). J.II, p. 84.

theologians, God possesses absolute power and is fully capable of creating all things, including Plurality and diversity, directly and without any intermediary. In fact, Al-Ghazali explicitly addresses this matter in his *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, where he states:

"The philosophers themselves affirm that physical substances are composed of form and matter, and that form does not generate matter, nor does matter generate form; instead, both are effects of another cause. Similarly, in the case of human beings, composed of body and soul, both components are effects of a cause external to themselves. The same applies to the celestial spheres, which consist of a physical body imbued with a soul. However, neither the soul creates the body, nor the body creates the soul. Instead, both are effects of another cause. Hence, a single cause may produce multiple effects. Therefore, the claim that a singular cause can only produce a singular effect is invalid. "<sup>2</sup>

According to the philosophers, the objections raised by the theologians are irrational and entirely lacking in an argumentative basis. Moreover, accepting such objections would imply a Plurality within Wājib al-Wujūd, which directly contradicts the principle of Tawhīd, which is the core of Islamic creed (Aqīdah). Some philosophers even regard this principle as *badīhī* (self-evident), asserting that existence, inasmuch as it is existence, admits of nothing beyond itself. As Ibn Sina (Avicenna) states:

وكان هذا الحكم قريب من الواضح و لذلك رسم الفصل «بالتنبیه» و إنما كثرت مدافعة الناس إياه لأغفالهم عن معنى الوحدة الحقيقية.

"Thus, this principle approaches the clarity of self-evidence, which is why the chapter is titled with the term "Affirmation." For the plurality acknowledged by human beings does not detract from the meaning of truth and essential oneness."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, there cannot be any plurality within pure, essential existence. Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in *Nihāyat al-Hikmah*, states:

"واجب الوجود واجب من جميع جهاته"<sup>4</sup>

"Necessary existence is necessary in the entirety of its essence."

In the *Madrasah al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyyah*, the third major school within Islamic philosophy, the discussion of the necessary existence as pure existence, entirely free of composition, serves as a foundation for the proof of existence. Consequently, the principle of Aṣālat al-Wujūd (the Fundamentality of Existence) becomes the central pillar upon which the entire structure of the philosophy of *Hikmah al-Muta'aliyyah* rests.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> Imam al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Dar al-Ma'arif, Beirut 1972 p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Sina, *Al-Isyarat wa al-Tanbihat*, Dar al-Ma'arif, Mesir 1960, V.3 p. 123 .

<sup>4</sup> Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Nihāyat al-Hikmah*, p.70

<sup>5</sup> Sadruddin al-Shirazi, *Al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah* V. 7 p. 205.

principle of al-Wahid in the philosophy of *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah* is a logical necessity, and it is impossible to reject this principle because it would entail affirming Plurality within the necessary existence, which would amount to the contradiction—an impossibility according to logic.<sup>6</sup>

This article seeks to reaffirm that the structure of the universe is not the product of mere chance, contrary to the view held by physicists such as Stephen Hawking, who stated: "Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason that things exist, the universe exists, and why we exist."<sup>7</sup> However, this article contends that there exists a chain of causality that ultimately originates from an Absolute and Singular Cause.

The study of the principle of *al-Wahid* is generally situated within the discourse of classical Islamic philosophy, where it serves to demonstrate that the Plurality of the universe ultimately originates from a single, absolute essence. This discussion emphasizes that the law of causality inseparably binds all parts of the universe. This foundational principle stands in contrast to, and serves as a refutation of, the views held by many modern physicists and scientists who argue that the universe came into existence by mere chance.

## Method

This study is based on a library research approach, examining the works of Muslim philosophers who have addressed the Principle of al-Wāḥid, whether through texts explicitly dedicated to this principle or through broader philosophical writings in which they discuss the origination of the universe from the Absolutely Singular Necessary Existence (*Wājib al-Wujūd*), in all its aspects (*min jāmi' jihātihi*).

The analytical approach used in this study is hermeneutic-phenomenology, a synthesis of two distinct but complementary methods. Hermeneutics, as outlined by Akhyar Yusuf Lubis, encompasses six dimensions: (1) biblical exegetical theory, (2) general philological methods, (3) the science of linguistic understanding, (4) the methodological foundation of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences), (5) existential phenomenology, and (6) a system of interpretation aimed at uncovering meaning behind

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<sup>6</sup> Sadruddin al-Shirazi, *Al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah* V. 7 p. 205.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, Bantam Books, USA. 2010 p.68.

symbols and myths.<sup>8</sup>Phenomenology, on the other hand, is the study of phenomena, concerned with how things appear or present themselves to consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

Although these two methods may appear distinct, Martin Heidegger argues that they can be integrated: "As long as *Dasein* exists—and the nature of its existence is to uncover, to bring forth 'being' from its hiddenness (*presencing*)—then every phenomenon is essentially a text, whose meaning is concealed and always open to interpretation and revelation."<sup>10</sup>

In this study, the author adopts the Hermeneutic-Phenomenological analytical technique as developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. According to Akhyar Yusuf Lubis, Merleau-Ponty's Hermeneutic-Phenomenology prioritizes "the description of phenomena"; "what is known about the world (including scientific knowledge) is grounded in understanding that emerges from a particular perspective or unique experience (*horizon*) of the world."<sup>11</sup>

## **Results and Discussions**

### **The Problem of Plurality**

Philosophy seeks to uncover the most fundamental issue—namely, the nature of existence. The arguments put forth by major philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, as well as by Muslim philosophers, point to the conclusion that existence is singular and unified. It is commonly argued that beyond existence lies only nothingness (*al-'Adam*), which is merely a conceptual notion used to comprehend existence, as its true essence is nothingness. As the maxim states *العدم لا يخبر عنه* (There is nothing to be said about nothingness). Therefore, what truly exists is only *al-Wujūd*, and in its essential reality, *al-Wujūd* admits of nothing other than itself.

Since nothingness contains nothing, it entails no duality. Nothingness, by its very nature, is absolute, and its binary opposite—*al-Wujūd*—must also be absolute, devoid of

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<sup>8</sup>Akhyar Yusuf Lubis, *Filsafat Ilmu dan Metodologi Posmodernis* (Bogor : Penerbit Akademi, 2004) p. 103 . Next cited as ; Akhyar, *Filsafat Ilmu*.

<sup>9</sup>Akhyar, *Filsafat Ilmu*, p. 197

<sup>10</sup>Martin Heidegger cited from Donny Gahral Adian, *Pilar-pilar Filsafat Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Jalasutra, 2002) p. 152.

<sup>11</sup>Akhyar, *Filsafat Ilmu*, p. 218.

any duality and plurality. If what truly exists in an absolute sense is only *al-Wujūd*, then there is no room for plurality.

The *Mutakallimūn* (Islamic theologians) maintain that, by virtue of His absolute omnipotence, Allah SWT has the power to do whatever He wills, even if such acts appear illogical from a human perspective.<sup>12</sup> Divine omnipotence, in this view, is not limited by anything—not even by human reason. This position stands in stark contrast to that of the philosophers. For them, truth can only be established through *burhān*—demonstrative and logical argumentation, not merely by invoking the doctrine of divine omnipotence to justify actions that may contradict the very laws God Himself has instituted. Such claims, they argue, are complex for a reason to accept. From the philosophical perspective, the entire order of the universe operates under a system governed by laws designed by Allah SWT, and these laws are coherent with all elements and dimensions of existence, including rational and logical principles. Without such order, the universe would be marked by chaos and inconsistency. Nevertheless, empirical reality reveals the opposite: a universe characterized by order, harmony, and consistency, all pointing to a divine wisdom that acts in accordance with intelligible laws.

Concepts or meanings that are produced are, in essence, the result of the human faculty of reasoning, which operates logically and in accordance with the guidance and laws ordained by God. Therefore, Muslim philosophers consistently affirm and uphold the principle of Divine Oneness, often referred to as the *Qā'idah al-Wāḥid*. This principle is also commonly known by other terms such as *al-Aṣl al-Aṣīl* (The Fundamental Source), *Asās al-Tawḥīd* (The Principle of Monotheism), *Qā'idah al-Wāḥid* (The Rule of the One), and *al-Fayḍ al-Ilāhī* (Divine Emanation).

### **The Explanation of The Principle**

The principle of *Al-Wahid*, expressed as, الواحد لا يصدر عنه الا الواحد (The one can only emanate from the one), refers to the true Oneness of its essence, in which there is no plurality. Its Oneness is absolute in its essence of Oneness. Therefore, the presence of an effect derived from this absolute Oneness must likewise be singular, and duality or plurality cannot arise from it, because the effect must necessarily derive its characteristics

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<sup>12</sup> Fakhr Al-Razi, *Mabahits al-Masyriqiyyah* V.2 p. 124.

from the cause. If the effect were plural, then the cause would also have to be plural, which contradicts the very nature of absolute Oneness. Thus, it is inconceivable for plurality to arise from an absolutely singular cause.

Only the true oneness can produce oneness, for oneness, by its very nature as a unified whole, can only emanate from the one alone. Were plurality to give rise to singularity, it would result in the union of two contradictory principles, a logically impossible outcome.

فقالوا كما سلف ذكره في السفر الأول في ضوابط العلة و المعلول أنه لو صدر عن الواحد من حيث هو واحد ا و ب مثلاً و ا ليس ب فقد صدر عنه من الجهة الواحدة ب و ما ليس ب و ذلك يتضمن اجتماع التقيضين<sup>13</sup>

"As previously articulated in the first volume of *al-Asfār*, particularly in the discussion on the relationship between cause and effect—one that is truly unified in its essence—then, for instance, the simultaneous emergence of both *alif* and *bā'* would be impossible. From such a unified source, it is not conceivable that both *bā'* and non-*bā'* could emanate from the same ontological dimension, for this would entail the coexistence of two mutually contradictory realities—a rationally untenable outcome."

In other words, from a cause—as a cause—only that which is contained within it can be produced. When the cause possesses only absoluteness without any composition, it becomes impossible for it to generate two distinct effects. God, as an utterly simple (non-composite) essence (*basīṭ*), is constituted by nothing other than His very self. Such a simple essence, being free from any compositional elements, cannot bring forth another being that is, at the same ontological level, plural in nature. Plurality can only arise when each entity possesses distinguishing features that differentiate it from others, something which necessarily implies the presence of plurality in the prior existence. However, the prior existence in this case is absolutely one.

Therefore, the emergence of the first existent from the One cannot involve more than a single being. From this first emanated being, a second is subsequently produced, and so on in succession. The further each level is from the source of existence, the greater the polarization that occurs, ultimately resulting in plurality, both in terms of quality and quantity. This principle forms the foundation of the theory of emanation in explaining the emergence of plurality, as well as of Mulla Sadra's doctrine of the gradation of existence

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<sup>13</sup> Sadruddin al-Shirazi, *Al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah* V. 7. p. 205.

(*tashkīk al-wujūd*). According to Hamid Reza Khademi, the principle of *al-Wāḥid* can be traced back to Anaximander:

“ارسطو در جایی دیگر تأکید می‌کند آناکسیماندروس قائل است اعداد در واحد هستند و با جدا شدن از آن به وجود می‌آیند (۲۸-۲۹ الف ۱۸۷، فیزیک). در توضیح اعداد، ارسطو می‌گوید «کسانی هستند که می‌گویند جسم نامتناهی، این، چیز است، نه هوا یا آب؛ بدان دلیل چنین می‌گویند تا عناصر دیگر به واسطه عنصر نامتناهی نابود نشوند؛ زیرا عناصر با یکدیگر متضاداند؛ چنان‌که هوا سرد و آب، مرطوب و آتش، گرم است و اگر یکی از اینها نامتناهی بود، عناصر دیگر تا کنون از میان رفته بودند» (۵-۱ الف ۲۰۵، فیزیک). ارسطو توضیح می‌دهد چرا نباید یکی از عناصر را نامتناهی انتخاب کرد؛ زیرا دیگر عناصر از بین می‌روند. توضیح ارسطو تعلیل خوبی برای اتخاذ رأی آناکسیماندروس است که چرا نتوانست یکی از عناصر را اصل نخستین مطرح کند؛ بنابراین آناکسیماندروس درباره اصل نخستین قائل بود که نخست، واحد است و دوم، چیزهای دیگر از او به وجود می‌آیند و درضمن، او این اصل را در باب فاعل‌های طبیعی ذکر کرده است؛ به این معنا که از یک فاعل طبیعی چیزهایی پدید می‌آیند. در فلسفه‌های بعد از آناکسیماندروس و فیلسوفان دیگر نیز بحث درباره اصل نخستین را ادامه دادند؛ برای مثال، امپدوکلس دوباره به عناصر اربعه بازگشت و آنها را اصل نخستین دانست؛ اما دموکریتوس اتم را معرفی کرد و آن را بی‌نهایت دانست.<sup>14</sup>

"In another context, Aristotle emphasizes that Anaximander held the view that opposites are originally contained within a unified principle, from which they emerge by a process of separation (*Physics* 28–29a 187). In discussing the nature of contraries, Aristotle explains: "Some assert that the infinite is not any specific thing, not air or water. They say this to prevent the destruction of the other elements by the one designated as infinite, since the elements are in mutual opposition. Air is cold, water is moist, and fire is hot. Were any one of these to be infinite, the others would necessarily have been annihilated by now" (*Physics* I.5, A205). Aristotle thus explains why one cannot designate any particular element as the infinite: it would imply the destruction of the rest. This reasoning, he suggests, supports Anaximander's position, namely, that no single known element can serve as the primary principle. Therefore, Anaximander held that the first principle is both singular and distinct from all known elements, and that all other things originate from it. Moreover, he introduces this principle within the framework of a natural agent, that is, all things arise from a natural cause. In subsequent philosophical developments, Anaximander's notion of a first principle continued to influence discussions. For example, Empedocles returned to the idea of four root elements and regarded them as the fundamental principles, while Democritus introduced the concept of the atom and considered it to be infinite in number and indivisible."

In the tradition of Islamic philosophy, al-Fārābī is regarded as the first philosopher to make this principle the foundational basis of his philosophical system. Although indications of it can already be found in the works of al-Kindī, it is al-Fārābī who first

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<sup>14</sup> Hamid Reza Khademi, Qaidah Al-wahid, Majalehye Ilmi Pezuhesi, Journal Al-Ilahiyat Tatbiqi. p. 63.

articulated and systematically explained this principle. In his treatise *Zeno, the Great Greek*, he writes: Zeno said:

و سمعت معلّمي أرسطاطاليس أنّه قال اذا صدر عن واحد حقيقي إثنان لا يخلو إمّا أن يكونا مختلفين في الحقائق، أو متفقين في جميع الأشياء. فإن كانا متفقين فإن قال قائل كيف يمكن أن يكون الأشياء من الواحد المبسوط الذي ليس فيه ثنوية و لا كثرة بجهة من الجهات؟ قلنا لأنّه واحد محض مبسوط ليس فيه شيء من الأشياء فلمّا كان واحدا محضا إنبجست منه الأشياء كلّها و ذلك إنّّه لمّا لم يكن هويّة إنبجست منه الهويّة.<sup>15</sup> . . .

"I heard from my teacher, Aristotle, that if two things originate from a true unity, they cannot do so except in one of two conditions: either they differ in their realities, or they are identical in every respect. If they are identical in every respect, then they are no longer two distinct things; and if they differ, then the cause cannot be said to have produced a single unified effect." (Farabi, 2008: 112).

From this statement, the Principle of al-Wāḥid can be understood with notable clarity. Zeno is reported to have claimed that he heard it from his teacher, Aristotle. According to al-Farabi, the treatise is attributed to Zeno, a distinguished Greek thinker and a student of Aristotle. However, the historical record of philosophy presents a different picture. It identifies two prominent figures named Zeno: one who lived prior to Aristotle, and another who lived afterward. Neither, according to the available evidence, was a student of Aristotle, and both are separated from him by a considerable chronological gap (Copplestone, 2009: 441 and 68). One of them, Zeno of Elea, was a disciple of Parmenides and is referenced by Plato in his dialogue *Parmenides* (Plato, 1380: 127). He was a proponent of his teacher's ideas in denying the reality of motion, and another Zeno—Zeno of Citium—was the founder of the Stoic school, born around 336 BCE. Thus, neither of them could plausibly have been a student of Aristotle. Meanwhile, Ibn Rushd attributes this principle not to Aristotle, but rather to Plato and Themistius:

هذا هو مذهب المحدثين من فلاسفة الإسلام كأبي نصر و غيره و قد يظن أنّه مذهب ثامسطيوس<sup>16</sup> . . من القدماء و أفلاطون

"This view belongs to a new school among the later Islamic philosophers, such as Abū Naṣr (al-Farabi) and others, who believed that it originated with Themistius, the ancient philosopher, and also with Plato." (Ibn Rushd, 1994: 163).

<sup>15</sup> Plotinus, *Utsulujiya*, Bidor, Qom Iran p. 293

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Rushd, *Tafsir Ma Ba'da Thabi'ah*, V. 3 p. 85

Therefore, in articulating the principle of unity, al-Farabi in fact drew upon the *Uthulūjiyā*—a text containing the thought of Plotinus. Consequently, the familiarity of Muslim philosophers with this principle was mediated mainly through Plotinian teachings. After al-Farabi, the first thinker to seriously examine this principle and provide rational demonstrations for it was Ibn Sina (Avicenna). Shaykh al-Isḥrāq (Suhrawardi) also engaged with this principle; however, in keeping with his distinctive approach, he at times adopted the terminology of the Peripatetics (*mashshā'īyyūn*) when referring to the First Source, while at other times he referred to it as a singular rational essence or as the "nearest light."<sup>17</sup> Since Ibn Sina was the first Muslim philosopher to formulate a proof for the One rigorously, his argument will be presented and subsequently evaluated.

Mir Damād, a philosopher of the Illuminationist (*Isḥrāqī*) school and the teacher of Mulla Ṣadrā, stated:

"من أمهات الأصول العقلية أن الواحد بما هو واحد لا يصدر عنه من تلك الحثيثة إلا واحدا فلعل هذا الأصل بما تلوناه عليك من فطرايات العقل الصريح.

"The foundation of this principle of thought is that the One—precisely insofar as it is one in its specification—can produce nothing but one. This principle, as we have described it to you, proceeds from the purity of illuminated intellect" Qabsat (Qom: Chop Bidor, 1373 p.232).

Mulla Sadra himself established this principle as the basis of his philosophy:

"هذه الأصول الممهدة التي قد مر ذكرهما مما يستقل به العقل النظري الذي ليس لعينه غشاوة التقليد ولا لمرآته رين العصبية وظلمة العناد لا ثبات أن الواحد الحق الصرف وكذا الواحد بما هو واحد لا يصدر عنه من تلك الحثيثة إلا واحد وان ليس في طباع الكثرة-بما هي كثرة ان تصدر عن الواحد ان يصدر عنها مبدعان مقابل واحد فواحدا إلى أن ينكسر الجهات والحثيئات وينفتح باب الخيرات".<sup>18</sup>

"This principle that has been previously mentioned is that upon which the theoretical intellect relies—an intellect whose vision is not clouded by the veil of imitation (*taqlīd*), nor is its mirror stained by fanaticism or the darkness of obstinacy, in order to affirm that the One, in its purest and absolute sense, as well as the One insofar as it is One, produces nothing but one. It is not in the nature of multiplicity, considered as plurality, to emanate from the One, two opposing creators that contradict its oneness. Rather, the One remains one until its aspects and conditions multiply, at which point the gate to goodness is opened." (Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfār*, V. 7, p. 204.)

<sup>17</sup> Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Isyraq*, V. 2: 132.

<sup>18</sup> Mulla Sadra,

The primary distinction from earlier philosophers is that Mulla Ṣadra grounds his philosophy in the principle of the unity of existence. In contrast, previous philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina regarded the intellects that emanate from the Necessary Existent (*Wājib al-Wujūd*) as independent possible existents (*wujūd mumkin*). Maḥdī Astiyānī devoted an entire work to explicating this principle, titled *Asās al-Tawḥīd* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1377), and Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī authored the treatise *Risālah al-Tawḥīd*.

### **Arguments for the Principle of al-Wahid**

Various arguments have been put forward to uphold the principle of al-Wahid, among which are the following:

Abu Yusuf Ishaq Al-Kindi presented the argument as follows:

(المحدث واحد) و المحدث لا يخلو أن يكون واحدا أو كثيرا، فإن كان كثيرا فهم مركبون، لأنّ لهم اشتراكا في حال واحدة لجميعهم أي لأنّهم أجمعين فاعلون و الشئ الذي يعمّه شئ واحد إنّما يتكثر أن ينفصل بعضه من بعض بحال ما فإن كانوا كثيرا ففيهم فصول كثيرة فهم مركبون ممّا عمّمهم و من خواصّهم. . . و المركّبون لهم مركّب، لأنّ مركّبا و مركّبا من باب المضاف. فيجب إذن أن يكون للفاعل فاعل فإن كان الواحد، فهو الفاعل الأوّل، و إن كان كثيرا و فاعل الكثير كثير دائما و هذا يخرج بلا نهاية و قد إتّضح بطلان ذلك؛ فليس للفاعل فاعل فإنّ ليس كثيرا بل واحد غير متكثر، سبحانه و تعالى عن صفات الملحدين<sup>19</sup>.

"The created is one, and it inherently involves two possibilities: either singular or plural. If it is plural, then it must be composite, since composition unites parts into a whole, where the whole serves as the subject. What we refer to as singular here is constituted by plural elements specified and differentiated among its parts. If it is plural, then it must also entail plural differentiations composed of general and particular parts. Composition is a structured arrangement arising from the addition of parts; it is necessary that the subject, even if singular and the first subject, is plural in its composition. A plural subject will always remain plural, and this process would continue infinitely, which clearly reveals the fallacy of this view. No subject can be composed of other subjects to become plural; this is impossible except if the subject is truly singular. Glory be to Allah, free from the attributes ascribed by the atheists."

Abu Ali Ibn Sina advanced several arguments to demonstrate the principle of unity, as follows:

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<sup>19</sup> Abu Ishaq al-Kindi, *Risalah fi wahdaniyat Allah wa tanahiya jarm al-'Alam* (Silsilah falasifa al-'Arab) p. 38.

In his work *Al-Isyarat wa al-Tanbihat*, in the gift chapter titled "*Al-Tanbih* (The Affirmation)", he presents arguments for this principle:

(تنبيه) مفهوم إنّ علة ما بحيث يجب عنها (الف) غير مفهوم إنّ علة ما بحيث يجب عنها (ب) و اذ كان الواحد يجب عنها شيان فمن حيثين مختلفي المفهوم مختلفي الحقيقة فإما أن يكونا من مقوماته، أو من لوازمه، أو بالتفريق. فإن فرضنا من لوازمه عدا بطلب جذعا فتنتهي هي إلى حيثين من مقومات العلة مختلفين إما للماهية و إما لأنه موجود و إما بالتفريق. فكل ما يلزم عنه اثنان معا ليس أحدهما بتوسط الآخر فهو منقسم الحقيقة<sup>20</sup>

If two concepts, A and B, become necessary due to a single cause, then it follows that these two concepts must be distinct from one another. The two attributes, A and B, derived from the cause, may originate either from the elements of the cause itself or from its complements, or one from the complements and the other from the elements of the cause. All such assumptions inevitably lead to a composite nature within the essence of the cause.

Qutb al-Din Shirazi, the commentator of *Hikmah al-Ishrāq*, similarly holds that this principle is very clear and requires only careful consideration (Qutb al-Din Shirazi, 2004: 305). Ibnu Sina's choice of this title indicates that the rule is clear or nearly so. In the context of establishing proof, he states:

Ibnu Sina's argument in *Al-Ilahiyat al-Syifa*:

"The first originates from the One, True God, who cannot be multiple. Now, this plurality is understood either numerically or as a division of matter and form. Since the existence and necessity of the One True God derives from His essence alone—not from anything else—and since the direction and determination inherent in His essence serve as the ultimate origin of the emergence of creatures, they cannot simultaneously be the source of any other phenomena. Therefore, if two things proceed from the essence of the Necessary Being, then necessarily different aspects will appear within the essence of the Almighty. Ibn Sina further explains that although these aspects are not absolutely essential to the essence of existence itself, they are necessary for its nature; nevertheless, the issue remains. For the discussion of the necessity of these aspects ultimately leads back to the problem of the essence of necessity itself. Thus, in its own essence, the essence must be composite and divisible. "<sup>21</sup>

Bahmaniyar, the foremost student of Ibn Sina, presents in how work *al-Tahsil* the following argument:

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<sup>20</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Isyarat al-Tanbihat*, V. 3 p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> Bahmaniyar, *al-Tahsil* p. 300.

و اعلم أنّ الشّيء البسيط الذي لا تركيب فيه أصلاً لا يكون علّة لشيئين معا معيّته بالطّبع، فإنّه لا يصدر عنه شيء إلا بعد أن يجب صدوره عنه فإنّ صدور (الف) عن (ج) من حيث يجب صدور (ب) عنه لم يكن (ج) واجبا صدوره عنه. فإنّه إن صدر (ج) من حيث يجب صدور (ب) عنه كان من حيث يجب صدور (ب) عنه يصدر عنه ما ليس (ب) فلا يكون اذن صدور (ب) عنه واجبا. فإنّ كلّ بسيط<sup>22</sup>

"Know that something simple and entirely without composition cannot possibly be the cause of two simultaneous effects, due to its very nature. Nothing can proceed from it except what necessarily must proceed. So, if the emergence of (A) from (J) is necessary, but (J) also gives rise to (B), then the emergence of (J) is no longer necessary. Conversely, if the emergence of (J) is necessary, and what emerges is (B), but something other than (B) also emerges, then the emergence of (B) is not necessary. Thus, it is proven that the essence of that which is simple must remain truly simple."

By negating the possibility of multiple necessary aspects within the essence and affirming the necessity of its non-composite nature, Ibn Sina concludes that the first existent emanating from the First Cause can be no more than one. It is worth noting that other Muslim philosophers considered Ibn Sina's argument highly significant and often reiterated it. For example, Shaykh al-Isḥrāq writes:

"One of the aspects (i.e., that the One) necessitates only one thing; for if it were to necessitate two things, then one condition would differ from the other. Hence, one condition would not be identical to the other. Therefore, the directions of necessity within His essence would be two distinct directions, each corresponding to a different condition—implying that His essence is composite. Yet it is assumed that He is one in all aspects."<sup>23</sup>

Mulla Sadra writes in *al-Asfār*: "If something were to proceed from the One in the sense that it is one—such as A and B—and it is not B, then it would have to proceed from Him from the same aspect as B, while not being B. This would entail the simultaneous presence of two contradictory states."<sup>24</sup>

Al-Fanari in *Syarh Misbah al-Uns* describes it as follows:

فثبت أنّ كلّما تكثر المعلول تكثر العلّة، و كلّما إتحد العلّة إتحد المعلول بعكس النقيض<sup>25</sup>

"it thus becomes clear that if the effect is multiple, then the cause must also be multiple and whenever the cause is singular, the effect must likewise be singular—and vice versa."

<sup>22</sup> Bahmaniyar, *al-Tahsil* p. 302.

<sup>23</sup> Suhrawardi, *al-Hikmah al-Isyraq*, p. 333.

<sup>24</sup> Mulla Sadra v. 7 p. 205.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Fanari, *Misbah al-Uns* p. 30.

In *Nihayat al-Hikmah*, Allamah Muhammad Husein Thabataba'i formulates three main arguments in support of this principle:

أولاً: أن الكثير لا يصدر عنه الواحد. فلو صدر واحد عن الكثير، فإما أن يكون الواحد واحدا نوعيا ذا أفراد كثيرة يستند كل فرد منها إلى علة خاصة، كالحرارة الصادرة عن النار والنور والحركة وغيرها، أو تكون وحدته عددية ضعيفة كالوحدة النوعية، فيستند وجوده إلى كثير كالهولي الواحد بالعدد المستند وجودها إلى مفارق يقيم وجودها بالصور المتواردة عليها واحدة بعد واحدة على ما قالتها الحكماء، وقد تقدم الكلام فيه. وإما أن تكون للكثير جهة وحدة يستند إليها المعلول، وإما أن يكون الكثير مركبا ذا أجزاء يفعل الواحد بواحد منها فينسب إلى نفس المركب. وثانياً: أن المعلول الواحد لا يفعل فيه علل كثيرة، سواء كان على سبيل الاجتماع في عرض واحد، لأنه يؤدي إلى التناقض في ذات الواحد المؤدى إلى الكثرة، أو كان على سبيل التوارد بقيام علة عليه بعد علة، للزوم ما تقدم من المحذور. وثالثاً: أنه لو صدر عن الواحد كثير وجب أن تكون فيه جهة كثرة وتركيب يستند إليها الكثير غير جهة الوحدة المفروضة، كالإنسان الواحد الذي يفعل أفعالا كثيرة من مقولات كثيرة متباينة بتمام الذات<sup>26</sup>.

**First:** That which is multiple cannot proceed from a truly singular cause. For if multiplicity were to arise from the One, several implications would follow. Either the singular is one in terms of genus but possesses multiple individuals, with each individual depending on its own specific cause—such as heat, light, and motion all deriving from fire—or the singular is numerically one, but only in a weak or generic sense, the kind of unity whose existence depends on a plurality of factors, as in the case of matter that is numerically one but whose actualization depends on an immaterial substance that successively imparts different forms, as some philosophers have claimed (and as has already been discussed). Alternatively, the multiplicity in question may contain within it an aspect of unity that serves as the true basis for the existence of its effects. Or, finally, the multiple may in fact be a composite entity, consisting of distinct parts, such that the singular cause influences only one of those parts, while the resulting effect is attributed to the whole composite.

**Second:** A singular effect cannot be caused by multiple causes, whether simultaneously at a single moment in time—since this would lead to a contradiction in the unity of the entity that produces multiple effects—or sequentially, as this would entail the occurrence of what has already been prohibited, namely, such a contradiction.

**Third:** If something plural originates from the singular, then there must be within that singular an aspect of "plurality" and "composition" that serves as the basis for the emergence of those multiple entities. This aspect, however, is evidently distinct from the previously assumed aspect of unity. It is analogous to a single human being who performs various kinds of actions—speech, deeds, thoughts—each of which is essentially different and singular in its own right.

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<sup>26</sup> Allamah Muhammad Husein Thabataba'i, "*Nihayat al-Hikmah*", p.214

For Thabataba'i, the argument supporting the principle of al-Wahid is exceedingly difficult to refute, as it clearly demonstrates the impossibility of denying the existential dependence between effect and cause.

Mulla Sadra in *Al-Asfār* also presents three primary arguments to demonstrate the principle of al-Wahid:

First argument: The identity of A must necessarily differ from the identity of B, indicating that each has a distinct cause. This cause is either two separate identities or a single identity possessing two different attributes. However, the ultimate source of existence is an absolutely simple and singular Being, making it impossible for two distinct identities to emanate from that Being.

Second argument: The identity of cause A must differ from the identity of cause B, whether in quality or in essence, and both entail plurality. Therefore, it is impossible for both to be unified in an absolute singular identity devoid of any difference. Otherwise, this would result in a violation of the law of non-contradiction.

Third argument: A simple substance, which is not composed of any elements, can only produce a single effect. If we designate this singular effect as A, then the emergence of A from that cause is a logical necessity. However, if another effect, B, were also to emanate from the same simple cause, this would negate the logical necessity of A's emergence—an assumption that clearly contradicts the principles of logic.<sup>27</sup>

However, some theologians rejected the principle of Al-Wahid, among them is Al-Ghazali.

Al-Ghazālī asserted that belief in this principle is:

قلنا ما ذكرتموه تحكّمات و هي على التّحقيق ظلمات فوق ظلمات لو حكاها الانسان عن منام رآها  
لاستدل به على سوء مزاجه.<sup>28</sup>

“We say, in response to what you have asserted and upon examination, that this is darkness upon darkness—akin to someone citing a dream as evidence in defense of his own mental confusion.”

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<sup>27</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyah al-Arbaah*, V. 7 p. 205.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al-Falasifah* p. 120-129.

الوجه الثالث في استحالة كون العالم فعلا لله تعالى على أصلهم، لشرط مشترك بين الفاعل و الفعل، و هو أنهم قالوا: لا يصدر من الواحد إلا شيء واحد و المبدأ الأولى واحد من كل وجه و العالم مركّب من مختلفات، فلا يتصوّر أن يكون فعلا لله تعالى بموجب أصلهم<sup>29</sup>

"The third issue concerns the impossibility of the world being fundamentally the direct act of God, based on the condition of simultaneity between subject and action. They argue: Nothing proceeds from the One except that which is one, and the First Source is absolutely One from all aspects. Since the universe is composed of multiplicity and diversity, they could not conceive that such a source could be the immediate origin of the cosmos as the direct act of God, the source of all things."

Al-Ghazali this principle on the grounds that it contradicts the absolute omnipotence of Allah, Most High. To uphold such a principle, he argued, is effectively to deny that the plural and diverse universe is a creation of God.

The same reasoning was also put forward by al-Fakhr al-Rāzī:

المسألة الثالثة و العشرون في أنّه لا يخرج شيء من العدم الى الوجود إلاّ بقدرّة الله تعالى. . . و اعلم أنّ المخالفين في هذه المسألة فرق كثيرة؛ الفريق الأول من المخالفين في هذه المسألة الفلاسفة الذين يقولون إنّ المعلول الأول لذات الله شيء واحد و هو العقل الأول و اما ساير الأشياء فهي معلولات معلولاته و لهم فيه شبهة<sup>30</sup>.

"Issue Twenty-Three: Nothing comes forth from non-existence into existence except by the power (*qudrah*) of Allah. It should be known that this view has many opponents, including the philosophers who maintain that the first effect from the Divine Essence is nothing other than a singular entity—the First Intellect—and that all other things are the effects of its subsequent effects. In reality, they are engaging in mere speculation and illusion."

Mulla Sadra rejected the arguments of both al-Ghazali and al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, maintaining that the act of creation carried out by Allah, the Exalted, occurs through a process of causality. According to him, Divine omnipotence refers to God's power to bring about all that is possible, not that which is logically or metaphysically impossible.

This principle is upheld by Muslim philosophers, as its arguments are both rationally sound and philosophically robust. They have demonstrated that the principle of al-Wāḥid is not merely relevant to classical philosophical discourse but continues to serve as a foundational proof that the universe could not have come into being by mere chance. Rather, it affirms a necessary and coherent causal relationship between cause and effect—

<sup>29</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut* p. 120.

<sup>30</sup> See al-Fakhr al-Razi, *Mabahits al-Masyriyyah* (Qom: Cop Bidor, 1411) V.I p. 466

such that no effect can bring itself into existence independently. Furthermore, the principle illustrates that this plural and diverse universe ultimately originates from a singular, absolute source, and that all things trace their existence back to that One Absolute Reality.

## **Conclusion**

Within the framework of Islamic philosophy, the principle of al-Wāḥid serves as a foundational principle for many theories concerning the emergence of plurality from a singular and simple Essence (al-Basīṭ). Muslim philosophers have presented a range of rational arguments in support of this principle, and nearly all—especially Ibn Sina—have articulated its logical basis. Some, such as Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi, even regarded the Kaidah as approaching the status of the *badīhī* (self-evident), asserting that it is inconceivable for the intellect to deny it. Although this principle did not originate exclusively within the Islamic philosophical tradition, It has been embraced and developed by Muslim thinkers as a doctrine that affirms the unity of reality. In doing so, it also serves as a rational affirmation of the central tenet of Islam: *Tawḥīd*.

Opponents of this principle, primarily theologians, have been unable to provide compelling rational arguments, relying instead mainly on the doctrine of Allah SWT's Absolute Power. In contrast, Muslim philosophers argue that Allah SWT creates and governs all things according to consistent logical laws that cannot be contradicted. Through this principle, they demonstrate that the universe did not arise by mere chance but originates from an absolute, singular source. The apparent plurality in existence is due only to limiting quiddities, while fundamentally, everything remains unified in its essential oneness.

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