

THE SYSTEM OF DIVINE MANIFESTATION IN IBN 'ARABI'S SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

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One of the fundamental problems of theoretical mysticism is how to explain the difference between God and the world on the basis of the idea of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of existence). Following the explanation of certain necessary premises, this paper presents the theory of divine manifestation as one that can explain and analyze multiplicity.²

In this article we especially seek to solidify the relation of such claims to mystics in general and to the adherents of Ibn 'Arabi's school of thought in particular. This is especially important because, in some of the works of many specialists in this field, we find that some unrealistic claims have been attributed to Ibn 'Arabi. The only way to counteract such false claims, in any field, including theoretical mysticism, is to make it binding upon ourselves to delve into the views of others in a cautious way. We must not take the apparent meanings of the sayings of the mystics as a proof in this matter. Therefore, the research methodology of the writer of this article is to relate the sayings of Ibn 'Arabi and his commentators, while simultaneously commenting upon and analyzing them as well.

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An explanation of manifestation and appearance

The Absolute Absoluteness of the Essence of the Truth is one of the givens of Theoretical Mysticism. The consequence of such an idea is that the Truth is present in every multiplicity. This presence is not an accidental presence (in which the Truth will lie outside the existence of the manifold beings of the Universe), but rather an existential one in which the Truth is one with every multiplicity. Therefore, because of its absoluteness, the Truth is present within the station of multiplicity with an existential presence. In this case, is there any room left for the multiple beings of this world? In other words, if the Truth is Absolutely Absolute and is not even conditioned by absoluteness, He will be both absolute, and because of this (absoluteness), He will be present in all of the conditioned beings. In this case will there be any conditioned being remaining?³

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2. I would like to thank Mr. Shiraz Agha for his help with the translation of this paper.

3. Sabzawari states the following when Mulla Sadra presents this as a serious question:

“If You are everything, then what is the world?”

This is a question that becomes even more serious when we come across certain passages in the texts of mysticism in which multiplicity has been described as being imaginary and the conditioned beings as unreal. The following passage is an example of this:

“Know that you are unreal and everything that you know and speak about is nothing but a figment of the imagination. The true existence is only for God, from the point of view of His Essence.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 104)

“The world is unreal, it does not have a real existence and this is what we mean by [its being] imaginary.” (ibid., p. 103)

Some of the sayings of the mystics have exclusively relegated real existence to the divine essence. It is for this reason that we can deduce (from such sayings) that the multiple beings are unreal and lack real existence.

“There is nothing in the realm of existence except the entity that is the Essence [of God].” (ibid., p. 76)

“There is nothing in the realm of existence except God.” (Qaysari, 1375, p. 551)

“The only thing that exists is God, nothing else.” (ibid., p. 585)

In some of the mystical texts apparently existence has been negated from the multiple beings. Let us look at some examples of this:

In a passage from the chapter on Ibrahim, Muhyuddin says the following, after having first stated that all of the things destined for man stem from his own essence in the station of his stable entity:

“This [is true], if you [really] have an existence.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 83)⁴

Qaysari explains this sentence as follows:

“The phrase, ‘If you have an existence,’ does not mean that you have a real existence that is separate from the Absolute Existence of the Truth so that by means of your essence existence would become numerous. Verily, existence is one reality and there is no multiplicity in it whatsoever.” (Qaysari, 1375, p. 592)⁵

So, if because of the Absolutely Absolute, the one true instance of existence permeates the multiplicity that is this world, can we say that the world and the multiple beings therein are imaginary? Do not the

If I am nothing, then what is this despair?”

4. In continuation, Muhyuddin says the following: “If it is true that existence belongs to the Truth not you, then the ruling is for you without a doubt but in the existence of the Truth.”
5. For more explicit examples of such statements, refer to *Muqaddimah Sharh al-Fusus al-Qaysari*, p. 14, line 23; p. 16, line 3; p. 17, line 17; p. 20.

conditioned beings of this world possess an external existence? Such can be apparently gathered from some of the texts that resemble that which we have just related. Are the beings of this world nothing?

The truth of the matter is that the aforementioned passage only forms part of the claims of the mystics. The station in which multiplicity is negated is the station of the Essence of the Truth. Of course, at the station of the Essence, the multiple beings that stand opposite to one another are void. The reason for this is that the Essence of the Truth consumes multiplicity because of its true absoluteness. It is for this reason that no one other than Him remains in that position.⁶ Thus, here we cannot speak of their features and characterize them as being other than God, the same as God or being one with and different from God at the same time. Consequently, it is true that multiplicity is negated from the station of the Essence of the Truth since the Essence possesses inclusiveness and absolute pervasiveness. Of course, this does not imply the absolute negation of multiplicity.

The relation of the world to the Essence of God is a very complicated matter and has been the subject of independent papers. A discussion of this topic lies outside the scope of this article. Therefore, for brevity's sake, it is not possible for us to enter into the technical premises of this debate and explain how existence is to be analyzed in both the Essence of God and the multiple beings of this world. So, it is correct that multiplicity is negated at the station of the Essence since the Essence has existential permeation and the infiltration that stems from its absoluteness. However, that which plays a part in this discussion is the fact that the multiple beings of the realm of multiplicity are not absolutely non-existent.

The system that Theoretical Mysticism presents for the analysis of multiplicity is the system of manifestation. In this system the multiple beings of this world are the manifestations and signs of the Truth. Manifestation means that the Absolute Being leaves its Station of Absoluteness and dons the robes of conditionality and specification.⁷ It is necessary to remind our readers that when the Absolute descends from its Station of Absoluteness it is still the Absolutely Absolute and even now the Absolute and the conditioned beings stand opposite to one another and are two separate instances of existence.⁸ The

6. This is a reference to a saying from Sa'in ad-Din ibn Turkah, p. 18.

7. "These different beings are from One Principle, and all of these qualities are from a Causeless Being," *Naqd an-Nuqud*, p. 65.

8. "Sometimes You are the Sun and sometimes the sea,
Sometimes You are the mountain of Qaf and sometimes the Phoenix
You are not this or that in Your Essence

Oh He that lies above our intellects and that precedes us before everything," Faydh Kashani, *Kalimat Maknunah*, p. 44, related by Mowlavi.

Absolute includes within its Station of Absoluteness all of the specific beings. However, the multiple beings of this world do not exist in the station of the Essence in an elaborated way, opposed to one another.⁹ This means that if the Essence includes the name “the Guide” we can not exclude the name “the One Who Leads Astray” from this station of the Essence by saying that these two names stand opposite to one another. Rather, the station of the Essence includes both names by means of its Real Absoluteness – of course, with this clause – that in the station of the Essence there is no multiplicity because of its Absoluteness. There, multiplicity and the names are hidden and succinct, not explicate and separate from one another.¹⁰ Now, when this secrecy is revealed, and that succinctness is transformed into explication, then the process of manifestation has been accomplished. Thus, every reality has a station of secrecy in which it is united with the other realities and also possesses a station of appearance in which it stands opposed to other realities. It is also necessary here to mention the fact that the Truly Absolute, while permeating the multiple beings, also lies above permeation at the station of its Essence. The reason for this is that at the Station of the Essence there is nothing other than Him so that we might speak of Him permeating it or not. However, when that Absolute Essence manifests itself in the conditioned beings its Permeating Essence is actualized (which is in fact one of the names of God). By means of what was mentioned in the discussion on the Absolute Absoluteness, it became clear that the absolute, in regard to categorical absoluteness, is conditioned with absoluteness and, for this reason, does not unite with the conditioned beings. On the other hand, the Absolutely Absolute is not even conditioned with absoluteness, and this leads to the fact that it is existentially present in all of the conditioned beings.¹¹

9. “We were spread out and all of us were one substance,
 We were without a head and legs in that realm, all of us,
 We were one substance like the sun,
 We were without any entanglements and pure like water,
 When that Light depicted Itself,
 It became innumerable like the shadows of a Crenation,
 Free the Crenation from the catapult,
 So that the difference between us may go away,” Mowlavi.

10. “Whatever is differentiated in the various degrees of the beings of this Universe will be succinct in this station like the tree in a seed. The entirety of the worlds is the elaboration of this station and there is nothing that falls outside this station of existence,” *Commentary Upon the Rose Garden of Mystery*, p. 100. See also the passage of Jami in this regard: v. 1, p. 197 and also Lawame’, p. 106.

11. The neighbor, the friend, the companion all are Him,
 In the street the beggar, and in the palace the king, are all Him.

The logical flow of the discussion dictates that at this point we should also discuss the reason for manifestation so that it becomes clear why the Absolute descends from its station of absoluteness. However, for brevity's sake, we will not present that discussion here and will ask the reader to seek it out in its own proper place, i.e., the goal of creation.

Therefore, in the system of manifestation, the world and the multiple beings therein are the manifestation of that Essence, or the Absolute that has become conditioned. They are not separate beings that stand in opposition to Him.¹²

“The world is nothing but His manifestation in the forms of the stable entities whose existence is impossible without Him.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 81)

Khwarazmi, when explaining this saying of Muhyuddin, has used the most significant expression of existential manifestation.

“And it is impossible for these stable entities to exist in the external world¹³ without this existential manifestation.” (Khwarazmi, 1379, p. 347)

In this case, all of the multiple beings of this world that exist in the various stations that make up this Universe are the Truth that has been conditioned by them.

“So, for the One, the Merciful, there is in every station,
Forms which are hidden and apparent,
So if you say that this is the Truth then you have spoken the Truth,
And if you say something else, then you have not.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 88)¹⁴

12. “So It is hidden in the first non-specification and apparent in the other specification,” *Sharh al-Fusus al-Jandi*, p. 196. It is also necessary to clearly state here that in this outlook gradation is relegated for the manifestations and is used to assess the degree of their appearance. See *Sharh al-Fusus al-Kashani*, p. 78.

13. Of course, Qunawi has also used this expression prior to Khwarazmi. See *Sharh al-Arbain Hadith*, p. 83, 100, 110. *Miftah al-Ghayb*, p. 33.

14. And also: “So we are for Him as our proof has shown us and we are for ourselves and He has nothing except me so we are for Him as we are for ourselves and so I have two faces: Him and me and He does not have a me because of me. Rather, in me is His manifestation. So, we are for Him like me.” A point that deserves to be noted here in connection with the phrase, “So, we are for Him like me,” is the negation of incarnation. The presence of the Truth in the warp and weave of everything does not imply that He has been incarnated in them so that there would be two beings besides one another. Rather everything exists by means of the existence of the Truth. The real existence belongs to Him and the manner of its specification to the conditioned being. In *The Rose Garden of Mystery*, Shabistari says the following: “Incarnation and Unification are impossible there, since in Unity duality is actually wrong.” In his commentary upon this passage, Lahiji says the following: “This means that incarnation, which is the descent of something into something else, and unification, which means that something becomes exactly something else, are both impossible at this station. This means

If the multiple beings of this world are the Absolutely Absolute that has been conditioned by them then we can look for two faces in everything: The face of the Absolute and the face of the conditioned being that has specified the Absolute. The face of the Absolute is the Truth while the face of the conditioned being is the self.

“So I have two faces, one is Him while the other is me.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 84)

It is clear that the appearance of the Truth in things does not limit Him to those things. It is for this reason that it does not condition the Essence of the Truth:

“His specification and personalization by means of a specific form and His being attributed with an attribute does not harm the perfection of His existence and His honor. His manifestation in things and the appearance of His specification and His being conditioned by things and their attributes does not contradict His loftiness and absoluteness and freedom from conditions and His essential self-sufficiency.” (Qunawi, 1374, p. 25)

Look at how Qunawi analyzes the realm of multiplicity by means of the concept of manifestation.

“This is the knowledge of the manner in which the world is related to its Creator and the relation of the Creator to it. This relation is nothing other than the relation of the all-permeating existential manifestation upon the stable entities which colors His light.” (ibid., p. 33)

Therefore, if the world is the existential manifestation of the Truth, the knowledge of multiplicity does not increase the knowledge of God in the least. It only develops something that was once concise. This is because the world is the enumeration of the succinct relations of the Absolute.

“Therefore, the knowledge of the Truth and everything cannot increase except the explication of something succinct...which stems from the differences of the dimensions and relations and connections.”

that in the manifestation of the Truth in the form of the various beings of this Universe (based upon the view of the Sufi's in this matter) incarnation and unification will lead to duality and otherness. This is while the Sufi is of the belief that in the realm of existence there is nothing other than God.” *Sharh Gulshan-i Raz*, p. 377. “Here incarnation is disbelief and so is unification, since this is unity that, albeit, has come about through a repetition; How can there be any room for incarnation here since this is one Reality that has manifested Itself in stations?” For a clearer picture of the negation of incarnation in the view of Theoretical Mysticism one can refer to *Ashi'at al-Lama'at*, pp. 84-85; *Sharh al-Fusus al-Qaysari*, p. 603, pp. 865-866; *Fusus al-Hikam*, Abu Ala al-Afifi, v. 2, p. 17, in which the difference of opinion of Hallaj and others has been explained.

Jandi says the following as an explanation of the manifestation that creates multiplicity.

“The Absolute Existence is unconditionally the First. After this, the specification and conditioning of existence categorizes the manifestation in the various degrees of Its specification.” (Jandi, 1381, p. 196)

Also, Kashani says the following:

“[This is] the Essence that creates all of the realities through its manifestation of them.” (Kashani, 1370, p. 16)

Qaysari says the following:

“So, verily He is the one that appears by means of the forms of the simple [elements] and thereafter through the composite beings. So the person veiled [from the Truth] surmises that they are realities that are different from the Truth...that the existence of the creature is the same as the One Existence of the Truth that has appeared in the various stations [of the beings of this world]. That one Entity that is nothing other than the Absolute Existence are those multiple entities from the dimension of the multiple manifestations, as they have said: Glory be to the One whose material realm has manifested the secret of His Illuminating Immaterial realm, and then His creation has appeared clearly in the form of ¹⁵the one who eats and drinks (i.e., man).” (Qaysari, 1375, p. 559)

Abu Hamid ibn al-Turkah says the following in his *al-Qawa'id al-Towhid*:

“When is the word ‘appearance’ is mentioned here it means that the Absolute has become specific ¹⁶by means of one of its specific beings.” (al-Turkah, 1360, p. 158)

His grandchild, Sa'in ad-Din ibn al-Turkah, understands things to be the form and manifestation of the Truth, and writes the following:

“It has been established that the boundaries of things and their borders and forms...are all the depictions of the Truth and they are hidden within Him [in the station of the Essence]. This is what demands His appearance and manifestation.” (1378, p. 480) ¹⁷

15. In the commentary of Qaysari many explicit references to the concept of manifestation can be found which we will refrain from mentioning for brevity's sake. Refer to p. 512, 498, 552, 498, 179, 502, 504, 524, 548, 547, 578, 585, 612, and also the *Muqaddimah Sharh al-Fusus al-Qaysari*: p. 3, 13, 14, 16, 17, 24.

16. Sa'in ad-Din ibn al-Turkah says the following in his commentary upon this passage: “So, when this is so, its manifestation occurs through its descent from its station of purity and absoluteness and unity until it finally reaches a state where it can be related to the conditioned beings of this realm and here it becomes colored by the multiplicity of their specifications.” Refer also to *Tamhid al-Qawa'id*, p. 118.

17. Refer also to p. 293, 858, 409, 430, 432. The late Nuri writes the following in his footnotes upon this book: “Things are nothing but the manifestation of the attributes of God, the Most

Lahiji says the following in his commentary upon *The Rose Garden of Mystery*:

“The existence of the possible being is the appearance of the existence of the Necessary Being in its form.” (Lahiji, 1374, p. 99)

Also, Sadra, in the end accepted this explanation of the world, i.e., the Divine Manifestation Theory:

“In the same way, my Lord guided me, through clear divine rational demonstration to the Straight Path, which is that which exists and existence itself is solely relegated for one specific person (i.e., God)...and everything that can be seen in the realm of existence...is nothing other than the manifestations of His Essence and the appearances of His attributes that are actually one with His Essence, as has been clearly stated by many mystics.” (al-Shirazi, 1981, p. 292/2)¹⁸

Manifestation in existence

It is necessary to remind our readers that the topic of discussion in this section is the existential manifestation and not the manifestation [of the Truth] in the mystical vision of the saint. In the scheme of the system of existence, the realm of creation can be divided into two separate “bows” – “the bow of descent” and “the bow of ascent.” Outside of this existential descent and ascent man has the ability to spiritually mature and benefit to the utmost from the Absolute Existence. He will thus acquire the Knowledge of Certainty, the Eye of Certainty, and the Truth of Certainty, and ascend by acquiring these spiritual stations. This will of course happen when he leaves his station in Reality and the Unseen and becomes present in the realm of multiplicity.

By “manifestation,” in this section, we mean manifestation in existence. This implies that the Absolute has become conditioned. We do not mean the manifestation of witnessing that occurs for the mystic in his spiritual journey. Even though the things that are witnessed by the mystic in his spiritual ascent are these very existential manifestations, and eventually the manifestation of the Essence, here it is the experience of the mystic that allows us to use the term “manifestation” for this phenomenon. However, in the process of the creation of the multiplicity that comprises the various beings of this world, the numerous beings of this realm are preceded by their non-

High and His Beautiful Names,” p. 383.

18. See also p. 300 and 356. Here Sadra allocates a lengthy chapter to this problem. See also *Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, p. 51.

existence which allows for their existential manifestation.

Creation and destruction in the system of manifestation

After having explained the general principles of the system of “manifestation” in the analysis of the realm of multiplicity, the time has come to explain how things are created and destroyed in this system in which everything is a manifestation of the Truth (which means that they are the Truth who has donned the robes of conditionality in this station because of His absoluteness).

In the first section of this paper, it was mentioned that, according to the path of the mystics, everything has two principle degrees: Concealment and Manifestation. In the station of their concealment all things are hidden in an intermingled way in the Essence of God. In reality, the phrase “they exist in the Essence” is one which we use for lack of a better word. In reality, there are dimensions that are conglomerated with one another and one with one another in the Essence, such as the essential knowledge and power that are one with one another and one with the Essence. After the separation of these realities by means of manifestation, the aforementioned realities manifest themselves and come out of the station of concealment and appear in the station of manifestation and the realm of witnessing. This movement has been named “creation” in theoretical mysticism.

Destruction is the opposite of the abovementioned process. This means that in the arc of ascent the elaborated beings are once again taken up and all of the conditioned beings return to their source in the Absolute. The conditioned beings leave the station of apparition and return to their proper place in the station of concealment. This latter occurrence is what is called “destruction.”

“His creating things happen when He becomes hidden in them and He manifests them. His destroying things occur in the Greater Resurrection when He is manifested with His oneness and dominion over them, when He removes their specific characteristics and makes them obliterated in His perfection, ‘and to whom does the kingdom belong today? To God, the One and the Dominant,’ and ‘everything perishes except His face,’ and in the Lesser Resurrection¹⁹ the apparent realm is transformed into the hidden realm.” (Qaysari: 1375, p. 17)

Creation in Himself

When God creates something it does not add anything to His Absoluteness, which is an Absoluteness that is even free from the condition of being absolute. The reason for this, as we have mentioned

19. The Lesser Resurrection begins with death.

once before, is that there is nothing in this Universe except that it is a manifestation that elaborates the perfections that exist conglomerated in the Absolute albeit in a conditioned way. It is for this reason that the Absolute is manifested in the depths of the conditioned being. Thus it is wrong to assume that the absolute is on one side of the realm of existence while the conditioned being is on the other and that they are opposed to one another.

Therefore, through manifestation and creation, the Absolute is made perceptible in the appearance of the conditioned rather than something being added alongside the Absolute.²⁰ In other words, creation and manifestation is something that takes place within the Absolute Himself and is not a process that lies outside of Him.

“Oh He who created things within Himself,
You include within Yourself all the things that You have created,
You create things that are infinite within You,
So You are full and at the same time extensive.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370,
p. 88)²¹

The Vision of the mystic sees unity and multiplicity

It has already been mentioned that the world is the manifestation of God and it is for this reason that everything is nothing other than God who has been conditioned in the station of that being. This means that because that thing is conditioned it is a creature and from the point of view that it is nothing other than the Truth who has appeared and manifested Himself in this thing, it is the Truth.²² Now, if someone

20. “By creating the world nothing was added to the Truth, the thing that did not exist in the first place does not exist now; The effect is nothing but the manifestation of Him, so that by it His attributes and actions may be revealed,” Mowlana.

21. See also *Sharh al-Fusus al-Jandi*, p. 351 and *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, p. 51.

22. The presentation of such a vision of the Universe has many interesting ethical and spiritual implications. In the system of manifestation, in which everything is the Truth that has been specified in the station of the conditioned being, the conditioned beings do not possess any independent existence. It is for this reason that they depict something other than themselves. This is exactly the meaning of manifestation. The conditioned being tells us that it is a portion of the infinite existence of the Unconditional Being that has been revealed in this portion. In this system, it is the Truth that is the eternal companion of man since it is He who has permeated all multiplicity. “The Friend is manifested without veil in the doors and walls of this realm, Oh those who have insight!” Another beneficial point is that the system of manifestation in the field of ethics is based upon this vision of the Universe, that man is the Truth Himself that has appeared in this way after descending from His absoluteness and having passed the degrees of possible beings. Therefore, by initiating a spiritual journey, and by means of relinquishing the shackles that have existentially bound him, he can achieve the loftiest Goal. This movement will continue, and in the end, when further conditions no longer remain, there won’t be any kind of distance between the servant and the Lord except servanthood and Lordship. “There is no difference between you and Him except that you are

were to only view the creaturely dimension of things, he would not have grasped them in their entirety, and if he were to only witness the person of the Truth within them, and to surmise that multiplicity is nothing but a figment of the imagination, then in this case he would not have been properly acquainted with the dual nature of the realm of multiplicity. The true mystic is the one who sees not only the reality of the Truth but also that of multiplicity, each in its own proper place. In other words, he does not consider multiplicity to be imaginary and at the same time he does not give them independence. Rather, he sees them as being the Truth that has been conditioned.

In other words, if someone has yet to begin his spiritual journey, he only sees multiplicity and does not perceive any dimension of unity within the conditioned beings. He does not refer them to the Absolute (that is their source). Also, if he has attained the apex of the first journey from amongst the four spiritual journeys, then he only witnesses unity and does not accept multiplicity in any manner. Both of these two groups share one thing in common: They have not grasped reality in its totality. Of course, they are different in that the first is still in the beginning of their spiritual journey, or has yet to begin it, while the second has attained a middle point in that journey. The true mystic is the one who pays due to both the Truth and the creation. This means that while he understands the Truth to be free from every clause and condition – even that of absoluteness – he sees the multiple beings of this world as the manifestation of the Truth and the presence of the Absolute in the station of the conditioned beings.

“Look, oh spiritual wayfarer on the path of the Truth! What do you see of Unity and multiplicity, together and separate? If what you see is only Unity then you are only with the Truth, since multiplicity has been removed. If you see only multiplicity then you are only with the creatures. If you see Unity hidden in the multiplicity and multiplicity embedded within the Unity then you have combined two perfections and have attained the station of the Two Good Things!” (Qaysari, 1375, p. 56)

“The first is the condition of the perfect ones who love [God] and who God pays special attention to. They are those who have not been

His slave.” (“The Acts of the Month of Rajab”) Khwarazmi has beautifully depicted this spiritual journey in his *Commentary of the Fusus al-Hikam*, pp. 367-368.

“A man went to sleep under a blanket, he tied a thread to his foot, to show him who he was,
So someone came and untied that thread, he tied it to his own foot and fell asleep,
When the one without the thread woke up, he looked here and there for himself,
He saw the person sleeping with the thread, he became astonished and said: Oh Lord!
Which one of these two am I, the one sleeping or the one awake? Show me myself!
I have lost myself in the boundaries of the land and the kingdom and the sky,
When the signs of we and me have left, then the difference between us and You will leave,
Whether You or we, whether Him or You, After this sea there is only unity and purity.”

veiled from the beauty of the Truth by His Awesomeness such as is the case of those who have been veiled by the creation from the Truth. Nor have they been veiled by God's Beauty from His Awesomeness such as is the case of those who have been veiled by the Truth from the creation. These are the ones who are awestruck and eternally remain within the Absolute Unity...²³

Later he explains the belief of the first group who have a proper comprehension [of the matter] and are loved by God:

“They witness the Truth at the same time that they witness the creation and the creation at the same time that they witness the Truth together without being veiled by one of them from the other.” (Qaysari, p. 585)

Manifestation and the Name [of God]

Manifestation creates the Name of God

The Name of God, in the parlance of Mysticism, is the Essence along with a specific attribute. It is clear that every specific name is conditioned and stands opposed to another specific name. Therefore, it is only when the Absolute is conditioned that a name, in the parlance of the mystics, comes to be. In other words, this comes about when the Truth leaves the station of Absoluteness and manifests Himself in that of the conditioned beings. Thus, as a result of manifestation, the Essence leaves the station of Absoluteness and descends into the station of the conditioned beings of this world. This results in the appearance of the Essence of the Truth in the station of a specific name. Keeping in mind the discussions that we mentioned previously, of the harmony between manifestation and the name of God, we can gather that the realities of the specific names are hidden and merged in the previous station of the Essence and only thereafter are they elaborately manifested as specific names.

Based upon the analysis that was presented regarding the system of manifestation of the name of God, it goes without saying that the elaboration of the specific names of God that were once merged within the Essence is a two-fold process. It is related on one side to the Essence and on the other to the specific name. Therefore, it is a reality that is a relation. In the parlance of Sadrian philosophy, this is a relation that is one-sided and is not one of the quiddities. The reason for this is that the name does not exist before this relation comes to be. Rather, it is by means of this relation that the name of God comes into

23. In this regard, see p. 654: “The true mystic observes the intellectual rights of all the stations, i.e., the station of the Essence and that of multiplicity.” See also p. 549, 654, 655, 562; *Sharh al-Fusus lil Jami*, v. 2, p. 83; *Sharh al-Fusus lil Jandi*, p. 324.

being.²⁴ It is the opposition of such relations that causes multiplicity to come about. Thus, insight will not see such multiplicity opposed to Unity since they are relations that are one-sided. Such a vision has many ethical results. The freedom from all specific clauses and the attainment of the greatness that is the reality of Absoluteness is the pinnacle of spirituality that shines on the horizons of the sight of the spiritual wayfarer. Of course, it may be that he knows he may never attain such a goal.²⁵ They remember this matter as the relinquishment of relations that leads to real Unity.

“They have shown you a sign of the ruins,
That Unity is the relinquishment of all relations.”

In his commentary upon this passage, Lahiji first interprets the “ruins” as being the station of annihilation and thereafter he says:

“The Essence of the Truth from the point of view of its manifestation and appearance in its manifestations is the same as everything...and since the Essence of the Truth has appeared and manifested Himself in their form He has related existence to them. Whenever they forgo such relations, everything reverts to the non-existence that they have essentially. Everything other than the Truth is void and this is the meaning of the saying ‘monotheism is the relinquishment of relations.’” As the poem says:

“The reflection of the lights of Your beauty,
in order to manifest its perfection,
Shined a ray of light upon the darkness of the world,
You became every being and then to hide Yourself,
You placed the label of existence upon them.” (Lahiji, 1374, p. 625)

The Name and the Named, unity and distinction

It has already been stated that the manifestation and exit of the Essence from the station of absoluteness is what legitimizes the existence of the conditioned beings of this world. Thus, the conditioned being is called “the name” while the Essence is called “the named.” In the discussions on the name it has been agreed that the term “name” refers to a real being existing in the external world and the word that refers to it is in reality “the name of the name.” Therefore, in the parlance of mysticism, the named is not a word rather it is the conditioned Essence of the Truth that has manifested itself in the form of the name by means of a one-sided relationship. After the Essence hides within the inner core of the multiple beings and is present in them existentially the name and the named become

24. See *Sharh Gulshan-i Raz*, p. 70: “The existence of the possible being is simply a relation.” See *Sharh al-Fusus al-Hikam lil Qaysari*, p. 473.

25. “If you achieve freedom from the materialistic soul, you will enter the sacred land of divinity.” When commenting upon this verse, Lahiji says that the meaning of materiality is “human” while divinity means the “Reality that permeates all things,” p. 675.

one. Since the Essence is not limited to a specific state the name and the named are two distinct things.

“The name is the named from the point of view of the Essence and the name is other than the named from the point of view of the characteristics that are peculiar to it and for which it has been revealed.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, 79/80)²⁶

This discussion has been presented under the heading of “The Unity of the Appearance and that which has Appeared” which we will not discuss for brevity’s sake.²⁷

The parables of manifestation

In order to understand manifestation in the light of Absoluteness that is free from even the condition of absoluteness itself, many different examples have been put forward in theoretical mysticism – each one of which is helpful in their own right. Here we will briefly present a few of them.

The mirror

If we place a number of different mirrors in front of something that thing will be reflected in a number of different ways in those mirrors.²⁸ The essence of the thing inside the mirror is one of something that seeks to display something else and it is not independent. Rather, each mirror will try to display that reality outside itself to the extent that it can.

“So the physical world is a series of forms or pictures in a mirror. No, rather, it is one picture in various mirrors.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 78)

This example has been mentioned in many of the mystical texts²⁹ and in many cases has been expressed in poems therein.

“In order to reveal the love that has burned the world,
You have made many things mirrors [for Yourself],
You have gazed [upon Yourself] in every mirror,
You looked in everything with every eye.” (Khwarazmi, 1379, p. 367)
“There is nothing but one face only,
If you count the mirrors it will appear as many.” (Qaysari, 1375, p.

26. See also *Sharh al-Fusus lil Qaysari*, p. 473, 566: “The name is one with the Named.”

27. For example, see *Kalimat al-Maknunah*, p. 35, *Muqaddimah Sharh al-Fusus lil Qaysari*, p. 48, 50, *Sharh al-Fusus lil Khwarazmi*, p. 249, 250, *Sharh al-Fusus lil Qaysari*, p. 669, 503, *Sharh al-Fusus lil Jami*, v. 1, p. 195, v. 2, p. 269, *Nusus lil Qunawi*, p. 53, *Lawaih lil Jami*, p. 33, 14-15, *Sharh al-Fusus lil Kashani*, p. 85, *Fusus*, p. 93, v. 2, p. 120.

28. “The form of the beloved is not but one, that has fallen upon many mirrors.”

29. For example, see *Futuh al-Makkiyyah*, ch. 63, *Asfar*, v. 2, p. 357, *Sharh al-Fusus lil Qaysari*, p. 184 and 458-459, *Sharh Gulshan-i Raz lil Lahiji*, pp. 380 -381.

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“My moon-faced witness has one-thousand mirrors,
His soul appears in every mirror that he looks towards.” (Faydh, 1342,
p. 33)

The Human Soul

Another example that serves to explain the “manifestation of the ray of the Absolutely Absolute” is the example of the human soul. This example was previously mentioned since it indicated the Absolutely Absolute. Here, however, we are looking at the manifestation of the soul and its faculties.

“The human soul” is one essence that is precisely the faculty of hearing, sight, etc., in the station of hearing, sight, etc. As long as the soul has not become highly present in these faculties, it possesses hearing, sight, etc., although not in a sophisticated way. When it becomes existentially elaborate, these faculties are separated from one another. Hearing, sight, etc., become things that are separated from one another and from the soul and are not connected with it but rather are the soul itself that has appeared in the form of the faculty of hearing, sight, etc.

“So remember that your essence is the same thing as your limbs, that are the same as the servant. So, the essence is one and the limbs are different.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 107)

This example can also be found in the poems and passages of the texts of the theoretical mysticism of Muhyuddin:³⁰

“The caravan of the unseen is coming out in the open,
Yet it hides from the ugly ones,
When will the beautiful ones come to the ugly ones?
The nightingale comes into the rose garden,
The Narcissus can be found next to the Jasmine,
The flower will come to the bud with the good mouth,
These are all symbols, and the meaning is this,
That that World will come into this world,
It is like fat mixed with milk,
The One free from place will enter place,
It is like the intellect inside the flesh and the blood,
This Sign-less will enter the signs.”³¹

The Shadow³²

30. For example, see *Fusus*, p. 68, 69, 72, *Sharh al-Fusus lil Qaysari*, p. 183, 524; *Kalimat al-Maknunah*, p. 21, 39; *Sharh al-Fusus lil Jandi*, p. 321; *Sharh al-Fusus lil Qaysari*, p. 321; *Sharh al-Fusus lil Kashani*, p. 58; *Sharh al-Fusus lil Jami*, v. 1, p. 127.

31. Jami relates these lines from Mowlana on page 65 of his *Naqd an-Nuqud*. In this regard, see *Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, p. 58.

32. For an in-depth explanation of the example of the shadow, see *Sharh al-Fusus li Sa'in ud-Din ibn Turkah*, p. 430, 432, 437, 440, and also the footnote of Nuri on page 441. See also

The shadow is a reality that is not independent from the one who it is a shadow of. Rather, the essence of the shadow says, “There is something else which I am a shadow of.” Many different types of shadows come into being because of the different type of light that is cast upon the thing the shadow is a shadow of.

“The Truth has not created all these shadows...except to point you towards yourself and Himself and so that you may know who you are and what is your relation to Him and what His relation is to you.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 105)

The shadow does not possess any characteristic in and of itself. Rather, it displays the characteristics of its owner in the station of the shadow. Mulla Ali Nuri relates this example of the shadow in a tradition that has been related from Imam Baqir.

“Have you not seen your shadow? It is something and it is nothing.” (Ashtiyani, 1363, p. 569/4)

The body and the spirit

Based upon the Sadrian explanation of the soul, the body of the human being is a dimension of the soul. This matter – which was only later properly explained by Sadra – has been mentioned in the mystical texts as an example for manifestation.

“So you are for Him like your physical form is for you, and He is for you what your spirit is for the form of your body.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 69)

Here, “form” means manifestation and Qaysari explicitly states that, in the same way that your body is the manifestation of your soul (or in other words is one of the dimensions of your soul), you are also a manifestation of the Truth (Qaysari, 1375, p. 506). Based upon this interpretation of the relation of the soul to the body, the body is the soul itself but only at the station of the body. We must deny the fact that it has an independent persona that is connected to the spirit.

This example has been explained in the commentary of *The Rose Garden of Mystery* in the following way:

“The mystic is the one who sees within the external world,
The Truth, in everything that it openly witnesses,
The Truth is the Spirit and the entire world is like the body,
It is manifest like the Sun in this Universe.” (Lahiji, 1374, p. 70)³³

Sharh Gulshan-i Raz, Lahiji, p. 98, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam lil Khwarazmi*, p. 328.

33. Page 45 of *Kalimat al-Maknunah Faydh al-Kashani* relates something regarding this example.

The wave and the sea

The wave is the sea itself that has manifested itself in this form.

The multiplicity and disparity in the forms of the waves and the foam [of the sea] do not cause the sea to multiply.

“So the sea is the sea as it was all along.
Phenomena are waves and rivers.
Let not its forms hide you
From the One who is manifesting Himself therein, since they are veils,
Every picture that is apparent upon the throne of existence,
Is the form of the One who has drawn it,
When the ancient sea forms a new wave,
They call it a wave while it is in reality the sea.”³⁴

This example has also been presented in the form of the sun and its rays. In his commentary upon *The Rose Garden of Mystery*, Lahiji says the following regarding these two examples:

“If you should happen to obtain two eyes that can see the Truth,
You will see the Friend filling both of the worlds,
We are drowned in the sea even though we are drops [from it],
We are all the sun even though we are motes.” (Lahiji, 1374, p. 69)³⁵

Light and the stained glass window

“You and I are accidental to the Essence of Existence
We are frames of the window of existence.”

When light hits a stained glass window, it breaks and multiplies. However, if there is a yellow light, this is the same light that shown upon the window and took the color yellow for itself and in this way became distinguished from the blue light. The original light possessed all of these colors within itself in a simple way and the reality of all of these differentiated colors is that original light that has appeared as these many colors:

“The stable entities are all different colors,
Upon which the light of the Sun of Existence has shown,
Every glass that was red or blue or yellow or blue,
The Sun has shown itself in that glass, in the very color of that glass.”
(Faydh, 1342, p. 41)

The universal and its instances

The Nature – meaning the reality that includes coldness, heat, dryness and wetness – is only one reality that also includes the four

34. In regards to this example, see *Sharh al-Fusus al-Hikam*, Qaysari, p. 630. Also, see *Ayn al-Yaqin*, Faydh Kashani, p. 316, *Sharh al-Fusus lil Jundi*, p. 416, 201. *Naqd an-Nuqud*, p. 67, 78, *al-Muqaddamat min Nass an-Nusus*, p. 389, *Jame al-Asrar*, p. 161, 207, *an-Nuqud*, p. 669.

35. See also p. 451 for the example of the sea and the wave.

temperaments. Dryness is that very nature that has manifested itself in this specific place and the same goes for the other natures.

“The thing that has appeared is not something other than it. Nor is it the same thing that has been manifested since the forms are different by means of the different rulings that we predicate for it. So, this is cold and dry while this other is hot and dry. So they share dryness in common and they differ by means of something else.” (Ibn Arabi, 1370, p. 78)³⁶

Other examples such as “fire and sulfur,” “the intellectual inspiration,”³⁷ “the bubble and water,”³⁸ “sound and the person whose sound it is,”³⁹ “number,”⁴⁰ as well as other metaphors, have been presented for the discussion of manifestation under the Absolute Absoluteness that we will refrain from discussing for brevity.

36. On page 562 of his commentary on the *Fusus al-Hikam*, Qaysari explains this passage as follows: “Can anything manifest itself from the Nature except color? In other words, that is what has been manifested in the degrees of its forms, nothing else. Nor is the Nature exactly the same as that which has manifested itself since It is essentially and characteristically one. Nor is that which has appeared from the Nature different in form and attributes.” See also *Sharh al-Arbain Hadith*, p. 82, Qaysari also presents the example of the species and its instances on page 184 of the same text.

37. *Lessons from Theoretical Mysticism* (A Collection of the Classes of Master Yazdanpanah), 2nd part, p. 47.

38. *Fusus*, p. 81, *Sharh al-Fusus al-Hikam*, p. 577.

39. *Sharh Gulshan-e Raz*, Lahiji, pp. 383-384.

40. *Fusus al-Hikam*, pp. 77-78, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*, Sa'in ad-Din ibn al-Turkah, p. 298, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam Qaysari*, p. 559, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*, Khwajah Parsa, pp. 140-144, *Mumid al-Himam*, p. 130, *Muntahal Madarik*, p. 7, *Mashariq al-Darari*, p. 123.

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