مطالعات عرفانی (مجله علمی)
دانشکده ادبیات و زبان‌های خارجی دانشگاه کاشان
شمارهٔ چهل‌وسوم، بهار و تابستان ۱۴۰۵، ص۴۵ـ۷۰

10.22052/se.2026.255746.1183

The Reduction of Correct Interpretations of the Unity of Being to the Personal Unity of Being Based on the Foundations of Transcendent Philosophy

Reyhaneh Shayesteh
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Vali-e-Asr University of Rafsanjan, Rafsanjan, Iran. Email: r.shayesteh@vru.ac.ir
Abbas Javareshkian
Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran (Corresponding Author); Email: javareshki@um.ac.ir

Received: ۱٤۰۳/۰۸/۱۸
Accepted: ۱٤۰٥/۰۳/۰۸

Introduction

The problem of the Unity of Being is regarded as one of the most fundamental and challenging issues in the Islamic philosophical and mystical tradition and has consistently been a subject of debate and reflection among scholars. Throughout its historical development, this doctrine has encountered various interpretations. Some of these—such as pantheism and incarnation (ḥulūl)—have gone astray, not only because they conflate God with His creatures and disregard the essential poverty of contingent beings, but also because they stand in clear contradiction to the ultimate aim of mysticism and philosophy: to explicate pure monotheism and to negate every form of polytheism and any independence from God.

By contrast, within the school of Mullā Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy, more adequate interpretations of this principle have been proposed, among which are the Personal Unity, the Unity of Witnessing, the Graded Unity, the Shadow Unity, and the Generic Unity of Being. Assuming the Personal Unity of Being to constitute the culmination and highest level of monotheism in Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, the present study seeks, systematically and on the basis of the fundamental principles of Transcendent Philosophy, to demonstrate how the four other correct interpretations—the Witnessing, Graded, Shadow, and Generic Unities—not only do not conflict with the Personal Unity of Being, but can all be referred to and analyzed within its framework, with each illuminating one aspect of this transcendent reality.

The principal findings of this study are articulated through four key mechanisms by which the sound interpretations of the Unity of Being can be reduced to the Personal Unity of Being on the basis of the principles of Transcendent Philosophy.

First, the reduction of the Unity of Witnessing to the Personal Unity of Being: The findings indicate that an incomplete interpretation of the Unity of Witnessing, which reduces it merely to the mystic's neglect of multiplicity or failure to attend to that which is other than God (ma siwa Allah), is untenable. Drawing upon the characteristics of infallibility and immediate cognition inherent in presential knowledge, which, from

10.22052/se.2026.255746.1183

Mulla Sadra's perspective, constitutes the highest and most certain form of knowledge, it can be demonstrated that genuine and complete mystical witnessing leads to the apprehension of annihilation (fana) in the Divine Essence and to the discovery of the objective and extramental unity of being. Accordingly, authentic Unity of Witnessing is identical with the Personal Unity of Being.

Second, the reduction of the Graded Unity of Being to the Personal Unity of Being: The gradation of being (tashkīk al-wujūd) refers to the multiplicity of degrees of being while maintaining the unity of its reality. The study demonstrates that, in order to relate this theory to the Personal Unity of Being, the concept of causality—which rests on a dualistic framework of cause and effect—must be replaced by the mystical concept of taʾashshun (manifestation/self-disclosure). On this basis, the various degrees of being are interpreted not as independent beings possessing separate existences, but as modes, aspects, and manifestations of the same single and personal Reality of the Necessary Being, God Most High. From this perspective, the multiplicity of the degrees of being is not regarded as an obstacle to unity; rather, it is understood as the manifestation and disclosure of that comprehensive unity which encompasses all perfections.

Third, the reduction of the Shadow Unity to the Personal Unity of Being: The theory of Shadow Unity emphasizes the existence of the shadow of God, or al-wujud al-munbasit (the expansive or extended being), as God's act, possessing a shadow-like rather than an essential unity. The finding of this section is grounded in the principle of ontological poverty (imkan faqri), according to which every contingent being is identical with sheer poverty and absolute dependence upon the Essentially Rich (al-Ghaniyy bi'l-dhat). On the basis of this principle, it becomes clear that shadow-being possesses no independence from, nor separation from, the One who casts the shadow (al-muẓallil), namely, the Divine Essence; rather, it is identical with relation and dependence upon Him. Consequently, this shadow is itself regarded as one of the modes or aspects of the Divine Essence, and this constitutes the Personal Unity of Being at the level of divine act and manifestation.

Fourth, the reduction of the Generic Unity of Being to the Personal Unity of Being: The theory of Generic Unity is founded upon the univocity of the concept of being; that is, the single concept of being is predicated of all beings. The findings of the study demonstrate that this conceptual commonality is neither merely mental nor conventional, but is rooted in extramental reality and in an objective affinity among the instances of being. Since, in extramental reality, there is no reality other than the one Personal Being, any stopping at the level of the concept necessarily diminishes, in some sense, the concept's capacity to disclose reality and leaves cognition incomplete. Therefore, the Generic Unity of Being ultimately, by moving beyond the conceptual framework, returns to the same extramental particularity and unity—that is, the Personal Unity of Being.

Accordingly, the Personal Unity of Being in Transcendent Philosophy provides the most comprehensive, robust, and coherent account of the reality of monotheism. The findings clearly demonstrate that the four theories of the Unity of Witnessing, Graded Unity, Shadow Unity, and Generic Unity neither contradict one another nor conflict with the Personal Unity of Being. Rather, they are, in reality, different aspects, levels, and developed interpretations of a single reality, each of which is referred back to that reality through a particular philosophical principle: presential knowledge, taʾashshun,

10.22052/se.2026.255746.1183

ontological poverty, and univocity, respectively. Ultimately, this approach not only reinforces the philosophical foundations of Sadra's account of monotheism, but also effectively demonstrates its compatibility with the apparent teachings of the Shariah and Qurʾanic doctrines, directing mysticism and philosophy along a unified and harmonious path toward the recognition of the "Light of the heavens and the earth".

Keywords: Personal Unity of Being; Graded Unity of Being; Shadow Unity of Being; Unity of Witnessing; Generic Unity of Being.