



Existentialism or Essentialism as Approached by MullaSadra and Hakim Rajabali

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Abstract

The problem of existentialism is one of the significant disputes of Islamic philosophy in the past few centuries. Based on the common consensus, existence is original. This paper embarks on answering the question that “To what extent can the common consensus be deemed as authentic?” To do so, a historical-analytic method is adopted to review the approaches of two major scholars of existentialism and essentialism, namely MullaSadra and Hakim Rajabali, as well as historical background of this dispute. The findings suggest that although the common consensus dictates that MullaSadra’s existential approach is correct and Hakim Rajabali’s essentialism is improper and inadmissible but existentialism and essentialism are two different interpretations of statements of previous scholars, especially Farabi and Avicenna. Therefore, theorists’ disagreements on existentialism and essentialism have principal and literal bases.

Keywords: *Existentialism; Essentialism; Mullasadra; Hakim Rajabali*

Introduction

A principal problem of traditional philosophy and Islamic philosophy to Muslims is the relationship between essence and existence and the type of association between the two. Some scholars associate the distinction between existence and essence with Aristotelian philosophy and some think of it as rooted in philosophy of Plato or Kindi. They all offer their own reasons and rational but it is noteworthy that apart from mental dissociation of existence from essence, there are actual and metaphysical distinctions, too. The philosophers commonly take such distinctions as an invention of Muslim philosophers such as Farabi and Avicenna.

The distinction between existence and essence constitutes one of the critical philosophical approaches of Muslim philosophers. This can be deemed as the first step in their existential thinking. To describe existence and essence, Farabi used the terms “existence” (Arez) and “essential” (Lazem). The term, “existence” refers to what occurs out there while “essence” is a quality which cannot be separated from an essence. Taking any possibly existing being as made up of essence and existence forms the basis of metaphysics as viewed by Avicenna and Farabi. This implies that human mind can analyze external

objects as constituted by essence and existence. Therefore, neither existence is the same as essence nor the essence of beings external to their essence. Therefore, any being requires a cause which is essentially existing (Farabi, 1993: 42).

This point is nowhere to be found in Aristotelian philosophical system and it can be counted as one of the major differences between Aristotelian and Islamic systems of philosophy.

In other words, one may suggest that Farabi took any being as made up of an existence and an essence. Farabi took existence as external to essence and this distinction is perceived not only as a mental affair but an external affair which can be discovered by human mind. Therefore, being in the world out there are divided in our mental analysis into an existence and an essence. Beings are separated from each other due to their essence but the essence is identical for any and every being. Following Farabi, these perceptions were further developed by Avicenna. But over time, these perceptions were wrongfully attributed to Avicenna.

After Avicenna, the distinction between existence and essence and externality of existence to essence were differently perceived by Muslim philosophers such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Sheikh Eshraq, and Ibn Rashid among others but this finally paved the way for discussion of existentialism or essentialism. This was the pinnacle of philosophical approach among Muslim philosophers.

The main question to raise is where in the universe, existence or essence is original and real? This two-dimensional question was first raised by Mirdamad (2003-2007: 504-507). So, the philosophers living before Mirdamad cannot be deemed as advocates of existentialism or essentialism as it's currently perceived by Muslims' philosophical system. As to the discussions among Muslim philosophers which can be perceived as cornerstone of Mirdamad's two-dimensional question, one could say that one of them is concerned with existence of a natural whole at the outside and the other is concerned with lack of existence and essence of an object in the world out there. The notion of originality or validity of essence is typically raised as a part of the discussion of "existence of a natural whole out there" and the philosophers before Mirdamad typically believed in existence of a general whole in the outside world (i.e. essentialism). The notion of existentialism was first introduced by Sohrevardi as something associated with "rational reasoning". He advocated the validity of existence and lack of its real manifestation in the world out there (Sohrevardi, 1977: 162-167).

Therefore, one may note that the philosophers before Sohrevardi embarked on the discussion of "existence of an external natural whole" and concluded that essence is original but they didn't deny the theory of existentialism so as to suggest essentialism. Even concerning Sohrevardi who inferred existentialism through essentialism, one should note that he didn't intend to answer the question that Mirdamad raised. Rather, he solely faced the problem of essentialism and he didn't know much about the second aspect of Mirdamad's question. So, one may suggest that the basis and origin of Mirdamad's two-aspect question is dealing with an original existence or essence. As a result, he deals with rational validity of Sohrevardi's perceptions.

MullaSadra (1571) was one of Mirdamad's top student and leader of the main movement of Isfahan School. Similar to his lecturer, MullaSadra initially advocated essentialism but later on, he was more inclined toward existentialism. Although the notion of existence was to some extent addressed by previous scholars, MullaSadra put emphasis on the notion of existence by alluding to existentialism and he pointed to certain reasons for emphasizing that. As a result. He made valuable conclusions on that matter. As Prof. Sayed Hassan Nasr noted, existentialism revolutionized the Aristotelian framework of previous Islamic philosophy and turned metaphysics not an attribution of a being but the fundamental essence of that being. Existentialism offered a novel perception of deepest form of reality since everything is an existence or manifestation of the verb "do", "be" or "divine order". By introducing this principle, MullaSadra manifested an association which could interlink every degree of reality and so, he revived the principle of "pantheism" which dominates the Islamic mysticism and philosophy (Nasr, 1992: 48).

Some scholars presume that the problem of existentialism was raised before MullaSadra in mystical scholars' books and treatises. But one should note that MullaSadra's existentialism is premised on suspicion of existence while mystics' existentialism is based on the notion of personal unity. In terms of suspicion of existence, the reality of existence is the same but it has degrees and levels. As to the notion of personal unity, the existence of a person is solely manifested in the essentially existing divinity. Therefore, diversity in the universe is not real as it solely points to the real truth (Jami, 2002:21).

Hakim Rajabali, a student of AbolghasemMirfendereski was an open-minded philosopher who led a philosophical movement against MullaSadra's one. Taking Quran verse and Islamic narratives into account, he rejected existentialism and its implications such as spiritual commonality of existence, unity and suspicion of degrees of existence. He believed that existentialism and spiritual commonality it presumes puts the divinity in the same level as creatures and so, it doesn't go with monotheism, Quran verses and Islamic narratives. As a result, he protested against MullaSadra's perception of existentialism. Instead, he pointed to literal commonality of existence between God and other beings and he presumed certain contrasts between different beings (Ashtiani, 2000: 241).

Historical Background

Aristotle took the nature of things the same as their reality. He called it as "essence" and divided it into 10 categories. In Farabi's philosophy, existence and essence are distinct but so close to each other that they can be taken as two manifestations of a single notion. From his viewpoint, essence has two types: dividable and non-dividable. In the first category, essence has 3 meanings. The first meaning refers to totality, the second meaning refers to the non-dividable or every part which makes up the integrity of the whole, and the third meaning refers to each and every part of the whole. The first meaning refers to a noun, the second meaning refers to a limit and the third meaning refers to kind, material, and appearance of each constituting part. There are different philosophical implications for existence and being for things which are essential dividable and things which are not. In the case of dividable essence for which the general meaning is imparted through wholeness and meaning of constituents is dependent on integrity of the parts, existence and being refer to two different meanings. In a dividable essence in which general meaning is holistically determined and meaning of the parts is dependent on their integrity, existence and being refer to two different meanings. A being owes its general meaning to its whole appearance and its constituents' meaning is dependent on its kind and material of each part. In a non-dividable essence, existence and being pose the same meaning. As the review of Farabi's statements suggest, he doesn't take the meanings of existence and essence as strictly independent and distinct (Farabi, 1986: 116-117). Avicenna reinforced and emphasized Farabi's distinction between existence and essence so as to take it the basis of theological discussions.

Avicenna took essence self-referentially by ignoring things other than itself. In his opinion, when we face an external being, our mind divides that being into two parts of existence and essence. Avicenna believed that when it comes to essential level, essences have an actuality and a presence in the world out there. But their actuality and manifestation cannot fake those of God. When it comes to nature, Avicenna took essence as something which doesn't admit another thing and every quality, including mutual qualities, is excluded from it. He took the nature of something as an external affair and therefore, superior to distinct existence of beings. Before creation, the essence of a being is annexed to divine essence but after creation, a being is associated with similar beings out of itself (Avicenna, 1405: 206-207). In addition, he attributes two other meanings to essence. One meaning takes essence as generally applicable to numerous items and the other attributes certain qualities and limits to the essence which makes it distinct (ibid: 200-201).

Avicenna was among the first Muslim philosophers who referred to proving the existence of God and inference and description of his qualities as a supernatural problem in his philosophical system. Avicenna's approach is premised on existence overshadowing the essence. This theory is nowhere to be

found in ancient Greek philosophy. This is why Averroes criticized Avicenna as he believed that Avicenna deviated from Aristotelian stance in suggesting his theory (Averroes, no date: 313).

There is no consensus among scholars on Avicenna's perception of limits, mental limits and analysis of existence in relation to essence. However, most scholars suggest that Avicenna embarked on a rational analytical perception (IbrahimiDinani, 2010: 300-311).

Reference to three pillars of necessity, possibility and avoidance in Aristotelian philosophical works is mostly rational and intended to clarify certain issues. However, Avicenna's philosophical system used those pillars metaphysically by discussing it in relation to existence and essence of diverse items. Therefore, rational framework of the three pillars were used in metaphysical realm and they were used for primary existential discussions. In Avicenna's philosophical system, the Aristotelian four causes are discussed differently by using the theory of distinction of existence and essence. Meanwhile, incapability is addressed from existential and essential perspectives. Avicenna took matter and form causes as associated with essence, efficient and final cause of existence (Avicenna, 1375: 549). He emphasized on efficient cause and took it as a real and original cause so as to offer an existential picture of it and to refer other causes to it. Therefore, he takes the final cause as the efficient cause for causality of efficient cause. Then, he takes the efficient cause as contributor to matter and form causes (Avicenna, 1375: 556/2).

Mirdamad was the first Muslim philosopher to suggest the circularity of the problem of existentialism or essentialism. He advocated existentialism but MullaSadra, his student, followed Mirdamad's path for a while before joining the opposite camp. To Mirdamad, existence has an infinitive denotation which can be solely inferred from essence of a subject as soon as the creator minted the subject. That denotation (i.e. meaning) comes after the essence and it has no manifestation or acquisition case (Mirdamad, 1385: 358/2; Mirdamad, 1367: 196-197). From his perspective, there is no existence in the world out there which can be added to one's essence. Rather, essence is realized by creation of the creator. Existence is solely an infinitive meaning which can be abstracted from and realized by essence. It doesn't imply the meaning of a name which itself denotes an external reality (Mirdamad, 2006: 358/2).

Natural Universal

The scholars typically advocate a natural universal which leads them to believe in existence of people in the world out there. This signifies taking essence as original because natural universal is the same as essence. In addition, scholars mostly point to mixed essence or essence as something external and this could imply essentialism too.

Avicenna took the natural universal as independent of its manifestations. In other words, as being is not an essential part of different categories, manifestations are not a part of natural universal because whether the natural universal is not simultaneously in the mind or out of it, it is not dependent on a distinct condition while it actually exists in subjects. He took manifestation of natural universal in subjects as manifestation of parts to the whole. Since external subjects are a combination of their elements, the natural universal is realization of the potential (Avicenna, 145: 201-205). Avicenna's statement takes the natural universal as devoid of conditions, and actualized on its own while enjoying the divine favor.

The conflict between existentialism and essentialism dates back to Mirdamad's era but that wasn't the case during the life of Avicenna. The latter advocated the precedence of essence to existence, actualization and realization of essence. As a result, the essence and nature of objects are also reflected in subjects and individuals out there. On the other hand, he noted that essence is not something that God created as creation is an alienable notion to essence. In order to realize essence, existence should be added to essence of creatures (Avicenna, 1405: 207-208). These ambiguous statements were made due to the fact that during Avicenna's life the notions of existentialism and essentialism hadn't yet been raised. That's why he offered a distinct viewpoint depending on relevance of the subject.

Avicenna divided existence into two, namely general and specific or notion and manifestation. The general or confirmatory existence is solely a general notion which applies to the whole universe. This general notion is an essential and vivid affair which is immediately depicted in the mind. In contrast, a specific being denotes a specific existence which is associated with deep roots of other beings and it is outside the realm of concept which makes it inaccessible within the philosophical thinking of Avicenna. The general existence conceptually includes the possible and the necessary while the specific existence is the same as possible and essentially specific essence (Avicenna, 1375: 15-31).

The meaning of essence to Avicenna is not that clear but he offers certain inferences which imply that essence and existence of any object are identical. He noted, for every object reality is a quality and the distinct reality makes up the essence of that object. As noted before, a specific existence is divided into two parts, namely the essential and the possible and it is not accessible to human (Avicenna, 1405: 42). Therefore, one may note that by distinction between existence and essence, Avicenna didn't imply a specific existence. Instead, he took existence as a definite general existence because from his viewpoint, a distinct existence and essence are the same.

Mirdamad took existence as something with infinitive denotation. In his works, existence as denoting a definitive meaning or a meaning referring to an external reality cannot be found (Mirdamad, 1385: 358; Mirdamad, 1367: 196-197). Sometimes, existence has a definite meaning (i.e. to be) which guarantees a relation with the agent and only divine favor can impose it on external objects. Other times, it's deemed as a gerund (i.e. being). In the latter case, it is endowed on an object by immediate intervention of divinity. It is the latter interpretation that makes up the existential viewpoint of MullaSadra and his followers. Mirdamad divided essence into four levels:

- 1- Conditional on object. In this case, we have an absolute essence which is intertwined with an object which has a unifying composition.
- 2- Non-conditional: In this case, we have an absolute essence which is independent of anything but itself.
- 3- Partially non-conditional: This implies the absolute nature which is intertwined with something from certain viewpoint but it's independent of other things.
- 4- Dividable non-conditional: This refers to the absolute nature which is intertwined with its underlying subjects but independent of them from rational analysis point of view.

Concerning natural universal, Mirdamad noted that it is not permissible for nature to exist if there is an object but there is an object non-conditioned absolute nature or a partially non-conditional nature. This is because in this case, the object is separated from its absolute nature and he takes the object non-conditioned absolute nature as natural universal (Mirdamad, 1367: 148).

Therefore, Mirdamad took natural universal as related to existence of natural subjects which are ambiguously unified with an external natural subject and they are superior to external natural subject in terms of extensiveness. As noted before, one may suggest that Mirdamad followed Avicenna in taking essence as the distinct existence which is realized by creator's act of creation. The meaning of existence as something distinct from essence is the same infinitive meaning of existence.

Based on above statements concerning the theories of Farabi, Avicenna and Mirdamad, one may say that essence as an answer to the question of what-ness of an object is not addressed in none of the theories. Their statements imply that they all didn't just take essence as what true nature of an object refers to, something in contrast with essence, as they included existence and its qualities in the notion "essence" too. In addition, all of them took existence as an infinitive meaning (i.e. to be).

MullaSadra's Proofs of Existentialism

MullaSadra noted that between essence and existence, existentialism follows essence in its realization and nature but that does not mean that existence affects essence. Rather, the association of essence with existence is like shadow to the object that sheds the shadow. So, this is not a matter of

influence. So, existence is essentially there but essence is realized due to existence. Existence is autonomously and essentially there and essence is a consequence of existence (MullaSadra, 1981: 75; MullaSadra, 1360: 71-161). Mohaqeq Sabzevari, one of the critics of MullaSadra's transcendent wisdom, took an original notion as the one which has at least one subject and external manifestation (Sabzevari, 1981: 54/1). However, Morteza Motahari, another critic of MullaSadra's notion of transcendent wisdom, not the purpose of existentialism or essentialism is that we take a real affair from two distinct perspectives. These perspectives refer either to the external aspect or mental or attributional aspect (Motahari, 1997: 496/6). In order to prove existentialism, MullaSadra used different arguments like the following.

First Proof: Essence is nothing other than itself and it has the same association with existence and lack of it. If existence is credited, essence can't exit from state of equality. Otherwise, circularity will be essential. So, existence is the origin of manifestations (MullaSadra, 1375: 188).

Second Proof: In this argument, the difference between external existence and mental existence is used to prove existentialism.

If an original essence and existence is credited, the external and perceived (i.e. mental) existence will not different because based on theory of mental existence the external essences with all of their effects will be realized in the mind. In contrast, based on the notion of essentialism, essences have certain effects in the physical and mental world. So, if existence is original, the mental fire should burn like a physical fire out there but that's not the case (MullaSadra, 1342: 12).

Third Proof: If existence is not original it will not have kinds and they'll lack a real constituent (e.g. a person) because the essence of a mind which is general can be allocated among lots of people even if it's allocated for thousands of times. So, people are a type of essence outside of existence which need another affair whose nature is the same as the people. That other affair is existence (MullaSadra, 1342: 14-15).

Hakim Tabrizi's Reasons for Essentialism

In contrast to MullaSadra, Hakim MullaRajabaliTabrizi tended toward essentialism. From his perspective, existence is an external affair as it's secondary to essence. Originality as essentially external realization and the secondarity signifies a consequential external realization (Tabrizi, 1386: 65). From his perspective, existence has an infinitive and descriptive meaning which is conditional on something and not conditional on essence (Ashtiani, 1378: 512-514). Qazi Said Qomi, one of the major students of Hakim Tabrizi, believed that existence is an object's existing but not the object itself. Existence is something by which an object is described and it's any target of description other than the qualities for describing it (Qomi, 1381: 159).

In order to prove his claim on essentialism, Hakim Tabrizi used the following:

Tabriz believed that essence is called so as it's not something other than itself. So, an essence in the external domain is not solely an essence but an essence plus existence. Since essence is essential and existence is a function of and secondary to it, so creation is initially done to essence and then to existence. As a result, essence is essentially unknown while existence is consequentially unknown (Tabrizi, 1386: 55-56).

As the above statements vividly suggest, Hakim Tabrizi took the existence of essence as presumed. Then, he analyzed essence for what it is so as to conclude that existence should also be an external affair while it's derivatively essential and secondary. So, essence should exist before existence. In addition, he takes the association between essence and existence as cause and effect while MullaSadra took the association between existence and essence as a credited and original.

Tabrizi took the imposition of existence on essence as possible if the source of imposition is already innate in the essence. As a result, one could note that a human being is existence only if these an existence in the outer world in human beings. For instance, the statement, “an object is white” is correct only if there is whiteness in an object and whiteness is conditional on the object. Alternatively, an object can be mobile the world out there is there is movement in that world (Tabrizi, 1386:57-58).

Following his proof for coexistence of existence with essence in the world out there, Tabrizi concluded that existence is necessary and a consequence of essence. When existence follows and is a secondary to something, the creator’s act of creation is bestowed initially to the essence and then to the existence. This is because it’s impossible for creator to create the secondary (i.e. the effect) before he creates the primary (i.e. the cause). In a similar vein, it is impossible to talk about parity before the number 4 (Tabrizi, 1386: 64-65).

In addition, common languages are premised on creation of essence. For instance, it is commonly said, “somebody moves and writes” instead of saying, “somebody awards movement and writing an existence”.

To explain these statements further, Hakim Tabrizi noted, “Sometimes, a particular language is commonly used among a particular community and other times, there a common language among a lot of people or lots of nations. The first type of common language can’t be perceived as aligned with reality but the second type of common language is realistic and literal (Tabriz, 1386: 65-66). This is due to coordination and alignment of the language with public taste or involvement of divine figures. The alignment with public taste is itself caused by congregation of different nations while involvement of divine figures is inspired by revelation (Tabrizi, 1386: 66-67).

Later on, Hakim Tabrizi further explains his perception of ambiguity of essence. He notes that creator embarks on creating essence instead of the fact that creator takes essence as the basis (ibid, 68-69).

Supporting Hakim Tabrizi’s statements, one may note that essentialism is a publically accepted viewpoint if “us” in association with the term “essence” is a associative and not explanatory. In the first case, the “us” refers to external realities and “us” for “them” and not a mental questioning of external facts.

Discussion

Izutsu (1990: 52) suggested that the metaphysical distinction between essence and existence was discovered by Islamic philosophers because in Aristotelian’s metaphysical system, the distinction played an insignificant role. Aristotelian’s world is actually existence and existing is not something to be raised about it. In contrast, Avicenna’s worldview is religious. So, the main concern of Islamic philosophy is the distinction.

Farabi promoted Aristotelian rational distinction between essence and existence to a metaphysical distinction. In his opinion, creations are certain essences which God creates by awarding them with existence (ibid, 60). Avicenna extended Farabi’s bipartite approach to essence and existence. Avicenna suggested that possibly existing creatures have certain essences which are sometimes accompanied by existence and other times they lack existence. Avicenna (1375: 96) noted, “You got to know that you know the meaning of triangle but you doubt where any triangle exists out there”. He also believed that essential beings sometimes owe their existence to another being and so he refers to the possible distinction between the possibly and the essentially existing. No other being than God is essentially existing as he is the only being that is so but others are a mix of essence and existence (ibid, 43).

Avicenna note that compared with existence and lack, essence lacks requirement. He suggested that as long as existence is not bestowed on essence by God, the essence will lack any external

manifestation. In other words, he took essence as neither single nor plural. He suggested that this singularity or multiplicity is not an inseparable quality of essence but something that is externally imposed on it (Avicenna, 1405: 201-203).

Therefore, one can't take Avicenna as an advocate of essentialism because although he believed in a natural universal in the external world and took the association of the natural universe with beings the same as the association between fathers and children, but he didn't allude to credited status of existence. Rather, he suggested external imposition of existence on essence by divinity. Meanwhile, Avicenna can't be regarded as an advocate of existentialism because apart from belief in realization of natural universal in the external world, he doesn't allude to MullaSadra's principle and conditions of existentialism such as division of existence and unification of existence and essence in the world out there. Explaining these principles and conditions takes a lot of space.

Similar to Farabi, Avicenna as a Muslim scholar embarked on philosophical explanation of the principle of creation while this problem wasn't there in Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle took causality as the source of change and not the source of existence. Quran introduces God as the sole creator of beings As AlamaTabatabai, the major Quran scholar explained the verse 42 of Surah al Najmsaying, "Whatever exists of a being in the universe, either the being's existence and its consequences, has its source either directly or indirectly to the divinity" (Tabatabai, 1417: 77/19).

Existentialism and unity of existence is one of the most significant basis of MullaSadra's transcendent wisdom but such presumptions were not held by previous scholars like Avicenna who believed in separation of existence from essence.

Based on MullaSadra' existentialism, essence is a function of existence. In other words, essence has a derivative and subordinate status but such understanding of essence is suspicious to philosophers who didn't join the camp of existentialism or essentialism. There are phrases in Avicenna's books which take essence as independent and oftentimes they take essence before imposition of existence as definite and stable. In *Al-Shafa'a*, Avicenna notes, "A color is an object due to its status of being a color but it's something else in terms of its existence" (Avicenna, 1405: 352). Elsewhere, he noted, "The meaning and essence of final cause for which an object is realized is a cause for causality of the efficient cause" (*ibid.*). Yet, elsewhere he suggested, "The initially expansive essence has no multiplicity while an active wisdom initially requires multiplicity because wisdom has an essence the existence of which is imposed by the First Essence" (Avicenna, 1379: 218).

Taking existentialism into account, MullaSadra suggested that what makes the external reality at first and essentially is existence. So, essence is actually existence in the world out there. This means existence and essence are both a source of influence and not parallel (MullaSadra, 1981: 287/2).

In other words, MullaSadra took the association between essence and existence as two sides of a coin. So, he noted that essence is not something separate from existence and realization of essence is the same as realization of existence. Elsewhere, Sadra noted that solely existence has an external manifestation and it fill in the world out there while essence is solely perceived in one's mind (MullaSadra, 1981: 49-89/1).

So, one may suggest that the essence perceived by MullaSadra as an external affair is essence as revelation and not essence as nature of an object. This is what Avicenna supported.

MullaSadra emphasized that by existence, he means its nominal or real meaning (MullaSadra, 1981, 63/1). The difference between infinitive and gerund is that infinitive has a descriptive and conditional status while gerund is independent and self-sufficient.

MullaSadra's arguments were examined and critiqued during and after his lifetime. Some scholars such as Haeri Mazandarani in "Avicenna's Wisdom" and Mirza Javad Tehrani in "What are mystic and sophysaying?" criticized MullaSadra's arguments and took them as cyclical. In contrast, some

scholars such as HaeriYazdi in his “General Science” and Javadi Amoli in “Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtum” endeavored to deal with opponents of MullaSadra’s arguments. To do that, they modified the logical structure of MullaSadra’s arguments so as to deal with their alleged ambiguity and favoritism.

It seems that MullaSadra’s arguments emphasized on existentialism and credited status of essence by taking essence as having a general and special denotation. Meanwhile, proponents of essentialism and credited status of essence perceived essence with its general denotation as something in the world out there.

Tabrizi perceived essence as a primary factor versus the secondary one which implies that essence presupposes existence. So, creation of essence is accompanied by realization of existence and existence is the external requirement of essence (Tabrizi, 1386: 64-65). So, essence and existence have no independent and external creation and realization. However, existence accompanies essence. In other words, creation is initially done to essence and then to existence. Meanwhile, despite of his belief in accompaniment of existence and essence he ranks essence as higher than existence.

As Tabrizi’s statements suggest, he based his argument on the notion of “creation”. Then, he used certain terminology and grammar to support his statements. As a result, he acknowledged the literal commonality of existence and dissimilarity of creator and its creators. To further support his viewpoint, he referred to some Quran verses and Islamic hadiths.

It seems that he didn’t distinguish between notion and its manifestation but took them as intertwined. He presumed that by taking the general denotation of existence, commonality of external manifestation of existence is necessary inferred. In other words, he took the divine existence as equivalent with mental conception of existence while other beings are created based on equality and parallel. So, he advocated similarity of existence between creator and creatures while the notion of existence has numerous manifestations and degrees. The divinity occupies the top degree while other beings take the lower ones.

A review of relevant books and papers on approaches of MullaSadra and Tabrizi to this matter suggests that despite of critiques of each approach and relevant responses to them, there are two different understanding of previous scholars’ statements especially Farabi and Avicenna on existence and essence. This implies that their agreements are primarily in principle as both of them took external reality as essential. MullaSadra and his followers took the external reality as existence while Tabrizi and his students such as Qazi Saeed Qomi took the external reality as essence. In other words, the reality of an object which essentialist scholars call essence is referred to as existence by advocates of existentialism. The researchers who contrasted these two approaches and preferred MullaSadra’s approach to that of Tabrizi (e.g. Amini&SaidiMehr, 2015: 1-18) noted that such a comparison is unreasonable and imprecise.

Conclusion

The review of approaches of existentialist scholars such as MullaSadra along with scholars of essentialism such as Hakim RajabaliTabrizi suggests that they had different perceptions of statements of previous scholars such as Farabi and Avicenna. Existentialism and essentialism both take the external reality as an essential affair. The same external reality that essentialisms call it essence is referred to as existence by existentialists. The researchers who compared these two approaches and preferred one approach to the other didn’t pay attention to these different perceptions. From MullaSadra’s perspective, existence as approached by previous scholars has nominal denotation and it’s conditional on essence. However, Tabrizi took essence as having an infinitive denotation and conditional on another affair. These disagreements are due to the fact that existentialism or essentialism were not raised for and by previous scholars. Therefore, their statements on existence and essence are not consistence and while dealing with any subject they talked about existence and essence according to its relevance.

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