

A DEFENDER OF AN "EXISTENCE": MULLĀ ṢADRĀ ON *MUMKIN*

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ملخص

يناقش هذا البحث عن استعمال اصطلاح "الممكن" في فكرة ملا صدره بداية من اول فكرة استخدام هذه الكلمة كموضوع في إطار القواعد اللغوية. وعلى سبيل الخصوص معنى كلمة "الممكن" من جهة أصل الوجود والميتافيزيقا. بما في ذلك البحث عن تلك الكلمة قبل دخولها في فكرة ملا صدره. في مثل بعض كتابات الفلاسفة اليونانيين، وعلى رأسهم أرسطو، أفلاطون، والفلاسفة المسلمين القديماء. وذلك نبين تسهيل للدراسات عن الاستخدام الفلاسفي تلك الكلمة في فكرة ملا صدره. وفي هذا المقال يبحث الكاتب أيضا عن التدرج التاريخي لفكرة "الممكن" وأثرها النظري. أما عن فكرة "الممكن" عند ملا صدره نفسها سيبحثها الكاتب في آخر البحث بعد المقارنة بينها وبين الفكرة نفسها عند المفكرين الآخرين.

Abstrak

Untuk memudahkan pembahasan tentang penggunaan filosofis (ontologis dan metafisik) terma "mumkin" dalam wacana Mullā Ṣadrīan, dalam tulisan berikut ini akan disajikan penyusunan historisitas ide dimulai dari penggunaan konsep tersebut dalam struktur bahasa; terutama sekali adalah makna kata mumkin secara ontologis dan metafisik. Termasuk dalam pembahasan berikut adalah terma "mumkin" jauh sebelum terma tersebut dimasukkan dalam wacana Mullā Ṣadrā, seperti dalam karya-karya filosof Yunani: Aristoteles, Neoplatonisme dan filsafat Islam klasik. Historisitas ide mumkin dan konsekuensi konsepnya akan dipaparkan. Mumkin versi Mullā Ṣadrā sendiri akan dikupas terakhir setelah perbandingan-perbandingan dengan konsep mumkin yang mendahului Mullā Ṣadrā diungkap.

Keywords: existence, possibility, preponderance, quiddity

A. *Mumkin*: Etymology

In common non-philosophical use, the very simple root *m-k-n* of *mumkin* in the Arabic language denotes the position taken by a lizard or locust in hatching its eggs as well as that of a bird.¹ Thus, in its simplest form *m-k-n* relates to the position of a creature in hatching eggs. In common expressions the root was later developed to describe a man's position, as in the statement "the men occupied his dwelling (*sakānātibim*), houses (*manāzilātibim*) and places (*makanātibim*)." In the Qur'an, we find the verse, "act based on your position [*i`malū `alā makanātikum*]." This probably means, "your field of work or ability". Meanwhile, in more sophisticated usage *m-k-n*, is closely related to position of a thing generally speaking.² Of course it would be wrong to think the lexical root of *mumkin* can determine the philosophical import of *mumkin*. Nevertheless, the reference to the position in common usage of the word parallels its technical meaning. For example, among early and well-known philosophers, Abū `Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Sīnā (979-1037)³ uses *tamakkun* in the sense of occupying a place, this may relate to the term ἐν τοπω (εἶνυχι) in Aristotelian philosophical discourse, according to Goichon's findings.⁴ It was on this basis that the root came to be used to describe the *position of beings* in terms of whether their existence was necessary, contingent or impossible.

¹The position of a bird while hatching its eggs is commonly related to this root *m-k-n*, as may be seen in the tradition of the Arabs in *jāhiliyyah* times watching a bird while it hatched its eggs and to observe towards which side it fell. Thus, when the bird fell to the right side it meant a good future, and when to the left side, unlucky one. The Prophet Muḥammad prohibited this tradition for he saw it as amounting to *shirk* (polytheism), Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-`Arab al-Muḥīṭ*, eds. Yousef Khayat and Nadir Merachli, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Lisān, [n.d.]), p. 517.

²Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-`Arab*, pp. 516-517.

³A. M. Goichon, "Ibn Sīnā," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 941-947; C. Brocklemann, *Geschichte des Arabischen litteratur* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937) vol. 1, pp. 452-458, sup. 1, pp. 812-829; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962), pp. 94-98; A. M. Goichon, *La philosophie d'Avicenne et son influence en europe médiévale* (Paris: Librairie d'Amerique et d'Orient, 1951); Louis Gardet, *La pensée religieuse d'Avicenne* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951).

⁴A.M. Goichon, *Vocabulaires Comparés d'Aristote et d'Ibn Sīnā: Supplément au lexique de la langue Philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1939), p. 33.

B. Possibility: Western Usage

In the Western philosophical context, the discussion of possibility has continued ever since the time of Aristotle. In Aristotelian philosophy, possible is illustrated in the following proposition. "*It is possible that p,*" means "*it is not necessary that not-p.*"⁵ Through distinguishing between formal and relative possibility, Aristotle spoke mainly in terms of *potentiality*, which had a considerable impact on the later Islamic philosophy, most of all that of Ibn Sīnā. One illustration of this sense of potentiality is man's ability to read, which makes it possible for him to be a potential reader. To put it differently, it is possible for him, based on his ability in reading, to be a reader or not. Among Aristotle's successors, Neoplatonists believed that possibility is not a fact or state of affairs but a thing lying within *nous* (intelligence), and that this awaits being actualized into existence. Since these ideas are in the divine mind, they will be actualized according to the perfection of that mind.⁶ From this understanding of possibility, roughly speaking, combining of the potentiality of Aristotle and the world of ideas or forms of Plato was an obvious step to take. We also find the topic addressed by medieval and modern Western philosophers such as Aquinas (1225-1274), Hobbes (1588-1679), Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-1677), and Hume (1711-1776).⁷ However, it would be misleading to discuss them all here, for our main focus is Islamic philosophy and particularly that of Mullā Ṣadrā.

⁵Bruce Aune, "Possibility," *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, vol. 6 (New York: Macmillan company and Free Press, 1967), p. 419.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 420.

⁷We will present briefly their notion of possibility. 1. Aquinas relates possibility with God's creation. Creation involves the idea of selection of some ideas, but not all-possible things are actual, and all actual things are not necessary. 2. Hobbes expanded the idea, adding that when we do not know the cause of the existence of a thing, as its existence requires cause, we call it contingency. This contingency opposes necessity. 3. Descartes argues that what is clearly and distinctly conceivable is possible. 4. According to Spinoza impossibility is that an object's definition could contain contradiction. 5. For Hume, a possible object corresponds to logical consistency. According to him, contradictory things are still possible, but we cannot conceive of them. In fact, these things never imply contradiction, so we have to differentiate between what is possible and what is conceivable. See, *Ibid.*, pp. 419-424.

Perhaps the first Muslim philosopher to respond to Aristotle's theory of potentiality was Abū Yusūf Ya`qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (d. 866)⁸ who nevertheless did not take seriously the whole issue of possible existence. For him, it is merely a fanciful concept.⁹ The affinity between possibility in Aristotelian thought and that of Ibn Sīnā is discussed at length by Goichon in his *Vocabulaires comparés d'Aristote et d'Ibn Sīnā*. According to Goichon, one of the forms of m-k-n, i.e., *imkān*, in Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, which refers to possibility, closely corresponds to δύναμις. More properly speaking this sort of possibility refers to *quwwah* (potential). Moreover, *mumkin* for Ibn Sīnā simply represents the opposite of "necessary," and this corresponds to τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον in Aristotle. In addition, Ibn Sīnā saw necessity as being of two kinds: positive necessity (*wajub*) and negative necessity or impossibility. In this sense, possibility is the opposite of impossibility [δυνατός; τὸ δυνατόν] as it was for Aristotle as well.¹⁰

C. *Mumkin*: Islamic Philosophical Tradition Prior to Mullā Ṣadrā

Al-Jurjānī (1340-1413) in his *Ta`rīfāt*, gives logical reasons for supporting the opposition of possibility and impossibility (*mumtani`*), by defining *mumtani`* as a thing which requires the nonexistence of its essence. He divides *mumkin* into three, 1. *mumkin bi al-dhāt*, 2. *al-`ammāh*, and 3. *al-kebāṣṣah*. The first type is illustrated by this world itself, whose existence does not require another's existence or non-existence. The possible gist of this simplest form of *mumkin* is that since the world is evident in our eyes, so it is easy to admit the possibility of its existence. The *mumkin al-`ammāh* is in direct opposition to absolute necessity (*ijāb*). For example, saying that fire is hot means its hotness is not a necessity (*mumkin*), or saying that no

⁸Brocklemann, *Geschichte des Arabischen*, sup. 1, p. 372; J. Jolivet and R. Rasheed, "al-Kindī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 5, pp. 122-123.

⁹Ian Richard Netton, *Allah Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1989) pp. 52, 89; Alfred Ivry, "Al-Kindī on First Philosophy and Aristotle's Metaphysic" in George F. Hourani, ed., *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science: Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p. 152.

¹⁰Goichon, *Vocabulaires comparés*, p. 33.

fire is cold, means its coldness is not a necessity (*mumkin*). The final type, namely *khāṣṣab*, is the opposite of both *ijab* and *mumtani`*. For instance, when we say that every man is a writer, this implies the two possibilities of being a writer and not being a writer. So the position of this kind of *imkān* falls between *ijab* and *mumtani`* hierarchically, to be or not.¹¹ The third kind of *mumkin* has a parallel with that of Ibn Sīnā's *imkān* which means "potential." The difference is that Ibn Sīnā clearly refers to this using the technical term *imkān*, whereas al-Jurjānī does not differentiate between *mumkin* and *imkān* but uses the terms *`am* and *khāṣṣab*. One reason for this difference is that the only basis for al-Jurjānī's *mumkin* is that of logic, whereas Ibn Sīnā takes a philosophical point of view, and of course analyzes the topic much more deeply than the former.

Ibn Sīnā's contingency is closely related to the most disputed question among the philosophers of medieval Islam, namely, the issue of existence (*wujūd*) and quiddity (*māhīyah*). Three terms were critical to this discussion: *wājib*, *mumkin* and *mumtani`*. Before attempting to define them, however, it would be helpful to explain what Ibn Sīnā meant by existence [*wujūd*] and essence/quiddity [*māhīyah*]. The easy way to understand these two technical terms, is that when one sees a thing one will immediately perceive its two inseparable aspects, existence and quiddity. A horse, for example, embodies the *idea of the horse* which exists in one's mind and *its shape, form, and color* in the external world; existence and essence are thus combined in the one horse. Both existence and essence are always together, so that every object in the Universe which has quiddity has an additional existence, but this is in the mind. However, for Ibn Sīnā, as Nasr puts it: "although the existence of a thing is added to its essence, *it is the existence which gives each essence, or quiddity, its reality and is therefore principal (aṣl)*. The quiddity of a thing is in fact no more than its ontological limitation abstracted by the mind [*italics mine*]."¹²

¹¹ Abd al-Rahmān `Umayrah Al-Jurjānī *al-Ta`rifāt* (Beirut: `Alām al-Kutub, 1987), p. 286. For more about al-Jurjānī's life and works see, Brocklemann, *Geschichte*, sup. 2, pp. 305-306.

¹² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Subrawardi, Ibn al-'Arabī* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 25-26.

In practice, however, we cannot separate the discussion of existence and essence and the threefold division of necessity, possibility and impossibility. The three terms may be defined as follows:¹³ (1). Since the quiddity of an object cannot stand alone without existence, then when the quiddity is in one's mind and "it cannot accept existence in any way," the object itself cannot possibly exist. One illustration of this case is the concept of a second principle of the Universe which is absurd metaphysically. (2). The so-called potential to exist, or the possibility of existing or not, applies to all creatures in our Universe. All creatures have the same possibility of existence or nonexistence. In other words, each possible thing has the potential to be either necessary or impossible. The latter implying either that it is not necessary or that it is absent now but might exist at any time in the future.¹⁴ (3). In the last category, where quiddity and existence are so closely related that they cannot be separated, and non-existence is impossible, then the existence is necessary (*wājib*). This case is Absolute Being, God, since it is only He whose Essence and Being are the same. The relationship between His Essence and Being is reciprocal, that His Being is Essence and Essence is Being. Necessary Being is unique in the sense that He has Existence in himself and self-subsistence.

Absolute Being is different from all other existences whose existence is added to their essence. The existence of all creatures in the Universe ranks no higher than the second case of contingency, in that they have possibility to exist or not and yet depend on the Absolute Existence who shines continuously His light on them.¹⁵ In addition, in the sense of their potentiality to exist the difference between "possibly existent being" and "necessarily existent being" is evident. To quote Herbert Davidson's description, the former has no necessity "for either its existence or nonexistence (*`adam*); alternatively it is such that whether assumed not to exist or to exist, no impossibility result." Whereas the latter perforce exists;

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁴Herbert A. Davidson, "Avicenna's Proof of the Existence of God as a Necessarily Existence Being," in Parviz Morewedge, ed., *Islamic Philosophical Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 172.

¹⁵Nasr, *Three Muslim*, p. 27.

alternatively, it is "such that when it is assumed not to exist, an impossibility results."¹⁶

Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn `Alī ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-`Arabī (1165-1240),¹⁷ a famous sufi, follows the basic threefold division of the necessity, possibility and impossibility of things. To preserve the uniqueness of the position of the necessary Being, both possible and impossible are assumed to be inferior to and dependant on the necessary Being. In dealing with possible things (*mumkināt*), he sets these in opposition these to the necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*), which the latter "cannot *not be*," in that the former, as is the case in Ibn Sīnā's thought, may or may not exist in the cosmos.

Hence, regarding the *mumkinat* of existence or nonexistence, instances of each are at the same level. When they are an "immutable entity," they remain at the level of nonexistent possible being. Their existence is dependant on circumstances, and of course, ultimately, on God's will. If He assigns *tariḥ* (preponderance) of existence to nonexistence, they become existent possible being, such as is the case with our world.¹⁸ Furthermore, an impossible thing can exist in one's mind or God's in a certain way but cannot come into existence. All possible things, even before becoming into existence, are archetypes or prototypes in the mind of God called *a`yān thābiḥah*.¹⁹ Ibn al-`Arabī states: "If the possible thing were an existent which could not be qualified by nonexistent, then it would be the Real. If it were a nonexistence which could not be qualified by existence then it would be impossible."²⁰ All the possible things

¹⁶Davidson, "Avicenna's Proof", p. 172.

¹⁷For more account about Ibn al-`Arabī's life and works, see A. Ates, "Ibn al-`Arabī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, pp. 707-711; Brocklemann, *Geschichte* vol. 1, p. 441, sup. 1, p. 790; Azhari Kautsar Noer, *Ibn `Arabi Waḥdat al-Wujūd dalam Perdebatan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995); Izutsu Toshihiko, *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism: Ibn `Arabi and Lao-Tzu, Chuang-Tszu* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1966).

¹⁸William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 12.

¹⁹Netton, *Allah Transcendent* 277; A.E. Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Din Ibnul Arabi* (Lahore: Muḥammad Ashraf, 1964), p. 47.

²⁰Ibn al-`Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyah*, ed. O. Yahia, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, n.d.), p. 275.5. trans. William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, p. 82.

whether they have come into existence or not are part of the cosmos. As their existence is dependant upon the will of God through given preponderance, their existence and their nonexistence are still possible things, and thus *their nonexistence does not influence their status of being part of the cosmos*. So everything other than God must be included in the cosmos and defined as possible, while He himself is Necessary existence. Ibn al-‘Arabī also employs these three categories—necessary, possible and impossible—to prove God's existence. The *imkān* (possibility) argument is rational enough to prove that there is God, whose existence is necessary and his nonexistence is impossible.²¹

Unlike Ibn Sīnā who maintains the superiority of existence over quiddity, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Futūḥ Yahyā ibn Ḥabash ibn Amīrak al-Suhrawardī (1153-1191)²² positioned himself against Ibn Sīnā on this point. For the former, quiddity is *asīl*²³ (fundamentally real), whereas existence is *i`tibārī* (mentally posited). For al-Suhrawardī, in defending the *asīl* of quiddity and criticizing the theory of existence of Ibn Sīnā, existence and essence are the same thing; these two components essentially differ at the level of conceptual analysis. Accordingly, this mental difference does not mean real difference. An attempt to differentiate between existence and quiddity is absurd. Furthermore, existence relates to the spatial or temporal as in the following expression, "a thing exists in the house," "in the mind," "in reality," or "at any point in time."²⁴ So this relationship between things

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 82.

²²On al-Suhrawardī's life and works, see Brocklemann, *Geschichte*, vol. 437, sup. 1, pp. 781, 819; S. Van den Bergh, "al-Suhrawardī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., vol. 4 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1936), pp. 506-507; Mehdi Aminrazadi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination* (Surrey: Curzon, 1997).

²³Izutsu concludes that in post-Ibn Sinian thought there were three views regarding positioning existence and quiddity: 1. both are fundamentally real (*asīl*), 2. existence is *asīl* while quiddity is mentally posited (*i`tibārī*), and 3. Quiddity is *asīl* and existence is *i`tibārī*. The first category is the weakest position since it does not explain how both existence and quiddity are in the same position. This doctrine was held by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī. The second position is defended by Mullā Ṣadrā, and the last one by al-Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā's own teacher Mir Dāmād (d. 1631). Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971), p. 100.

²⁴Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality* 112; Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p. 27.

in certain times or places is a product of our reasoning, whereas this relation is added to the quiddity itself which is in the external world, and, of course, real. Another argument made by al-Suhrawardī is that if existence constitutes external reality, then existence itself has to exist as a second existence, and as a third, and so forth *ad infinitum*. Therefore, existence is an absurd concept. The emphasis on the *asīl* of quiddity over existence is closely related to *mumkin*, our focus in this paper. As the notion of existence has no the external form connecting it to our real world, neither does *imkān* (contingency), which is a kind of existence, while existence itself is an attribute of essence. Al-Suhrawardī holds that existence and possibility are only attributes of quiddity. To quote Suhrawardi's own words in his *Kitāb al-Mashārī' wa al-Muṭāharāt* (in Izutsu's translation):

From the fact that the judgment we form on a thing that "it is possible in objective reality" is right, it does not necessarily follow that the "possibility" of that thing is an objective external fact. *Nay, "that it is possible in objective reality" is the content of a judgement which formed by the mind. In a similar way, "that it is possible in the mind (i.e. conceptually)" is also the content of a judgment. Thus "possibility" is but a "mental attribute" (ṣifāh dhibnīyah) which the mind attributes sometimes to what is in the mind and sometimes to what is in the objective reality. Sometimes the mind even forms unconditioned judgments having a neutral relation to both the mind and the objective reality [italics mine].*²⁵

Thus, whereas al-Kindī viewed the Aristotelian potentiality as fanciful, al-Suhrawardī attacked Ibn Sīnā for taking Aristotelian potentiality too seriously, saying that existence including possible things is just a mental construct and an attribute of quiddity. Thus al-Kindī and al-Suhrawardī share similar opinions, in this case.

²⁵Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality*, p. 114. In another occasion Izutsu quotes al-Suhrawardī's words, "I readily admit that "existence", "possibility" and the like are (conceptuality different and distinguishable from the "realities" (i.e. "quiddities") to which *they are attributed*. But I can never accede to the view that these distinguishable elements have their own concrete forms in the extra-mental world [emphasis mine]." (*The Concept and Reality*, p. 113). For another discussion of Mullā Ṣadrā's concept of existence see also, M. Nazami, "Causality and its Relation to the Unity of Existence According to Mullā Ṣadrā's View" (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1994) especially chapt. 2-3, pp. 14-61.

D. "The Existentialist Revolution"²⁶

From the peripatetic approach of Ibn Sīnā, the theosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabī, and the illuminationism of al-Suhrawardī,²⁷ we come to the eclectic approach to *mumkin* favored by Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad, called Akhūnd Mullā Ṣadrā (1572-1640),²⁸ who was born in Shiraz, Ispahan. He is most famous for his attempt at synthesis, which involved his selecting from his predecessor's ideas in the various fields mentioned above, and of course, his accepting or criticizing these ideas. However, Mullā Ṣadrā had his own contribution to make to the discussion of *mumkin*, one that is significant issue of the study of Islamic philosophy generally and particularly the issue of *mumkin* itself.

Before dealing with our subject proper, we have to begin with the issue of *wujūd* (existence), to which *mumkin* is closely associated. To begin with, it is worth noting that Mullā Ṣadrā's concept of existence is in itself revolutionary, as noted by Herman Landolt²⁹ and Henry Corbin. The latter points out that:

Nous savons à considérer que, par métaphysique de l'être donnant de plein droit la primauté à l'acte d'exister, *Molla Ṣadrā opère une révolution qui détrône la vénérable métaphysique de l'essence, dont le règne*

²⁶This section echoes Herman Landolt's designation for Mullā Ṣadrā, see his "Ghazālī and "Religionswissenschaft", " *Asiatische Studien Etudes Asiatiques* 45 no. 1 (1991), p. 57.

²⁷For this claim see Rahman, *The Philosophy*, p. 10.

²⁸We will not present here an account of the life of Mullā Ṣadrā, since a number of books have done this: see, D. McEoin, "Mullā Ṣadrā," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*, vol. 7 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993); Henry Corbin, "Esquisse Biographique" in *Le livre des penetrations metathysiques [Kitāb al-Mashā'ir]* (Teheran: Departement d'Iranologie de l'institute Franco-Iranien, 1964), pp. 1-20; Gobineau, *Les Religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* (Paris: les Editions G. Gres et Cie, 1923), pp. 91-103; E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), pp. 429-430; Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950), pp. 141-143; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, ed. Mehdi Amin Razavi (Surrey: Curzon Press)pp. 271-275, 294-295, in which Nasr also provides a list of Ṣadrā's works, see also note 3.

²⁹However, we find an argument using the doctrine of existence to prove God's existence before Mullā Ṣadrā brought by `Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī (executed 1131). See Landolt, "Ghazālī and "Religionswissenschaft," ", pp. 55-57.

durait depuis de siècles depuis Fārābī, Avicenne et Suhrawardī [italics mine].³⁰

This revolution was begun when Mullā Ṣadrā received special guidance from God (*hadāmī rabbī*), which opened his spiritual eyes to see clearly (*fa-inkashaf lī ghāyat al-inkishāf*). Through God's demonstration (*burhān*) he finally achieved the truth, that existence is a primary reality whereas quiddity is an archetype (*a'yan thābitah*). Existence is illuminated by true Light and then to it is added essential properties and intelligible qualities. The former is self-subsistent and while the latter simply is, quiddity.³¹ Refusing al-Suhrawardī particularly as well as other predecessors, he insisted that quiddity is an element which is far from possessing true Reality; it is a shadow, a reflection, and a similitude of reality, while reality is in fact existence.³² This existence is a self-subsistent entity, whereas quiddity has species and individuality which makes things differ from each other. Quiddity of things makes us possible to give them a definition, genera, and differentia and distinguish them from one

³⁰Henry Corbin, "Introduction" of his translation of *Le livre des penetrations* 62. The reason given by Corbin is that "Car il commande toute la stucture de sa doctrine: la préséance de l'acte d'exister sur la quiddité conditionne la notion de l'existence (wojūd) comme présence (hozūr, hozūr); celle-ci s'exprime en gnoséologie comme l'unification du sujet de la perception (à ses trois degrés: sensible, imaginative, intellective) avec l'objet de la perception; chez le penseur shī'ite, elle permet un approfondissement de l'imāmologie qui dégage tout ce qu'implique la qualification des imām comme Témoins de Dieu (être témoin, être présent à); finalement elle conduit à une métaphysique de l'Esprit, de l'Esprit-Saint créateur, où le sens premier de l'être se révèle non pas comme l'être substantif (l'étant), ni comme l'être à l'infinifitif (l'acte d'être), mais comme l'être à l'impératif."

³¹Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* (Teheran: Departement d'Iranologie de l'Institute Franco-Iranien, 1964) 35, no. 85, with its trans. by Corbin, *Le livre des Penetration* 152; I also used Izutsu's translation, *The Concept and Reality*, p. 104.

³²Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* 4, no.4 : "*Wa ithbat annah al-aql al-thabit fī kull manjūd, wa huwa al-haqīqah; wa mā `adāb ka-`aks wa ḡill wa shabḥ* [Corbin, *Le Livre* 90: Et par démontrer que l'être est le principe positif dans chaque étant (*manjūd*), c'est-à-dire qu'il est la réalité (*haqīqah*). Tout ce qui est autre que l'être est comme un reflet, une ombre, un simulacre; Izutsu: "Existence" is what primarily real in every "existent"; it is the "reality." Everything other than "existence" (i.e. "quiddity") is, on the contrary, like a reflection, a shadow, or similitude]. Other Mullā Ṣadrā's criticism for Ibn Sīnā and al-Suhrawardī, see for example, Bilal Kuspinar, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Criticism of Ibn Sīnā and al-Suhrawardī on the Problem of God's Knowledge," *Islami Arastirmalar* 5, 1 (1991) pp. 45-55.

another. Existence is all a single actualization, which has various stages in terms of higher or lower.³³

If al-Suhrawardī states that the notion of existence is nothing more than an abstraction of the mind or the product of our reasoning, Mullā Ṣadrā expresses a contrary view that *nothing is real other than its existence* and that the reality of everything is its existence.³⁴ Existence is self-subsistence which has no genre (*jins*), no species (*naw'*), and no accident (*'ard*) but is comprehensive including everything.³⁵ On another occasion he emphasizes that we cannot assign any categories to existence, and that existence is the only existence and there is none other outside it. There is no rational existence (*dhahmī*), particular existence (*juḥūd*), universal existence (*'ām*), or proper existence (*kbāṣiy*).³⁶

To those who would ask how one can recognize this truth about existence, Mullā Ṣadrā answers that it can be known only by Gnostics (*'urafā*, pl. of *'arif* or *al-rāsikhūn fī al-'ilm* [those who are given deep-rooted knowledge], Q. 3: 5).³⁷ Nonetheless, although it is reserved only for Gnostics, Mullā Ṣadrā in fact refers to many sources in addition to Gnostic intuition, such as logical deduction, the Qur'ān and traditions of the Prophet.³⁸

We have seen how al-Suhrawardī points out that existence is only in the mind, and that it must be associated with a real thing, i.e., quiddity. Ṣadrā however argues that al-Suhrawardī is inconsistent in depicting God as pure existence or necessary existence, since for him, on the one hand, existence is not real, while on the other, God is necessary existence, i.e., not necessary quiddity. Therefore, for Mullā Ṣadrā existence is a primordial reality, and cannot be said to exist independently of its essence, which will

³³Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* 5, no. 4: "*Ann al-wujūd kulluh ma` tabāyun `anwa`ih mābīyatih wa takhāluf ajnāsih wa fuṣūlih ḥaddan wa ḥaqīqatan jawhar waḥid lah ḥawīyah waḥidab dhat maqamat wa darajāt `āliyah wa naẓīlah.*" Trans. Corbin, *Le livre* p. 90; Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality*, p. 105.

³⁴To quote Ṣadrā's *Mashā'ir* 9, no. 16: "*Ann ḥaqīqab kull shay' huwa wujūdub* [Corbin, *Le livre* p. 107: La réalité de chaque chose, c'est son acte même d'être]."

³⁵Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* 8, no. 12; Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 103.

³⁶Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* 7, no. 9; Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 101.

³⁷Q. 3: 7, but Corbin refers to Q. 3: 5.

³⁸Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual*, p. 276.

result in the development of many more existences. We cannot treat existence as unreal due to its abstraction, since quiddity itself is an abstraction too,³⁹ in the sense that both are immaterial and can be understood only by abstraction. The dynamism of existence later creates essences which are in the mind. Based on their different emphases on whether essence or existence is real, Landolt suggests that it is fair to designate al-Suhrawardī as a type of "essentialist," and Mullā Ṣadrā as an "existentialist."⁴⁰

The confusing problem of the relationship between existence and essence of Mullā Ṣadrā, has led us to question whether the existence is real and essence is added to it, and consequently whether there is a sort of existence of real existence itself, and the existence of essence, *ad infinitum*. The answer is that *existence is the existence of essence itself*. Existence is only one

³⁹Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* 12, no. 22: *Al-mābiyah qad takūn muttabiṣalatan dhibnan wa laysat bi manjūdah fi al-khārij* [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 110: Puisqu'il arrive que la quiddité soit actualisée dans la pensée, sans pour autant exister *in concreto*]."

⁴⁰Landolt, "Ghazālī "Religionswissenschaft", p. 57. Izutsu points out the difference between the use of existence in the existentialism of the West and in that of Islam. The discussion of existence in the West is mainly focused on the question of the existence of "I," "you," "he/she," as a personal being, vis-à-vis this world. Generally speaking, the concern has been caused by the mechanical nature of everything in the industrialized West resulting in the loss of human identity. Therefore the meaning of human for the individual is very crucial, where is the position of the individual as "I," "you," and "he/she?" And what is the meaning of being individual vis-à-vis the world that surrounds it. What is the limitation of being individual vis-à-vis others? By contrast, in Ṣadrā's philosophical point of view, with respect to the existent, everything that surrounds us exists. "It is a table," "It is a chair," etc (Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality*, pp. 26-32). Another very crucial difference is what Nasr refers to as that the discussion of existence in the West regarding the limitation of human being's life. It has to do with the individual who lives in the world among other individuals, ending with his death (*The Islamic Intellectual*, p. 285). In other words, as the individual will end his existence in the world when he dies, so does his existential discussion. The Individual does not exist, using Hedigerian ontology, when he is not among us. On the contrary, roughly speaking, the discussion of existence, in Sadrian ontology, begins before the birth of human beings and continues after their death. We may summarize that existence in Western existentialism refers to that of human beings, whereas in Islamic philosophy it is wider, in the sense that it includes human beings, all of nature, and even God himself. Nonetheless, despite this different use of existence, we are right to use the "existentialist" designation for Mullā Ṣadrā, I think, in opposition to the essentialism of al-Suhrawardī (Landolt, "Ghazālī and "Religionswissenschaft", p. 57).

and is real. There is no other existence of outside of real existent itself,⁴¹ nor existence of essence. Rahman explains it thus: "existence is simply the status of being real, not an attribute of something which is in its own right already something real."⁴²

E. *Mumkin*: Effect of Mullā Ṣadrā 's Revolution

Mullā Ṣadrā does not revolt against his predecessors' division of *wājib*, *mumkin* and *mumtani`*, as it is noted by Nasr, as a division is found since Ibn Sīnā.⁴³ Since the real thing is existence, these three divisions are part of its discussion.

To begin with, Necessary Existence can only be attributed to God. Describing this as Absolute Existence, he states that it is impossible to define it (*ta`rif*), since to give a definition means to restrict Him by description or definition itself. Furthermore, it is impossible to give Him any definition for He cannot be described in terms of genus, differentia, and has no limitation. In spite of our inability to describe Him, however, He is much more evident than any description we could attempt, for God is simply existent and, of course, He exists. His existence is *the most real* existence (*annīyat al-wujūd*), which is much greater than and incomparable to anything else. It is simply that God's existence is necessary and of course anything other than Him occupies a lower position in terms of existence, an existence which moreover is not necessary.⁴⁴

⁴¹Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir* 7, no. 8: *Wa lays li al-wujūd wujūd ākbar yatabaddal `alayh ma inḥifad ma'nāh kharījan wa dhibnan* [Corbin, *Le livre* p. 101: Or l'être, l'exister, ne comporte pas d'autre exister avec lequel il permuerait, tantôt à l'état extramental, tantôt à l'état mental, tandis que son concept se maintiendrait]. See also Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta`āliyah fī al-Asfār al-'Aqḥiyah al-Arba`ah*, ed. Ayāt Allāh Ḥasan Ḥasan Zādah al-Āmilī, vol. 1 (Tehran: Muassasah al-Ṭibā`ah wa al-Nashr Wizārah al-Thaqāfah wa al-Irshād al-Islāmī, n.d.), p. 106.

⁴²Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* 29; Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta`āliyah* vol. 1, p. 106.

⁴³Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual*, p. 281.

⁴⁴Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir* 6, no. 5-7; Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 100.

In dealing with Mullā Ṣadrā's contingency, we have to discuss his concept of creation.⁴⁵ In doing so, we may recall the subject of 1. necessary existence, 2. unfolded existence (*wujūd munbasit*), 3. contingent existence itself, 3. As well as we have to deal with the position of existence and essence at the level of Necessary Existence's emanation, which produces other existences, such as unfolded existence and contingent existence.

To begin with, when the Necessary existence, God, reflects on Himself,⁴⁶ this is on the level of God's existence and results in His first effulgence. The action of self-reflection takes place but once, and not repeatedly. In the sense that His existence and this first effulgence are pure and absolute existence, the two seem to be identical.⁴⁷ However, they are different since the latter is God's actualization, not Himself. This first existence is called unfolding existence (*wujūd munbasit*),⁴⁸ the breath of the

⁴⁵Mullā Ṣadrā presents many concepts of the creation of universe. 1. It is a natural process (*tab'*) for materialism, 2. It is based on the will of God (*qashd*) for Mu'taziltes or without His will for other theologians; 3. God's *riḡā* (voluntary) for peripatetic (*isbraqiyyin*); 4. *ināyah* (divine providence) for philosophers (*hukamā*), 5. It is God's self-manifestation (*tajallī*) for sufi. See, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* p. 58 no. 123, Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 203.

⁴⁶Mullā Ṣadrā presents a variety of evidence for creation: 1. Traditions of Prophet mentioning that God creates, first, either *al-'aql* (intellect), *qalam* (pen), or *nūrī* (light), 2. Quoting Saffār Qummī (Abū Ja'far or Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Farukh) (d. 903) in his *Kitāb Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, that creation begins with *ruh* (spirit), but *ruh* itself is only known by God, 3. This is then supported by another opinion, that of Ibn Bābūyih al-Qummī or Abū Ja'far Muḥammad (d. 991). Creation begins with spirit which consists of holy souls (*nufūs al-muqaddas*) 4. As a synthesis, Mullā Ṣadrā presents the five kinds of spirit: (a). *al-quds* (holy) or *al-'aql al-fa'al* (actual intellect) which is with God; (b). *al-īman* (faith); (c). *al-quwwah* (potential), e.g., *naṭiqah* (intellect) of human; (d). *al-shahwah* (lust), e.g., animalism; (e). *al-mudarrij* (inserted), e.g., in the nutritious and growing process. Finally, Ṣadrā emphasizes that all spirits are lights, but vary in degree of intensity, *all are one existence which has a gradation of intensity*. See, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, pp. 58-63, no. 124-136; Corbin, *Le livre* pp. 204-209.

⁴⁷Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 85; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, p. 37, Penetration 7: "*Ann al-amr al-maj'ul bi-al-dhāt min al-jā'il wa al-fā'iz min al-'illah huwa al-wujūd dūn al-mābiyah* [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 157: Que ce qui est par essence l'objet de l'instauration divine et émane de la cause, c'est l'existence, non pas la quiddité]." In another passage Ṣadrā states: "*Ann al-jā'ilīyah wa al-maj'ulīyah innamā yakunnā bayn al-wujūdāt, lā bayn al-mābiyāt* (*Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, p. 52, no. 115); [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 180: l'acte d'être le sujet Instaureateur (*la jaiīya*) et la situation d'objet instauré (*la majulīya*) interviennent entre les existences (les actes d'être ou d'exister), non pas entre les quiddités]."

⁴⁸At the level of God's throne (*'arsh*), there are three kinds of existence: 1. The existence which does not need others—free existence; 2. The existence which relates and

Merciful (*nafs al-rahmānī*) which spreads into everything (*rahmah wasi`at kull shay`*),⁴⁹ or *al-ḥaqq al-makblūq bih* (created reality).⁵⁰ This pure existence then manifests itself in various forms, producing all possible beings which are still existence but not yet essence. This manifestation of first existence is also described as a light which shines its light into contingency. They are all still in the form of existence not in the external reality (*in concreto*); then contingency manifests itself as quiddity. However, the relationship between quiddity and existence at this level (since existence has various degrees),⁵¹ is of the nature that the more existence something has, the less quiddity there is in it. Since God is pure existence,⁵² He therefore has no quiddity. Hence unfolded existence is the fullest existence compared to other existences, and it has the least quiddity.

Contingent beings are related directly to the absolute existence,⁵³ unfolded existence, or the Breath of the Merciful. They are realities, since they are pure existences without essence. They are actualities not potentialities, since potentialities are more properly applied to matter.⁵⁴ However, the mind cannot conceive of how they could exist being sustained by the Creator (*ja`il*), clearly they are dependant on God and have no independent existence. Nor can the mind can conceive of them

depends on others, such as intellect, celestial body, elementary nature, soul, matter; 3. Unfolded existence, which is the source of all possible things. Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir*, p. 40-1, no. 97; Corbin, *Le livre*, pp. 161-162.

⁴⁹Q. 7: 55.

⁵⁰Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir*, p. 8, no. 12; Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 103.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 36, no. 87: *Inn al-wujūd fī dhawāt al-māhīyāt lā yakhtalif binnaw`, bal in kān lah ikhtilāf, fa bi-ta`akkud wa tazā`uf* [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 153: L'existence dans les choses qui possèdent une quiddité, ne diffère point quant à l'espèce. Non, se l'existence se différencie, c'est par l'intensification et par l'affaiblissement]."

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 49, no. 109: "*Ann wājib al-wujūd tamām al-ashyā`, wa wujūd al-wujūdāt, wa nūr al-anwār* [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 176: Existence Nécessaire est la perfection plénière des choses; il est l'existence des existences (l'être des êtres); il est la Lumière des Lumières]."

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 41, no. 97: "*Wa huwa [nafs al-rahmānī] al-ṣādīr al-anwāl fī al-mumkināt... wa huwa aṣl wujūd al-`ālam wa ḥayātuh wa nūrīh al-sārī fī jamī` mā fī al-samāwāt wa al-arḍīn* [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 162: C'est cet être, cette existence qui, parmi les êtres non-nécessaires, est par essence et en vérité le Première Emané de la Cause Première,... Cette première existence émanée est la source et principe de l'existence de l'univers; elle en est la vie et la lumière, pénétrant dans la totalité de ce qu'il y a dans les Cieux et sur les Terres."

⁵⁴Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 86.

without their manifesting themselves in quiddity. Before the light of existence illuminates their contingency, our mind cannot determine whether they exist or not. Obviously, prior to this, they are concealed in their original nonexistent state.⁵⁵

Having done this, we cannot say that existence and essence are united altogether, for essence has no reality and is an element of existence, whereas existence contains some reality or is reality itself;⁵⁶ besides, existence itself at the level of contingency creates the essence by which our mind can conceive it. In the sense of whether it is real or not, an existence is pure light and real, whereas an essence is darkness and unreal.⁵⁷ On the other hand, essence here functions as a bridge connecting contingency and self-unfolded existence, which also acts as a bridge to our understanding.

Mullā Ṣadrā gives the clearest definition of the relationship between the created and Creator; it is like that of perfect and imperfect.⁵⁸ Both are very different, and are in fact virtually opposed.

In comparison with contingent existence, God's existence is pure, unaffected and unmixed with any essence, whereas the contingent existence is mixed with essence and is therefore lower in its degree. Of course, the latter is far lower than the existence of God or even that of

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 30; Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, vol. 1, 1, p. 87; idem, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, p. 13, no. 24: "*Ann al-Mahīyah idhā i tabarat bi dhatihā mujarradah 'an al-wujūd, fahiya ma' dūmah wa kadhā idhā i tabarat bi dhatihā ma' qaṭ' i al-naḍr 'an al-wujūd wa al-'adam* [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 111: la quiddité en elle-même, indépendamment de l'acte d'être, elle est non-existence. De même lorsqu'on la considère en elle-même, en faisant abstraction aussi bien de l'existence que de la non-existence]."

⁵⁶Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, p. 34, no. 82: "*Inn al-wujūd lays illā kawn al-shay', lā kawn shay' li-shay'* [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 151: l'existence n'est rien d'autre que l'acte d'être de la chose elle-même, non pas l'acte d'être de quelque chose d'autre pour cette chose elle-même]."

For example, we may say: *man is man* [*insān huwa insān*],

but impossible to say: *man and his existence* [*insān wa mawjūdub*].

⁵⁷Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 33.

⁵⁸Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, p. 44, no. 102: "*Ann nisbat al-maj'ūl al-mabda' lī al-jā' il nisbat al-naqṣ ilā al-tamam, wa al-ḡa'f ilā al-quwwah* [Corbin, *Le livre*, p. 170: Le rapport de l'instauré à l'égard de son Instaurateur est le rapport de la déficience à l'égard de la perfection, de la faiblesse à l'égard de la puissance]."

unfolded existence, for contingent existence manifests in essence.⁵⁹ God, as pure existence without any essence, cannot be conceived by human mind. Contingency on the other hand is perceivable because it is manifested in essence.

The unfolded existence, compared to all contingent existences, is the highest in terms of the degree of its existence, and the lowest in terms of material content, while the lowest existence is the material reality which is itself a shadow of unfolded existence. We may also say that the material existence is at the zero level of actuality, since it is pure potentiality, while the unfolded existence is full of actuality. The contingent existence, which is full of potentiality, produces a multiplicity of concepts and quiddities, which then can be conceived by our minds.⁶⁰

From the discussion above, we have to be careful not to assume that contingency is existence itself or quiddity.⁶¹ Recalling the process of actualization, when the absolute existence, the Breath of the Merciful, actualizes into another kind of existence, the latter then needs to be actualized into another essence. Hence, contingency arises at the end of the process of actualization. However, we can say that contingency belongs more to a quiddity⁶²—but not quiddity itself—which we cannot describe as existent or nonexistent, while the existence which is associated with an essence itself flows purely from a higher existence, the Breath of the Merciful.⁶³

Finally, all existences are part of⁶⁴ and contained in the lower level of Necessary Existence, particularly this universe which is at the lowest level

⁵⁹Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 39; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta`āliyah*, vol. 1, pp. 252, 254-255.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 87; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir*, p. 8, no. 12.

⁶¹Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta`āliyah*, vol. 1, p. 275.

⁶²As Ṣadrā himself called *Māḥiyah kulliyah imkāniyah* or *māḥiyat imkāniyat* not *wujūdīyah imkāniyah* see *Kitāb al-Mashā`ir*, p. 8, no. 11 and 9, no. 14.

⁶³Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 89.

⁶⁴Nasr says that Necessary Existence in Sadrian discourse is multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity (*The Intellectual Tradition*, p. 280); whereas Rahman, based on Sabzawari's commentary, calls it diversity in unity not unity in diversity, in the sense that everything has to return to Him, but He is unique and not everything (*The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 39).

of contingency because it has the highest level of physical matter, and is *ḥadīth zamānī* (new in terms of time), since prior to it is either existence or nonexistence. Every material being including body, always follows the pattern of the renewal process (*mutajaddid*). In making this claim Mullā Ṣadrā bases himself on a number of Qur'ānic verses, such as Q. 50: 14, 56: 61, 27: 90, 14: 22, 35: 17, 39: 67, 19: 41, 55: 26-27, 19: 94-5. This process of renewal is also quite foreign to Necessary Existence which is permanent and not subject to change, whereas all existences and contingent beings are continuously changing. All contingent existences are in transubstantial motion (*ḥarakah jawhariyah*)⁶⁵ and are in the process of perfection (*istikmāl*) till they reach the One Reality. Every existence, since its creation is derived from the One, has to return again to its Creator.⁶⁶

F. Comparative Reflection and Evaluation

Although, Mullā Ṣadrā cannot avoid dealing with the topic of contingency on the basis of the conventional threefold division of *wājib mumkin* and *mumtani`*, he positions himself uniquely as a result of his revolutionary views on existence, as Landolt noted earlier. His belief in the *aṣīl* of existence as being superior to quiddity results in the concept of change and so-called contingency. It is obvious, when compared with his predecessors, that Mullā Ṣadrā offers a new kind of contingency.

Al-Jurjānī discusses *mumkin* simply in logical terms particularly in putting this concept in opposition to concept of "impossible" and "necessary." For this very reason, al-Jurjānī's view of course, is the shallowest of all those who admit the existence of *mumkin* especially when compared to Mullā Ṣadrā. It is likely that al-Jurjānī in this sense follows the conventions of Aristotelian logic, while other Muslim philosophers dealing with *mumkin* are comparable to Neoplatonic thinkers who associate this concept with *nous* (*`aql/intellect*).

⁶⁵About this concept see, Mehdi Dehbashi, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Theory of Transubstantial Motion: A Translation and Critical Exposition" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fordham University, New York, 1981); S.M. Moosavi Mesbah, "Substantive Motion According to Mullā Ṣadrā Shirāzī" (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1994).

⁶⁶Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, pp. 64-67, no. 137-41; Corbin, *Le livre*, pp. 209-212.

Of course, Mullā Ṣadrā is at the opposite extreme from of al-Kindī who views the idea of possibility as fanciful, and from al-Suhrawardī who holds that possibility is a product of mental abstraction and is therefore unreal.

Ibn Sīnā equates *contingency* with *potentiality*, where something has the potential to exist at some time in the future. But, when existence is then added to quiddity, it becomes an existence, such as our universe. However, Ibn Sīnā still admits that there are things outside existence, quiddities without existence. Although it is impossible for them to exist, they do so in a sense, as illustrated by the so-called second principle of the Universe which is metaphysically absurd. This is very different from what Mullā Ṣadrā says in emphasizing existence over essence, that the first *thing that emanates from God is unfolded existence which is pure existence*, creating the second existence which then through acquiring its quiddity may be said to be contingent. For Mullā Ṣadrā, there is nothing outside existence, for reality is existence itself. For him, contingency itself occurs in *the manifestation of existence in essence*. This is in contrast to Ibn Sīnā, who holds that contingency occurs when *the quiddity accepts its existence*.

Ibn al-‘Arabī more or less holds the same opinion as Ibn Sīnā; he supports Ibn Sinian ontology and metaphysics in the sense that for him the possible thing depends on its existence or nonexistence, and both are at the same level of possibility. He differs from Ibn Sīnā however in his advocacy of the concept of *tarjīḥ* (preponderance). If God desires to give preponderance of existence over nonexistence, nonexistence becomes *existent possible being*, our universe is sort of this. Furthermore, the *impossible thing* exists as an archetype or prototype in the mind of God called *a’yan thābitah*, before coming into existence. In addition, *both nonexistence and existence include the cosmos*, as the cosmos includes everything other than Necessary existence. And of course, Ibn al-‘Arabī in this respect contradicts Mullā Ṣadrā’s claim that existence is the beginning of everything, and that other than existence there is nothing. The key point differentiating Mullā Ṣadrā from Ibn al-‘Arabī in this sense is that when God contemplates Himself, this results right away in unfolded existence, and not impossibilities, as the latter holds. To become an existence, for

Ibn al-ʿArābī, involves a longer process. Impossibility is given its preponderance from the will of God, then finally comes *into possible existence*, whereas for Mullā Ṣadrā it involves a much simpler process. The result of God's contemplation is pure existence, which later creates *possible existence* with its quiddity.

The two philosophers, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn al-ʿArābī, share the same basic concept. For Ibn Sīnā and Ibn al-ʿArābī contingency can be quantified as a quiddity which has 50% existence and 50% nonexistence. For Ibn Sīnā this 50% nonexistence will become *existence* if God adds existence to it. It remains nonexistence, however, if God does not. Likewise, for Ibn al-ʿArābī, if God gives quiddity a preponderance of existence over nonexistence, it becomes existence. By contrast, it remains nonexistence if God does not choose to do so. Mullā Ṣadrā differs completely from them in his treatment of *mumkin*. As he believes that there is nothing outside existence, since existence is the original reality, and the first thing created by God through His manifestation, then contingency is not the sum of 50% existence and 50% nonexistence, but is rather the end result of the process of existence's manifestation in quiddity.

However, one may find some weaknesses in Mullā Ṣadrā's argument.⁶⁷ One is that Mullā Ṣadrā does not define the *impossibility* (*muḥāl, mumtani*) as the opposite of *mumkin* in his definition. For Ibn Sīnā and Ibn al-ʿArābī the *mumkin* comes into being through the addition of existence, and for this both can define what is impossibility (the opposite of *mumkin*), which is a thing which has no existence (for Ibn Sīnā) or is not given preponderance (for Ibn al-ʿArābī). Mullā Ṣadrā, on the other hand, does not provide an explicit definition of impossibility,⁶⁸ but from his formulation of contingency we can conclude that *impossibility is existence without essence, or existence which does not manifest in essence*. If so, we may raise

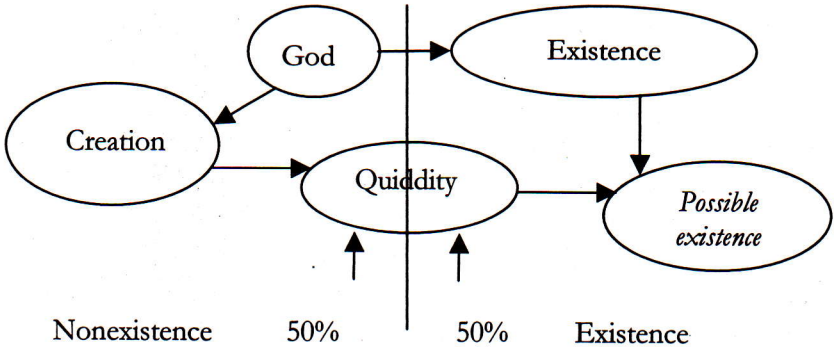
⁶⁷Of course this weakness is viewed from logical statement point of view not from his other *epistemology* such as *dhawq, ʿilm al-buḍūrī*, or Gnostic intuition, for we are not in that level.

⁶⁸There is Mullā Ṣadrā's explanation about *mumtani* and *ma'dūm* as the opposite of existence (*al-Ḥikmah al-Mutaʿāliyah*, vol. 1, pp. 374-377), saying that nothing is outside existence. However, we cannot find the *mumtani* and *muḥāl* as the opposite of *mumkin*.

him the following question: Does God, as a pure existence for having no manifestation in essence, include impossibility? This is clearly impossible.

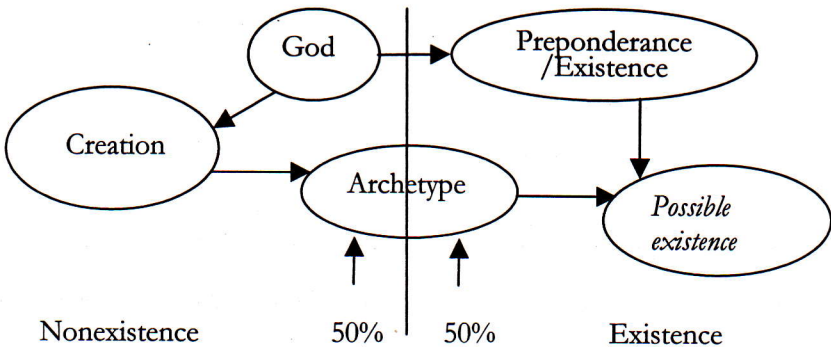
The following diagrams describe *mun̄kin* according to the philosophies of Ibn Sīnā, Ibn al-`Arābī, al-Suhrawardī, and Mullā Ṣadrā:

1. Ibn Sīnā



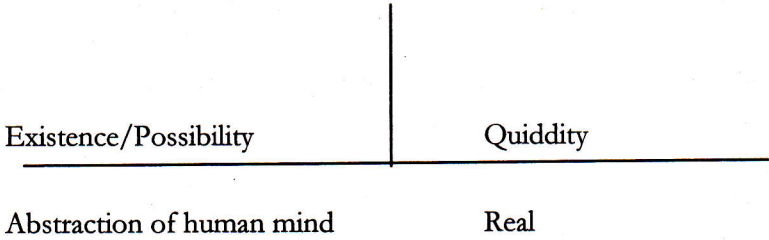
The diagram does not include the concept of creation, for more about Ibn Sīnā's concept of creation see, Netton, *Allah Transcendence*, p. 165.

2. Ibn al-`Arābī



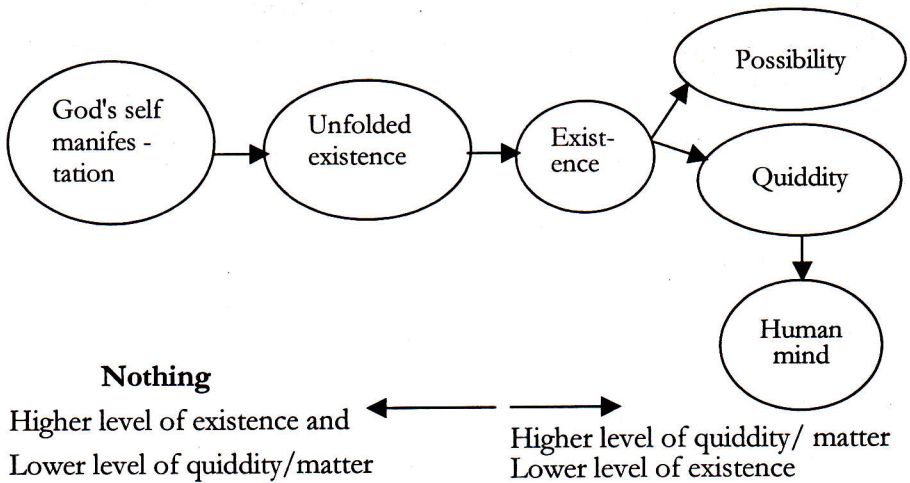
The diagram does not include the concept of creation, for more about Ibn al-`Arabi's concept of creation see, Netton, *Allah Transcendence*, p. 284.

3. al-Suhrawardi



The diagram does not include the concept of creation, for more about al-Suhrawardi's concept of creation see Netton, *Allah Transcendence*, p. 267.

4. Mulla Ṣadrā



G. Conclusion

Mullā Ṣadrā's existentialist revolution resulted in a new definition of *mumkin*, featuring a departure from the common opinion of the *aṣl* of essence over existence and insistence of the *aṣl* of existence over essence. In our discussion on Islamic philosophers prior to him we found two tendencies in dealing with *mumkin*, 1. The first was to view it as merely a fancy and a pure abstraction of our reason, the position taken by al-Kindī and al-Suhrawardī. The latter especially held that possibility, existence and the like are unreal, and that reality lies in quiddity; 2. The second tendency involved treating the concept of *mumkin* seriously, something that both Ibn Sīnā and Ibn al-`Arābī certainly did, as one half of the equation that makes up contingent existence. Mullā Ṣadrā offered a new solution in which *mumkin* is part of the process of the manifestation of existence in essence. However, he chose not to define impossibility (*mumtani`/muḥāl*) as the opposite of *mumkin*. Mullā Ṣadrā, as mentioned above, took issue with al-Suhrawardī over treating existence as unreal, demanding to know how an existence could be unreal if God is Necessary *Existence*. In the same way, we may question "impossibility" as an implication of Mullā Ṣadrā's definition of *mumkin*. If "possibility" is existence which manifests itself in essence, impossibility (as the opposite of possibility) is existence which does not manifest itself in essence. This includes God. Does impossibility then include God?

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