The Problem Of Contradiction In Islamic Philosophy

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This text explores the issue of contradiction in Islamic philosophy, focusing on whether real contradictions can exist. It outlines the views of early Islamic thinkers and compares them with later scholars.

Key arguments are explained simply, including concepts like unity, opposites, and existence. The discussion connects philosophy with Islamic beliefs.

The text also highlights the role of logic in understanding truth. It is structured clearly and aimed at readers interested in foundational questions.

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The Problem Of Contradiction In Islamic Philosophy

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ

"He makes the night enter into the day and makes the day to enter into the night and brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living." (*The Holy Qur'an, 3:27*)

Conflict, collision and struggle are some of the fixed characteristics of this world. This condition is clearly

perceived through superficial observation and profoundly revealed through scientific and philosophical enquiry.

We live in a world full of conflict and interference. This is the world of creation and destruction, making and breaking, weaving and tearing apart, birth and death. Here we see a whole series of opposites paired in an eternal embrace: good and evil, being and non_being, pleasure and pain_these are the stuff of reality. As the Persian poet, Sa'di says:

گنج و مارو گل و خاروغم و شادی بهم اند

The treasure and the snake,

The flower and the thorn,

Happiness and sadness are inseparable.

Therefore, in each case, two opposite forces are observed existing side by side. Many people consider this world imperfect because of this duality. They say that this is not the best of all possible worlds, that this is not an ideal world. They wish that it were a world in which there was only light, life, goodness, happiness, peace and tranquility.

They wish that sickness, darkness, death, evil, misery and anxiety did never exist. These people are amazed that the Creator did not fashion the world in the image of the idealized notions which they happen to conceive.

The idea of dualism was born from precisely this perception. It was thought that if the world had one source and was ruled by a single principle, two opposite tendencies would never exist.

The opposite way of interpreting this duality is that evil and non_being are superficial and relative aspects of goodness and perfection. In other words, evil is only superficially bad. Opposition, struggle, and conflict are, if not the basic, at least a necessary condition for all progress and development.

All beauty, sublimity, exaltation, perfection, movement and evolution is the outcome of conflict, disharmony and imperfection. Conformity and harmony create peace and stagnation, which are always followed by death and annihilation.

Dividing objects into two distinct and separate groups and calling one group good and perfect and the other evil and imperfect, and tracing each group's origin to a separate source is the extremity of superficial thinking. When looked at from a higher perspective, the things which were formerly regarded as evil and imperfect are seen to be good and perfect.

All things, irrespective of their designation as good or bad, share equally in the make_up of the perfect

order and equally contribute to the beauty and ultimate goodness of the macrocosm. Furthermore, they emanate from a common source and are the manifestations of an invisible witness.

خـنـده از لـطـفـش حـکایـت مـی کنـد

نـالـه از قـهـرش شـکایـت مـی کنـد

ایـن دو پیـغام مخـالـف در جـهان

از یکـی دلـبـر حکـایـت مـی کنـد

Laughter tells of her benevolence and grace

Lamentation is a complaint of her wrath.

These two opposite songs of the world,

Tell of only one Beloved.

Issues regarding the question of opposition such as the tendency of a pair of opposites to cancel and neutralize each other or to combine and synthesize, the tendency of one to beget the opposite of itself, have always occupied the minds of men, although the intellectual responses to such phenomena have not always been the same, taking sometimes an optimistic view and at other times a pessimistic interpretation has been adopted.

At tunes men were led by this apparent dualism to deny *the existence and* the unity of God, and at other times to believe in the all‑pervading will and power of the Creator. Sometimes it has led to theological dualism and at other times given birth to belief in absolute unity of the Divine attributes.

The Holy Qur'an, that ultimate source of Divine revelation, which has had the most significant role in forming the views of Muslim philosophers and scholars, always speaks of opposition and contrast as the "signs" of God

مَّا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا ۝ وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا

"Why do you not acknowledge the magnificence of your Creator, when He made you in so many different hinds." (71:14)

And:

.. وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَأَلْوَانِكُمْ

"Among His signs is the variety (difference) of your languages and colours" (*30:22*)

Especially, there are numerous references to one opposite giving birth to its own opposite. The Qur'an also considers this condition to be a sign of the wisdom and craftsmanship of God.

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Thou makest the night to pass into the day and Thou makest the day to pass into the night, and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living, and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure. (*3:27*)

In the *Nahj al‑Balaghah* we frequently encounter the combination of the opposites treated as an issue relating to the question of the oneness of God:

بتشعيره المشاعر عرف أن لا مشعر له. وبمضادته بين الأشياء عرف أن لا ضد له. وبمقارنته بين الأشياء عرف أن لا قرين له. ضاد النور بالظلمة، والوضوح بالبهمة، والجمود بالبلل، و الحرور بالصرد. مؤلف بين متهادياتها. مقارن بين متبايناتها، مقرب بين متباعداتها. مفرق بين متدانياتها.

The fact that He has made sense faculties proves that He has no sense faculty; the fact that He has made things which are opposite to each other, proves that He has no opposite; the fact that He has made things similar to each other, proves that there is nothing like Him.

He made the light the opposite of darkness, clarity the opposite of ambiguity, solidity the opposite of fluidity, hotness the opposite of coldness. He reconciled the homogeneous things and associated the heterogeneous. Things which were far apart He brought close and things which were close, He made distant from each other.

Modern philosophers have attributed great significance to the question of contradiction, holding the view that contradiction is the cause of every movement and evolution. They believe that evolution is nothing but the synthesis of opposites and contradictories and the replacement of simple pairs of opposites by more complex ones.

Some of these thinkers went so far as to deny the oldest law of logic i.e. the Principle of Contradiction, which holds that the contradictories are always mutually exclusive. They removed the distance between

being and non‑being, existence and non‑existence. This distance was believed by the ancient philosophers to be infinite and therefore the greatest of distances.

Hegel, On the Philosophy of Contradiction

Hegel, the famous German philosopher, is the champion of the philosophy of contradiction. It is he who formulated the triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, which was suggested by other philosophers as the description of the birth and synthesis of contradictions. Also, it was Hegel who introduced contradiction into the concept of dialectics and founded the new dialectics.

In his treatise on dialectics, Paul Foulquie says:

Hegel did not invent the triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, Fichte and Shelling, Hegel's contemporaries, had also based their metaphysical views on these concepts. Hegel, however, made utmost use of this principle and considered it to be the ultimate explanation of reality. He designated it as "Dialectics" which made the theory strange to the minds of his contemporaries, because, up to that time, the term "dialectics" designated the art of proof and disproof, which were both based on the Principle of Contradiction. Hegel's dialectics, however, meant the "synthesis of opposites".

In another part of Foulquie's treatise he says:

The difference between the old and the new dialectics is in the way they treat the principle of the mutual exclusivity of the opposites. According to the old dialectics, the principle of mutual exclusivity of the opposites is the absolute law of both objects and the mind. A particular entity cannot both exist and not exist at the same time.

…And if the human mind encounters two contradictory propositions in succession, one of them must necessarily be false. The new dialectics, however, holds the view that contradiction is a quality of the things themselves. and that an object "is" and "is not" at the same time. This quality of self‑contradiction is the cause of the change and development of things, so the new dialectics believes, and without it, they would fixed and unchanging.

…Therefore, if man is forced to accept two contradictory statements, it is wrong to believe that he is making a mistake. Of course, it is necessary to resolve the contradiction, but neither of the con‑ tradictories should be denied.

Also, Foulquie says that, "the reconciliation and synthesis of contradictions in things and in the mind is called dialectics by Hegel. The dialectical method consists of three stages which are usually called `thesis', `antithesis', and `synthesis'. However, Hegel calls these three stages `affirmation', `negation', and `negation of the negation'."

In Hegel's view, *becoming* is neither *being* nor *non‑being.* It is the synthesis of both. As Paul Foulquie

puts it:

The first triad of Hegel's philosophy, which is the most famous is this: *Being* "is", i.e. exists. This constitutes the `affirmation' or the `thesis' of the triad. But pure unspecified *being* without a particular content of some sort is equivalent to nothing at all. It is the same as *non‑being.* Our `affirmation', therefore, is necessarily followed by its own negation. Therefore, we say that being "is not" or does not exist. Is there a further concept that will overcome this contradiction and prove to be a synthesis of the ideas of *being* and *non‑being?* Hegel finds such a concept in that of *becoming.*

We find a view similar to that of Hegel expressed in Islamic philosophy. That is, in the state of *becoming, being* and *non‑being* embrace each other and become one and the same. And that a thing which is *becoming,* both is and is *not.* The Islamic philosophers, however, never posited this fact in opposition to the Principle of Contradiction and never believed that it cancels the validity of this principle of logic.

Now, let us take a closer look at what the Islamic philosophers say on the question of contradiction' and examine whether it is the same as the views of the Western philosophers; or, if it is not the same, what are the similarities and differences between their views.

Islamic philosophers were well aware of the role of conflict and contradiction in evolution and development, and believed that conflict between creatures is a necessary condition for the continuation of Divine Grace. They have said:

لولا التضاد ما صح حدوث الحادثات.

If there was no conflict, none of the creatures would hare emerged.

Or:

لولا التضاد ما صح الفيض عن المبدأ الجواد.

If there were no opposition, the emanation of existence from the First Principle would not have occurred.

That is, no new beings would have been born.

At this point, we should determine whether the Islamic philosophers shared the view of the European philosophers regarding the role of opposition (contradiction) in the process of natural evolution, or if they held a different position. Now, we shall continue our discussion in two parts:

1. The unity of being and non‑being in the process of *becoming.*

2. The role of opposition in change, movement and evolution.

The Islamic Treatment

We have already considered Hegel's concept of the reconciliation of the contradictory concepts of *being* and *non‑being* in *becoming.* Now, we shall turn our attention to the treatment this subject receives in Islamic philosophy. There are numerous references to this topic by Muslim thinkers.

Fakhr al‑Din al‑Razi has a famous paradox concerning the problem of becoming. He believed that gradual emergence of things is meaningless. All the things that we think emerge gradually, are in fact born in a sudden manner. The illusion of gradual emergence of a thing is caused by the fact that the object in question is made up of a number of parts.

As each part emerges suddenly and these emergences follow one another in succession, we are deluded into thinking that we are witnessing the emergence of one whole object, while in reality we are witnessing the creation of a number of things, each of which is born quite spontaneously; each part being quite separate and independent of the anterior and posterior parts. From this analysis, al‑Razi concludes that all movements are in fact a combination of independent parts none of which is a movement and gradual emergence from potentiality into actuality.

Al‑Razi defends his position in the following manner. Anything that does not exist and then comes into being, its being must have a *beginning.* Furthermore, this *beginning is* simple and indivisible. It has no beginning, middle, or end. If the *beginning* had a beginning, middle, and end, then the real beginning would be the *beginning* of the *beginning,* and its middle and end would cease to be the part of *begin‑ning.*

We apply the same argument to the new *beginning;* if it were not simple the same difficulty would arise. Therefore, we are forced to conclude that *beginning is* simple and indivisible.

Next, we say, anything that comes into being, must either be in a state of existence at its *beginning* or in a state of non‑existence. If we say that a thing was in the state of non‑being at the beginning of its existence, then we cannot say that it was at the beginning of its existence; rather, we must say that it was in the state of non being and is still in the state of non being. It would be impossible to say that such an object is in the beginning of existence. We are forced to conclude that a thing exists at the beginning of its being.

Now, either something of that object remains to come into being or it does not. If nothing remains to come into being, then we have admitted that the thing in question was fully and completely existent at the beginning of its being. Since the beginning is simple and indivisible, the object in question must have come into existence suddenly not gradually.

If some of the object still remains, the question arises: is the thing remaining which did not exist at the beginning of the existence of the object, identical with that which existed at the beginning, or, are they

two different things? It is impossible for them to be identical because a particular thing cannot both be and not be at one and the same time.

If on the other hand, the thing remaining which is to come into being is different from that which has come into being, then that which came into being in the beginning has come into being fully and instantaneously and nothing of it remains to emerge later. The thing which is yet to come into being, then, is something completely different, distinct and independent of what has already come into being. Gradual emergence and `becoming,' then, are meaningless notions.

The views expressed by al‿Razi caused a great stir among the Muslim thinkers and led to renewed efforts to better understand the nature of movement and time. The theory of time as the fourth dimension of matter, which was forwarded in the Muslim world by Sadr al–Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), came in the wake of these intense philosophic efforts.

Mir Damad is the first Muslim thinker to have solved properly the problems raised by Fakhr al Din al‿Razi. Mir Damad first tackles the problem of beginning. He says that when we talk of a gradually emerging object having a beginning, this does not mean that the object in question came into being instantaneously and then continued its existence so that some instant should be taken as the starting point of its being. Such a beginning is appropriate for things which come into existence suddenly and instantaneously, not to gradually emerging things.

Beginning in the gradually emerging things means that since the thing that comes into being has extension and dimensions, which in turn corresponds to a temporal dimension, its being possesses the dimension of time, and since its existence is finite, it must have two ends, each end corresponding to a hypothetical point in time. One of these points is its beginning and the other is its end.

Therefore, the beginning and the end of the gradually emerging object both exist in the instant and not in time. The extremities i.e. the beginning and the end of a continuous entity, whether spatial or temporal, can never be considered as parts of that entity. So the question whether the end points of a continuum are simple or not does not arise. For example, the end point of a line is not part of the line. In fact, the limit of any extended thing has no existence of its own; it is a concept abstracted from the limitation of being. The instant is also nothing but a hypothetical point in time.

Mir Damad then turns his attention to the ontological mode of the temporal and gradually emerging entities and probes into the nature of time itself. He claims that because this kind of objects are existentially weak, the stages of being and non‿being are mixed in them. Every stage of their being is associated with the non‿being of another stage.

Therefore, the answer to the question raised by Fakhr al‿Din al‿Razi that if a part of a gradually emerging thing becomes existent while another part is still non‿existent, does the object in question exist or not, is that every part of that object exists in a particular segment of time. And in another segment of time where another part of the object exists, the first part is non‿existent. The totality of the

object as a wholly complete unit exists in the totality of time and not in any particular segment of it, and not in any instant.

In his book *al Asfar*, Mulla Sadra expresses the same view in a more forceful manner. In the eleventh chapter of his book (the chapter dealing with potentiality and actuality), he says:

ألحركه و الزمان من الامور الضعيفة الوجود التي وجودها يشابك عدمها، و فعليتها تقارن قوتها، و حدوثها عين زوالها، فكل جزء منها يستدعي عدم جزء آخر بل هو عدمه بعينه

Movement and time are among those things which are existentially weak, i.e. things in which being and non‑being are interwoven. Their actuality is associated with their potentiality, and their coming into being is the same as their annihilation. The existence of every part necessitates the annihilation of some other part or rather it is none other than the non‑being of some other part.

Discussing the relationship of the changing to the unchanging in chapter twenty‑one of the discussion on "potentiality and actuality", he first says: "The kinds of actuality and stability that various objects possess are different from one another, and the Ultimate Source has given every object the distinctive form of stability peculiar to itself. And, whenever the stability which an object has is the stability of change, and the actuality of it is the realization of its potentiality and power, inevitably, that would be the sort of stability and actuality which would be granted to it."

Mulla Sadra continues his discussion by saying:

و الذي من الموجودات ثباته عين التجدد هي الطبيعه، و الذي فعليته عين القوه هي الهيولى، و الذي وحدته عين الكثره بالفعل هو العدد، و الذي وحدته عين قوة الكثرة هو الجسم و ما فيه.

The thing whose perpetuation or continuity is identical with its becoming ever new is nature. And the thing whose actuality is identical with absolute potentiality, is the primordial, formless matter. And that thing whose unity is identical with its actual multiplicity is the number. And the thing whose actual unity is identical with its potential multiplicity is the body and its physical properties.

In the twenty‑eighth chapter of the discussion on potentiality and actuality, Mulla Sadra draws a delicate inference from verse 61 of the sixth chapter of the Holy Qur'an which is as follows:

هُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُم حَفَظَةً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُونَ

And He is the Supreme, above His servants, and He sends keepers over you; until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers cause him to die, and they are not remiss. (*6:61*)

The inference that Sadr al‑Din Shirazi draws from the above quoted verse is this: "A thing, the being and non‑being of which are intermixed, and its mere persistence and continuity entails its destruction and annihilation, inevitably, the means of its continued existence are identical with the causes of its destruction and annihilation.

Therefore, in the Qur'anic verse the same entities that have the duty of guarding the individual are entrusted with the duty of bringing about his death and oblivion, when the time for it comes. In other words, the agents of survival and preservation of life are transformed in time into the agents of death and decay."

How is it that such thinkers who so explicitly defend the view that being and non‑being are united and intermixed in the natural world, still defend the validity of the Law of Contradiction and call it *umm al‑qadaya*, or "the mother of all theorems"?

The fact of the matter is that in the view of these philosophers, the interwovenness of being and non‑being, which is a necessary characteristic of all changing and transitory things, in no way negates the validity of the Principle of Contradiction. In their view, the difficulty has been caused by failing to distinguish between the various ways in which we perceive non‑being. In other words, the problem is caused by a failure to adequately understand the mind's tendency to distort and miscomprehend the meaning of nonexistence.

In order to comprehend this matter properly, two things must be kept in mind:

(a) It is well‑known that logicians divide propositions into two general categories of affirmative and negative propositions. In the case of the affirmative propositions, the judgement of the mind is clear: that is, our mind either affirms the existence of the subject of the proposition or its having a particular predicate or property, as, for example, in such statements as "John is", or, "John is standing."

Now, how about the negative propositions? For example, if we say, "John is not standing", what is the purport of this proposition? and what is the mental process involved in reaching a conclusion about it? At first, we might think that the purport of this proposition is that, John is in a non‑standing position. Such an inference is certainly false. "John is non‑standing" is an affirmative proposition. That is, its essence and nature is affirmative.

The negation in the proposition is made a part of the predicate and it is called an `affirmative proposition with a diverted predicate.' Whether a proposition is negative or affirmative cannot be determined by its subject or predicate. It is a question the answer to which must be sought beyond the subject and the predicate.

Failure to make distinction between these two can cause numerous errors in the reasoning process and in making inferences. Of course, those who are familiar with logic do not mistake these two kinds of propositions with each other and there is no difference of opinion among logicians regarding this matter.

Those who consider the affirmation and negation in propositions to be beyond the scope of the subject and the predicate, belong to two different groups. One group believes that the difference between these two types of propositions is a question of "relationship": affirmative relationship and negative relationship.

When we say, "John is standing", John and standing are related to each other with a copula which is of the kind that may be designated as "being". And when we say, "John is not standing", the relationship between them is of the "non‗being" kind. This group holds the view that the Persian words, *ast* (is) and *nist* (is not) represent the relationship between subject and predicate in a proposition.

However, another group which includes Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra maintain that the "relationship explanation" is completely erroneous. In their opinion, the same sort of relationship and copula exists in both affirmative and negative propositions. And the kind of copula in both kinds of propositions is affirmative. Such an affirmation, however, is related to concepts (subject‗predicate terms) rather than to judgements.

The difference between the affirmative and the negative propositions is that in the affirmative proposition the mind judges and affirms the existence of the relationship between the subject and the predicate in the external world, whereas in the negative proposition the existence of such a relationship is denied by the mind.

The purport of the negative proposition, therefore, is not that there exists in the external world a certain thing and that thing is a "relationship of non‗being" between the subject and the predicate.

What the negative proposition indicates is that the affirmative relationship which exists in the conceptual form in the mind does not exist externally. In other words, what is judged and affirmed in the affirmative propositions is the occurrence of the relationship in the external reality, while in negative propositions what is judged is the non‗existence or the non‗occurrence of the same relationship.

The affirmative proposition tells of the correspondence of the relationship with the external reality, while the negative proposition tells that such a correspondence does not occur. The view that has been expressed while defining declarative statements as opposed to non‗declarative ones that "if the truth or the falsehood of the relationship (between the subject and the predicate) can be ascertained through reference to the external reality, the statement is declarative, otherwise it is non‗declarative" and that this also applies to the negative propositions, is false.

In the view of these scholars, the content of the negative proposition is سلب الربط *salb al‗rabt* (denial of a relation) and not *rabt al‗salb* (a negative relation). In other words, the content of the negative proposition is *the negation of the affirmative relation,* not the *affirmation of the negative relation,* which constitutes the content of an affirmative proposition with a diverted predicate موجبه معدولة المحمول. (*mujabat ma'dulat al‗muhmul*).

The truly negative proposition is precisely as has just been described, and this is the only expression for the contradictory of existence. The purport of the negative proposition is nothing other than the negation of the content of the affirmative proposition.

Furthermore, the negative proposition does not assign any conditions to the act of negation itself, be they temporal or spatial. Whatever terms of specifications that exist in the negative proposition are subject to negation and are part of the predicate which is being negated.

Only with this consideration could *non‑being* be said to exist as a contradiction and negation of *being*. To put it in another way, if we have two propositions one of which negates all the contents of the other and has no other function than this, then these two propositions are contradictory. For example, if we say that "Ahmad is standing at such and such a place at such and such a time", its contradictory would be: "It is not the case that Ahmad is standing on such and such a place at such and such a time."

If a thousand conditions and terms be added to the first proposition, the second proposition negates the first proposition with all its myriads of conditions and terms; and this is the real meaning of the logical axiom that the contradiction of everything is its negation (*naqid kull shay' raf`uh*). Such two propositions, the real and logical contradictions of each other, are mutually exclusive, and the law of the mutual exclusivity of the contradictories applies to them.

Non‑being, interpreted and used in this way which is, by the way, the main interpretation and use of this concept has no external reality and inherent existence of its own. It can be neither a subject nor a predicate. The dimensions of time and space do not apply to it; time and space are not a vehicle for non‑being; they belong to the particular object that it negates.

Therefore, in the sense just mentioned, *on being is* pure negation. Here, the intellect is taking an overview of the world and concludes that a particular conceptual entity simply does not exist in the external reality, i.e. it has no denotation.

There is another interpretation of *non‑being* which is in reality a figurative one. In this interpretation, *non‑being* has a denotation and exists in time and space. It can be both a subject and a predicate. What we have in this case is that when the mind surveys the external world and perceives that a certain thing is not in it, it supposes that negation has taken the place of affirmation and that non‑being has occupied the place of being.

In other words, when it perceives the absence of a particular object in a specific location, our mind imagines that its place is empty and its *non‑being* occupies it. Thus interpreted, *non being* comes to occupy its own space just as *being* does. It also comes to possess its own essence and the capacity to be either the subject or the predicate.

Therefore, there is a difference between the propositions, "X does not exist in the world", and "X is non‑existent in the world". In the second proposition for the "non‑existence" of "X" in a particular space

in the external world is posited. Of course, we know that *non-being* has no real denotation. Inevitably the existence of other things is figuratively taken to denote the non-existence of the hypothetical object. It is because of this that it is said: every stage of *being* marks the annihilation of another stage.

Now that the two interpretations of *non-being* have been considered, it can be clearly perceived that in its fundamental interpretation and meaning *non-being* has no independent and inherent existence of its own, being purely a negation and denial of *being.* In the second interpretation, *non-being is* granted independent existence metaphorically; however, in this sense it is not the contradictory of *being.*

(b) Now let us consider the question of *becoming. Becoming* refers to the continuity, gradualness and the fluidity of *being.* A thing that comes about gradually, possesses a sort of extension and continuity which is parallel to time. In fact, the extension of time is none other than the extension of the continuous and gradual stages of existence which are sequentially related to each other in the relation of potency and act.

A quality of the extended thing is that while it possesses a continuous and actual unity, the intellect is able to divide it into mathematical parts and segments. Since the extension in question is temporal and it has its roots in potentiality and actuality, inevitably, the hypothetical parts and segments precede or succeed one another with no possibility of existing simultaneously.

Furthermore, since these segments have no simultaneity, they are devoid of each other, they lack each other. To put it another way, since no two segments can exist in the same time-frame, each part presupposes the non-existence (according to the second interpretation) of the other part. Or we may say that in the duration of the preceding part "non-existence' of the succeeding part is true, and in the duration of the following part "non-existence" of the preceding part is true.

On the other hand, we know that these divisions are imaginary and hypothetical ones, not really disconnected and discrete parts. Furthermore, every extended object is infinitely divisible by the mind, and this divisibility does not come to an end. Every segment can be divided into two smaller parts everyone of which is the "non-being" of the other part. Each of these new parts can in turn be divided into smaller parts everyone of which is the "non-being" of all the others.

These parts can be divided into even smaller ones, and so on *ad infinitum.* It is therefore inevitable that segments and stages are posited on an infinite scale. Furthermore, as degrees and parts are conceived infinitely, it follows that *non-being is* also posited infinitely because each part implies the *non-being* of all the other parts. Since no end to division can be conceived, being and non-being are so closely interwoven that it is impossible to imagine any boundary between them.

In objects with a gradual existence, we cannot find any stage in the existence which remains constant in a duration of time irrespective of its length. We cannot find any stage of the existence of an evolving object remaining fixed in any particular duration of time, irrespective of how small the duration in question happens to be. Every stage and section of the evolving object can be divided into past and

present and into preceding and succeeding parts.

Every one of the newly defined stages can in turn be divided into a past and a future, while any one of the new segments can be divided into a preceding and a succeeding section, and this process can be continued *ad infinitum.* What cannot be found anywhere here is *now,* that is, the duration of time lying between the past and the future.

The past and the future are all there is, and every past is a combination of a future and a past, while every future is also a combination of a past and a future. Whatever exist is either preceding something or following something, and everything which is preceding is itself a combination of a preceding thing and a following thing, while everything which is following is itself made up of something which precedes and something that follows.

Everything is made up of *being* and *non-being.* Anything that exists contains both *being* and *non-being* within itself, just as everything that does not exist is also complex, both of *being* and *non-being.*

Evidently, when we speak of the intermixing of *being* and *nonbeing,* we are not talking about the mixing of two real elements. The kind of mixture we have in mind involves one real element (*being*) and one hypothetical element (*non-being*). Inevitably such a mixture takes place in the mind and the imagination, not in the external world and the external reality. As far as the external and the real world is concerned, all there is, is an existence which is slippery and fluid in nature. There is nothing outside of such existence.

From what has been discussed, it can be clearly understood that *non-being* taken to mean the negation of *being* has no external reality. Therefore, it would be meaningless to speak of its mixture with existence. On the other hand, when *non-being* is interpreted as having a sort of hypothetical existence and reality of its own, and the capacity to mix with *being* it does not contradict existence.

The claim, therefore, that the union of *being* and *non-being* in *process* and *becoming is* equivalent to a coupling of contradictions and reconcilement of opposites, and that it negates the Law of Contradiction, and furthermore, that Hegelian dialectics has succeeded in disproving the validity of the Law of Contradiction, is caused by not having paid sufficiently close attention to the real meaning of the problem and the different interpretations of the concept of *non-being.*

The truth of the matter is that it is impossible for someone to understand the real meaning of the Law of Contradiction and deny its validity. If someone were to make the sort of claim that has been just mentioned and interpret arbitrary metaphors as contradicting the Law of Contradiction, it must be taken more as a joke than a serious argument. Such claims merely indicate an over-abundant appetite for new ways of philosophizing.

Besides the Islamic philosophers who have been mentioned, it should be kept in mind that our mystics and poets exhibited dialectical thinking long before Hegel, and had discovered the very core of dialec-

tical thought which is the compatibility of *being* and *non‗being*. It was one such poet who said:

عـــاقـــل زهـــــست گـــویـــد و عـــــارف زنـیـــسـتـــی

مـــــن در مـــــیـــان آب و گـــــــل هـــستـم و نیستـــم

The man of reason speaks of being,

While the mystic speaks of nothingness;

In the midst of water and mud of being and nothingness,

I both am and am not

Much the same idea is expressed in the following poem:

چون نور کـــه از مهر جدا هســـت و جـــدا نیســـت

عالـــــم همـــه آیات خدا هســـت و خدا نیســـت

در آیــــیـــنـــه بیـــنیـــد هـــمـــه صـــورت خـــود را

آن صـــــورت آیـــــیـــنـــه شما هست و شما نیست

هـــر جا نگـــری جلوه گـــه شاهد غیبی اســـت

او را نتـــــوان گفـــت کجا هســـت و کجا نیســـت

درو یـــــس کـــه در کشور فقر است شهنشاه

پیـــش نظـــر خلـــق گـــدا هســـت و گـــدا نیست

ايـــن نيستـــى هســـت نمـــا را بـــه حقـــيقـــت

در ديـــدهء ما وتـــوبـــقا هـــســـت وبـــقـــا نيـــست

((بـــــي مهـــري و لطف از قبل ياربه ((عبرت

از چيـــست؟ ندانـم كه روا هست و روا نيـــست

Like the rays of light,

Which are separate from the sun,

And yet are not separate,

The universe is a sign of God,

And yet it is not God.

You all see your image in the mirror,

Yet the image in the mirror Is both you and not you.

Wherever you look,

You shall see the unveiling of the hidden witness

How can one say where He is or where He is not?

The dervish, who is a king in the land of poverty,

Is looked on as a beggar by the masses,

But in reality is no beggar at all.

This nothingness which appears as being,

Seems to have permanence in the eyes of you and I,

But in reality it has no permanence at all.

Kindness and indifference given out by the Beloved as "warning";

Why is it? I don't know if it is justified or not.

Hegel himself had understood the fact that what he called `the compatibility of contradictions' is something other than that which is deemed impossible by all reasoning minds. In his *Treatise on Dialectics,* under the heading "Hegel and contradiction," Paul Foulquie says:

In Hegel's view, the dialectical method, according to which, the idea (absolute form) is actualized in mind and nature, is based on contradiction. It should be kept in mind, however, that Hegel's dialectics do not completely reject the Principle of Contradiction, and between it and the old dialectics—which considered the Principle of Contradiction its foundation—there is no difference in this regard. Although Hegel appears to say the opposite, inwardly, like all other human beings, he accepts the Principle of Contradiction.

Furthermore, in his *Treatise on Metaphysics,* page 369, Paul Foulquie says:

synthesis of contradictions is about apparent contradictions, not real ones. Hegel believed that whatever is regarded as truth by the human mind, will always remain true, and is wholly contained in the later synthesis. In Hegel's view, intellectual progress means that only those elements of science the falsity of which has been demonstrated, be rejected.

The difference of opinion that prevails between the Islamic philosophers and Western thinkers like Hegel regarding the problem of *becoming is* not limited to the conclusion that Western scholars have tried to draw regarding the union of contradictions. Although both of these modes of thought appear to reach similar conclusions in that they say `in *becoming, being* and *non-being* are in an embrace,' the foundations and roots of these two modes of thought are completely different, and they have emerged from completely different origins.

From the point of view of Hegelian dialectics, "Every conception is a combination of relations. We are able to conceive something only when we can imagine its relationship to some other object and know their similarities and differences. Any conception devoid of relationships would be meaningless. This is what is meant by the dictum `pure existence is identical with nothingness.' The sort of *being,* that is devoid of all attributes and relationships, does exist, and is meaningless."

"The first triad of Hegel's philosophical system, which is also the most famous, is: *being* exists. This is the stage of thesis or affirmation. However, *being* which is undefined and has an unspecified nature so that we cannot say it is this or that, is equal to *non-being* or nothingness. Thus, following our affirmation it becomes necessary to negate it. Therefore, we say: *being is* not.

This negation is itself negated, and we reach the third stage: that of synthesis. Thus, we say that *being is becoming.*" (Paul Foulquie's Treatise on Dialectics) In Hegel's view, therefore, pure *being* cannot be real, and *being* becomes a reality through synthesis with *non-being.*

In the opinion of the Islamic philosophers, especially Mulla Sadra, what possesses reality is pure *being,* and the determined and manifested beings derive their reality from pure *being.* In the opinion of these thinkers, when *being* reaches its weakest point in the order of its descent, it takes on a fluid quality, mixes with *non being,* and takes the form of *becoming.* This is precisely the opposite of Hegel's notion of *being.*

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