



## The Existence in Sufism

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### The Existence and The Essence of Allah

Allah is present. The existence of Allah is by means of His Essence (Zât), not by means of His Attribute of Existence. But other beings are not the case, they are existed by means of their beings attribute. It is one of the characteristics of Almighty God that He exists by His Own Essence and has not need of being attribute.

Everything which are seen and known are limited, that is, registered, conditional and bounded. It is below the simplicity of absoluteness. Almighty God is exempted from all limiting. Therefore, you must look

Him beyond the areas of images and information. This issue is beyond the perception of mind. Because mind accepts that it is impossible to investigate beyond the seen and known.

Almighty God is for the simplicity of His absoluteness. Any restrictions and bonds can not find way to Him. But if His manifestations reflect on the mirror of universe, He could be seen and known. Because His manifestations would be reflected on the mirror of universe so that they would be considered as the authority of universe which could be seen and knowable. Some people are satisfied with these seen and known reflections of God's manifestations. But on contrary to these people some aim at a higher target. God likes the people who have the highest goals at the knowing Him.

### **The Levels of Knowledge about God**

They are in three orders:

- 1) The first is to follow and to observe the signs that signify His Essence. All the observed things and lights are in this level of knowledge. Such an observation does not give out the news from God.
- 2) The second is to observe God after the lifting of the emergence veil. This observations is called the simple comprehension. This realization is contrary to know. It is a marvel authority. Science is contrary to this observation and the seeing is a veil to this science. This means that the signs of the people who recognize God rightfully are to be aware of their hearts and not to have any knowledge in themselves. It is a perfect knowing of God and there is no other divine wisdom beyond it.
- 3) The third level is to see God by Him and to find Him as own truths of Sufis. This occurs in the order of everlasting with God. In this order

science and seeing would not become a veil to each other. Sufi knows while seeing and sees while knowing.

Muslims agreed that there are the attributes of God. They know that these attributes are added to the Essence of God. But the essence of God is independent of these attributes and can do every act without the attributes. For example . God knows with the attribute of science and has the power through the attribute of might.

The essence of God can do any issue about science and knowledge without using the attribute of knowledge. In the same way, His Essence is enough to do any acting about powerfulness without the attribute of might. Although the essence of God is enough to act all applications of attributes without them., these attributes are necessary for establishment of the perfect features. The essence of God is characterized with these perfection attributes as perfect. God knows all known things through the science which is added to His Essence.

It is not possible to know His Essence and His Attributes. The Human is unable to recognize His essence and His attributes. What we know about His attributes are only their images and shadows.

### **The Existence of Universe and Objects**

*“God was there and there was nothing else with Him. He is, as in now.”* (Hadith)

As God wanted to create the universe and to start the creation of universe in the style he knows it, a manifestation took place against the universal truth from the exalted will. From this manifestation occurred the truth called Hebâ. It is the first created being in the realm and is as mortar and soil to build realm. Then God manifested this Hebâ with His divine light. The rationalists call the Hebâ as Heyula

which is the original state of the universe. Everything has adopted something from this Hebâ according to its power and natural ability. The truth of Muhammad (sav) was the creation in Hebâ and was called mind. The truth of Muhammad was the closest thing to God. His existence occurred from the divine light, Hebâ and universal truth. Thus he became the first Lord of the whole world and the first emerging thing in existence. Then the truth of whole realm occurred from the manifestations of Muhammad (sav).

God made Himself obligatory to create the universe. What compelled Him to this, is His Will to bring the knowledge of whole realm and its existence to the most perfect state. Thus, the realm appeared in the form of God's Shadow in all authorities of existence.

God is with His creatures together, but His creatures are not with Him together. To be together depends on the knowledge. Therefore God knows us and is with us together. But we are not able to know Him and so we are not with Him together.

Hebâ has spread to the whole creatures, because all creatures are in Hebâ. It occurs in every creature according to its truth. It is indivisible, not broken and can not be characterized by deficient. On the contrary, it is like the truth of the white which is found in every white stuff with its essence and truth.

The existence of a substance is given in four stages: The first is being in mind, the second is being outside, the third is being in utterance and the fourth is being in writing.

The presence of the realm is limited by the presence of God. The realm can only be in existence through the existence of God. God exists through His Own Essence, but the realm exists thanks to God.

The reason of the creating of the realm is the attaching of God's knowledge to the creating of realm. God has known the realm in its

absence state and has given it the existence according to its image in His Knowledge. The divine knowledge decided to exist the realm. It is impossible the existence of anything contrary to the divine knowledge.

The whole realm are the words of God in the existence. All existences are an opened sheet. The whole realm is written on this sheet. There are two aspects of the whole realm. One direction tries to reach the divine names and highness. The other direction wants the down. The down is the nature. According to us the whole realm is a great book. This book is written in the opened pages of existence with the letters and digits. Writing goes on forever without any end.

The universe is the evidence of God. Because we go to God from the universe. It is not appropriate to go to universe by taking God as an evidence for universe.

The matter actually comes from the existence to another entity. In other words the matter came to the outer existence from the existence of knowledge. The matter has no authority in the knowledge of God. The matter gets its authority if only it emerges outside. This emergence is to go out from the divine knowledge to sensory existence.

Every substance in the universe is a symptom of a main essence. The main essence is unique and indivisible, but the symptoms may be divided. The main essence is in need of the creation of symptoms in itself. Because the main essence can get an existence only through the creation of some substance in itself. The main essence of all realm is unique according to being essence. But may acquire different characters according to symptoms connected itself.

When a substance is created by God, appears outside in the universe and it has always a soul. This soul accompanies the shape and the form of that substance. All realm is in the palm of the divine names. The

divine names direct him in two ways: according to their own truths and according to capability of substance. For anyone with two eyes these two conditions are required. Because the nature of divine names and everything else do not change.

The realm occurred in the image of God to be the place for His Manifestations. Therefore it is seen in the existence only God. In fact, there are only the realities of substances. The realities of substances are as the spirit of them. The substances are the external images of their spirits. God knows the realities of the substances and distinguishes the substances through the enveloping attributes. God creates without being under the control of the destiny of creation. But the creatures claim their destiny.

The probability of being a creature is the manifestations of divine names to bring substances in existence. The reality of everything in realm is a divine truth. Every possible existence outside is connected with the beautiful names of God. Every possible is in the grip of a divine truth. In fact in existence there are only the divine names of God.

But the creatures are veiled from the information of divine names. The possible creatures are characterized with the absence according to their realities, but they are characterized with the presence according to their authorities.

God does not create anything by coincidence. He creates everything according to a right knowledge, will and an unknown appreciation. Thus the presence of any occurrence must be occurred first in His Knowledge. There is no a state of a creature which is not directed to God. God protects the existence of the creature through this direction. Everything is actually cleaned with this divine direction in itself.

The lifeless materials know and worship God at most in other species. They were created in divine wisdom. They have no mind and lust.

There is no action for them unless they are moved. When they are removed high and left alone with its nature, it is forced to fall down. This is required by his servitude. Because the height is the God's property. God is the highest. So the stone hesitates to be in height against God. The verse *"...while others fall down for fear of God..."* (Al-Baqarah, 74) explains this fact, that is the fall is due to the fear of God.

### **The Existence of Realm and Besmele**

The emergence of the realm is **Besmele**. The " Besmele" is the formula **bismillahirrahmanirrahim** which means "In the name of God, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful". In other words the realm occurred by the name of **Allah** who is **Rahman** (The Most Gracious) and **Rahim** (The Most Merciful). The realm is appeared by the Arabic letter ب (ba) which is the first letter of Besmele. Through the point under the letter ba the prayers are dissociated from Deity. The letter ba accompanies all the creatures and is in the order of Cem' ( sum, total ) and Wücûd ( existence ). It means that all things existed and appeared because of the letter ba. The Arabic letter س

(sin) which is the second letter in the Besmele, is the time of passing of the realm from the absence to the presence. The absence entered the outwards thanks to the Arabic letter م (mim) which is the third letter in the Besmele. The letter mim is the symbol of existence in the realm of letters.

The point of the letter ba indicates all the existence in the realm . There are three kinds of formations in the letter ba : The shape of ba , the point and the "hareke" (the sign which gives the letter its pronunciation) . They point to three kind of realms. The shape of ba is

from the realm of angels. The point of ba is from the compulsory realm and the hareke is from the realm of substances.

The name “Rahman” in the Besmele is in the position of unity. It is the position of ignorance. The most valuable positions in Sufism is not to be able to know God and is to know this fact. Because it is the reality of being servant.

The name “Rahim” in the Besmele is the attribute of Prophet (saw). The perfection of the existence depends on him. The Besmele is completed with the name Rahim and so the creation of realm is completed.

## **The Creation of Human**

God has created people of two different parts which are body and soul. The body of the people is from the realm of physical matter which is limited under matter and time. The soul is from the realm of orders of God which is not bounded under the matter and time. Therefore the lineage of human should be considered according to its soul. This is confirmed in the following verse:

*“When I have formed him and breathed My spirit into him,...”* (Al-Hijr, 29)

Soil and water are the main substances in the creation of human. The human is created in divine form. This means that human has the ability to be moralized with the names of God. God says literally: My all names have emerged only in human creation. So the heart of faithful servant has accepted this wideness because of the creation in divine forms.

There are two great mysteries. One is the secret of human and the other is the secret of God. The secret of human consists of the reality of man. It is expressed in the following hadith : “Allah has created



Adam in His Own Image.”. Accordingly human appeared in the form of the divine reality. The following seven divine attributes refer to this divine form: life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, seeing and talking. Adam (ra) has emerged on these seven divine attributes. He is the place and the recipient of these seven divine attributes. The secret of human is the outward of the secret of God and the secret of God is the absolute truth and the esoteric of the secret of human.

This secret of God is ascribed to the greatest name of Allah which gathers all attributes of God. Therefore this greatest name of God is called as the encompass of things because this name includes all divine secrets and comprises all divine truths.

Man is the son of his time. He is not the son of past time and future time. It means that the reality of man is effective only in the present time. He has no any effect in the time of past and future.

### **Unification of Reality**

If you look at all of being in unity and detail, you should see that the unification accompanies the beings and never leaves them. It is confirmed by some physical rules. For examples the rules for the conservation of energy and mass in macro physics suggests the unification. There are also signs in the theory of micro physics for unification. For example, entanglement of particles in quantum theory is a sign for the unification feature.

The reality of unification is expressed in the following verse:

“...He is with you wherever you are...” (Al-Hadid, 4)

The reality of Hebâ is essential together with the unification feature. This feature is in fact the substance of Heyula which is searched by the positive scientists. The feature of unification penetrates to all beings in realm. In all of the aspects it occurs only one form Unity. God is

unique, so He likes the unity in the realm to see the form of the unification.

### **Unity of Existence**

According to the Sufis there is only one existence which exists spontaneously. This is the presence of the Almighty God. The presence of God is eternal and does not accept any increase, division, change and renewal. God manifests in the individuals not concerning His Essence, but concerning His Attributes and Acts. All animate and inanimate elements in universe can remain standing only by the existence of God.

The main purpose of creation is according to a hadith about God: “ I was a Hidden Treasure, I wanted to be known.” This expression denotes that all the things and the universe are the manifestations of God.

Where was the universe created and where is placed in? Sufis say that the existence is unique and God is the real and absolute existence. Universe is a shadow of His names and attributes and acts. The shadow can not confine the original and so a space problem does not arise.

The companion of the Prophet (sav) asked him “ What was in the place of universe before creating of universe?” Hz. Prophet (sav) replied this question as “God had, nothing else.”

The main features of unity of existence are the followings:

- What exists is only God.
- What we see around us are the shadow of the names and attributes of God,
- These shadows are imaginary and have no real presence, so there exists in reality only God,

According to the ideas of unity of existence, the existence arises of the following five orders, outside of the presence order of God:

- Unification (other names: truth of Muhammad (sav), first manifest, gathered knowledge)
- Unity ( second manifest, detailed knowledge)
- Realm of Spirits
- Realm of Forms
- Realm of Matters

The first two of these orders belong to the divine realm and the other three orders belong to the created realm. But the last three realms are imaginary and have no real existence. The first two orders are the names and the attributes of God. They are in the forms of the essence of God and so there is only one real existence which is the essence of God.

### **Unity of Witness**

According to Sufi Ahmed Sirhindi Imam Rabbani, Sufis perceive the Being in different ways during their spiritual journey. This perception is basically of two types. The first is Unity of Existence, the second is the Unity of Witness. In the unity of existence Sufis know and believe that the existence is unique. But in the unity of Witness, Sufis see the existence of God and do not deny that there are other beings. Or they see the realm as shadow. Everything is not God, but everything is from God.

Imam Rabbani thinks that these two orders are required states of spiritual journey. But there is an higher order than these two orders which is called “Servanthood”. In this order Sufis see God and creatures as different from each other.

The main differences between the unity of existence and the unity of Witness are the followings:

- The unity of existence depends on the unity of origin and shadow and so has the property of sameness. But the unity of witness sees the shadow different from the origin. So it has the property of difference.
- According to the unity of existence the reality of the objects are the divine names and the attributes. According to the unity of witness the reality of objects are the absence which are the opposite of the divine names and the attributes. The shadows of names and attributes reflect on the mirror of absence and so becomes realm. For example, the shadow of power reflects on the mirror of weakness and so is formed the powerfulness of cosmos.
- According to the unity of existence, the true viewpoint to understand the existence is to perceive the existence as an unity. But according to the unity of witness the level of unity of witness in perceiving the existence is higher than the unity of existence. But it is not the end point. The level of Servanthood is the highest level to see God and creatures separately.

There are some incorrect interpretations about the unity of existence. We try to answer some of them in the following.

Ibn Arabi and Imam Rabani are of the most important Sufis in Islamic mysticism. Both have reached the highest rank surpassing all the stages of spirituality. Therefore we do not think that the difference between them is a lack of order in the unity of existence. How can we say that the spiritual level of the unity of witness is higher than the spiritual level of the unity of existence? Both of them have reached the highest rank in spirituality.

In our opinion the differences in both doctrines are verbal controversies which have come about because of ambiguous

language. If we leave all the metaphors and similes used for the expression of ideas aside, the apparently opposite views of two Sufis will agree.

Some people criticizes the unity of existence because of the idea that God and the universe are identical. But this criticism is not true. Because in unity of existence it is not claimed that God and the universe are identical. Ibn Arabi expresses in his famous book "Fütûhât-İ Mekkiyye" the followings:

*"Everything except Allah characterized by existence is a special relationship. The subject of the divine will is to manifest in a particular place of manifestation. This is a relationship. While the outer appearance continues to be attributed with existence, the place of manifestation continues to be attributed with absence. When the manifestation occurs, the place of manifestation gives an authority to his reality. So from these realities emerge the substances in the universe."*

According to this explanation every being outside of God are not realities, they are relations. They are not the same with the existence of God. The property of relation causes the misunderstanding of the unity of existence.

In the same book Ibn Arabi explains that:

*"The reason of the existence of creatures and the created knowledge is to be attained the order of existence of knowledge in perfection. It is not because of providing God to attain at perfection. God is perfect in His Own Essence. It does not depend on the existence of realm and the created knowledge. God can not be known, but the creatures can know only themselves."*

*The realm of creatures occurred according to all existence authorities in the image of God. It has the authority of absence,*

*although it is being. Everything except God is null and void. Null and void are absence."*

After these explanations, how can we claim that God and universe are identical? Actually there is one absolute truth. The difference is because of the interpretations and words used by both Islamic Scholars on their discovery of the truth. The absolute truth is unique and this truth existed in the knowledge of Allah. This truth can not be changed in any way. Sufis observe this absolute truth through their discoveries. To explain their discoveries they use some words and technical terms which can differ over time. So the expression of the absolute truth can not be fully and perfectly translated. Just as we have stated above, the words "relation" and "same" have no the same meaning.

We like both Sufis, Ibn Arabi and Imam Rabbani with all our hearts. What they wrote, we consider them as a guiding path to Sufism. We wish to share that Almighty God grants to all friends the intercessions of both Sufis.

Hopefully tomorrow in afterlife we would be side by side with them in heaven and continue to benefit from their knowledge.

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