

Critical Examination of the Meaning of Existence from the Perspective of Molla Rajab-Ali Tabrizi, Philosopher of the Isfahan School

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Abstract

Molla Rajab-Ali Tabrizi, a philosopher of the Safavid era in Isfahan and a contemporary of Šadr al-Muta'allihin (Mulla Šadra), stood at the head of a movement that opposed Šadra in many principles and foundations. One of the most important points of contention between these two philosophers of the Isfahan school was the problem of wujud (existence). In Šadra's philosophy, existence holds an exalted position: the doctrines of the primacy of existence (aşalat al-wujud), the unity of existence (waḥdat al-wujud), and the gradation of existence (tashkik al-wujud) give Šadrian thought its distinctive character. In contrast, in Tabrizi's thought, the fate of existence is determined in a completely different way. For him, existence has a qualificative (şifati) meaning and, like any other attribute, is in need of its subject, rendering it dependent and non-self-subsistent. Such a view of existence, given the central role of the problem of existence in philosophical debates, set Tabrizi's philosophy apart from Šadra's. Conceptual-referential confusion, treating existence as a mere attribute, insufficient precision in interpreting the words of earlier philosophers and mystics, and in the narrations he relied upon, appear to be among Tabrizi's strategic errors.

The purpose of this article is to explain Tabrizi's view on the problem of existence and to point out its flaws and weaknesses. The method employed is descriptive-analytical, based on library sources. The conclusion indicates that Tabrizi's interpretation of the meanings of existence lacks the necessary robustness, and the evidence he presents is not free from gaps and shortcomings.

Keywords: Isfahan School, Molla Rajab-Ali Tabrizi, Mulla Šadra, Ontology.

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