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Rule of the One: Avicenna, Bahmanyār, and al-Rāzī on the Argument from the *Mubāḥathāt*

Davlat Dadikhuda*

وتراعى الفرق بين العدول و السلب فلا تأخذ الموجبة المعدولية على أنها سالبة**

Abstract: Avicenna is a strong proponent of what some of the later ones call *qā'idat al-wāhid* or 'rule of the one' (RO). The gist of RO states: from the one only one directly proceeds. In the secondary literature, discussion of this Avicennian rule is usually limited to a particular application of it i.e., the issue of emanation. As result, it's not really clear what RO means, nor why Avicenna endorsed it. In this paper, I try and remedy this situation by doing two things – one on the *taṣawwur* front, the other on the *tasdiq*. First, explain just what the terms of RO amount to – that is, its subject and predicate. In doing this, I distinguish between a narrow and a broad understanding of RO, and the show that, on the Avicennian view, the scope of RO is broad; it is meant to be a general principle of efficient causality. This is why it is appealed to in various contexts to establish substantial philosophical theses. Second, I consider an argument Avicenna offers for RO in the *Mubāḥathāt*. In unpacking it, I uncover some of its realist presuppositions, and then further clarify it in light of a critique first raised by Bahmanyār and then later made famous by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. I then conclude by seeing whether the Avicennian has the resources within the initial premises of the argument to meet the objection that's raised.

Keywords: Avicenna, Bahmanyār, *Mubāḥathāt*, Rule of the one, *qā'ida al-wāhid*, Rāzī, Ṭūsī, efficient causality, causal procession, *tanbih*, self-evident.

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** Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Najāt*; Manṭiq ed. M. T. Danishpazhuh (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehrān, 1985) I.2.25, 95.

Introduction

Avicenna is a strong proponent of what in the Islamic philosophical tradition has come to be called *qā'ida al-wāḥid* or 'rule of the one' (RO).¹ The gist of this noble rule states:

From the one only one directly proceeds

What RO more precisely means I'll soon explain.

Now there's some treatment of RO in the English secondary literature.² But, that treatment is inadequate for at least two reasons. First, it is usually limited to a particular application of RO i.e., to the issue of emanation from the First principle. And second, none of those who treat it really explain RO, so from their accounts it is not really clear just what RO asserts. Nor do most of them say why the shaykh endorsed it.³

Accordingly, the goal here in this article is two-fold – one concerns RO's conception (*taṣawwur*), the other concerns its *taṣdīq*. That is to say, with respect to the first, I will explain just what RO states – specifically, by clarifying the subject and predicate terms of the proposition expressing it. And, with respect to the

- 1 Studies of RO in general abound in the Persian literature. Some examples are: Qaramaliki, "Naqsh rawshan shenākhti-ye qā'ida al-wāḥid," *Kheradnāme-i Ṣadrā* 33 (82), 1382/2004; Ghafari, "Qā'ida al-wāḥid," *Faṣṣnāme-i falsafa* 3, 1387/2009; Miri, "Didgāh-ye Ghazālī dar bāre-ye qā'ida al-wāḥid va naqd e ānhā," *Faṣṣnāme-i Isrā'* 1 (2), 1388/2010; idem, "Ravikardī-ye tārikhī - Intiqādi be inkār e qā'ida al-wāḥid," *Tārikh-i falsafa* 3 (3), 1390/2011; Kakayi/Hushmandi, "Barasi-ye taḥiqiqi-ye ma'nā va mafhūm e qā'ida al-wāḥid az didgāh-e ibn sinā va mullā ṣadrā," *Journal of Religious Thought of Shiraz University* 14 (1), 1393/2014; Azimi, "Naqdi bar 'naqsh rawshan shenākhti qā'ida al-wāḥid," in *Kheradnāme-i Ṣadrā* 78 (2), 1393/2015; Parsaee/Mousavi, "Qā'ida al-wāḥid dar tarāzū-ye sanjash (bā ta'kid bar mabāni-ye ḥikmat e muta'aliyye)," *Dū faṣṣnāme-i 'ilmi - puzhūheshi-i ḥikmat-i ṣadrāyi* 5 (1), 1394/2016; and Fayyazi, "Taḥlīl va Arzyābi-ye qā'ida al-wāḥid dar ḥikmat e muta'aliyye," *Ḥikmat-i Islāmī* 4 (4), 1396/2018.
- 2 Hayman, "From What is One and Simple only What is One and Simple Can Come to Be," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 111-136; Heer, "Al-Rāzi and al-Tūsī on Ibn Sinā's Theory of Emanation," in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 111-125; Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect* (Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 74-83; Janssens, "Creation and Emanation in Ibn Sinā," *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 8, 1997, 455-477; D'Ancona, "Ex uno non fit nisi unum. Storia e preistoria della dottrina avicenniana della Prima Intelligenza," in *Per una storia del concetto di mente*, E. Canone ed., L.S. Olschki, Firenze 2007, 29-55; McGinnis, *Avicenna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 204; and Arif, "Divine Emanation as Cosmic Origin: Ibn Sinā and His Critics," *Jurnal TSAQAFAH* Vol. 8, No. 2, October 2012, 331-346.
- 3 McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 204 is a slight exception in this regard, and also Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna: A Study and Edition of Sharaf al-Din al-Mas'ūdi's Commentary on the Ishārāt* (Netherlands: Brill Academic Pub. 2015), 74-75, but where the latter is paraphrasing Sharaf al-Din Mas'ūdi's take on RO.

second, I'll consider one way the shaykh justifies it. In connection with the *taṣḍīq* concern, I will take up a certain question about the argument raised by Avicenna's student Bahmanyār - a question that some of the 'later ones' (*muta'akhhirīn*) churlishly turn into an objection - and then follow it with a clarification of the shaykh's answer with a view to answering said question/objection.

A last point before moving on to discuss RO itself:

One might imagine that the *qā'idat al-wāḥid* is an obviously Neoplatonic principle. But one shouldn't; rather, the rule is best understood as a properly Avicennian principle, even if some of the ancients (*qudamā'*) did vaguely presuppose something like it. And this for at least three reasons:

The first is that RO is never explicitly formulated as such i.e., as from 'the one only one directly proceeds', in any of the relevant ancients. There's nothing for example in the two places where we'd most expect to find such an expression i.e., the *Uthūlūjīyā* and the *al-Īdāḥ fī-l-khayr al-mahd*.⁴ The second reason is that the relevant ancients, even assuming they did endorse something like RO, never *argued* for it. At best they only presupposed something like RO, as we can see in a passage like the following one from the *Uthūlūjīyā* X.1:

If someone says: how can the things come to be from the simple one in which there's no duality and multiplicity at all? We say: because It is a pure simple one, none of the things are in It. And since It is a pure one, all the things gush forth from it and that is [because] since It has no ipseity there gushes forth from it ipseity.

فإن قال قائل: كيف يمكن أن تكون الأشياء في الواحد المبسوط الذي ليس فيه ثنوية و لا كثرة بجهة من الجهات؟ قلنا: لانه واحد محض مبسوط ليس فيه شيء من الأشياء فلما كان واحدا محضا انبجست منه الأشياء كلها و ذلك أنه لما لم تكن له هوية انبجست منه الهوية.⁵

4 Hayman, "From What is One and Simple," 113-117, and Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 75, agree.

5 See Adamson, "The Arabic Plotinus: A study of the 'Theology of Aristotle' and related texts" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2000), 218-223, over the question of immediate and mediate creation in the Arabic Plotinus, and Badawi, *Al-Aflātuniyya al-muhdatha 'ind al-'Arab* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1955 (reprinted in Kuwait: Wikalat al-Matbū'a, 1977)), 1-33 for the Arabic Proclus. Even in the *Enneads* themselves, in the passage (the cited text from *Uthūlūjīyā* X.1 is based on, where the Greek Plotinus explains the origin of multiplicity, stating: How, then, do they arise out of a simple One, which is self-identical and has neither apparent complexity

Clearly, there's no 'from the one only one proceeds' expression in the above passage. Nor does the passage show why it's not possible for two or more ipseities to gush forth from the simple one directly.

The third reason why RO is to be taken as Avicennian is that, again assuming that the relevant ancients had something like it, they seemed to employ it only in a specific case i.e., the issue of how a multiplicity emerges from the First principle. But on the Avicennian view, as we'll see, RO is a general principle about all efficient causation, and as such applicable in non-theological contexts as well.

Of course, I don't mean to deny continuities between the ancients and Avicenna on this score, but only to say that, for the above reasons, at best the influence of the former on the latter here is only insofar they left Avicenna a specific problem to deal with i.e., the origin of plurality from the First unitary principle – and this because both were committed to the doctrine of divine simplicity - but not as regards the solution i.e., by way of RO, to that problem and its justification.

The solution itself, as well as the expression ('from the one only one proceeds'), is more likely due to the influence the Second Teacher, Abū Naṣr, about whom Avicenna said "he is all but the most excellent of those that preceded".⁶ Interestingly though, the expression ('from the one only one comes') isn't contained any of al-Fārābī's main works where the emanative ontology/cosmology is laid out⁷, but rather in an obscure short treatise (assuming it is genuine) that's supposed to be a commentary on a certain Zeno that was apparently a student of Aristotle, to whom Zeno attributes the RO.⁸ The attribution is not implausible for at least

in it nor any doubleness whatsoever? In fact, it is because there was nothing in it that all things come from it, and, in order that Being should exist, it is not Being but the generator of it. This is, in a way, the first generation. Since it is perfect, owing to its neither seeking anything nor having anything nor needing anything, it in a way overflows and its superabundance has made something other than it. (*Enn.* V.2, tr. Gerson and Dillon, *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Hackett Publishing Company: 2004), 84) we see that there's no appeal to anything like RO, and that what the above states is seemingly compatible with the direct product of the One being a multiplicity. So it's not prima facie clear that Plotinus would accept RO, since it turns out that he thinks Being, the immediate product of the One, is Intellect, and so a one-many i.e., the Dyad i.e., a composite. See further *Enn.* V.1.5, V.2 and V.3.16 in *ibid.*

6 Avicenna, *Letter to Kiyā*, in *Al-Mubāḥathāt*, ed. M. Bidārfar (Qum 1371/1992)§1162.

7 Like the *Ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* and the *al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya*.

8 al-Fārābī, *Sharḥ Risālat Zinū al-Kabīr al-Yūnāni*, in *Rasā'il Abi Naṣr al-Fārābī* (Hyderabad 1349/1930), 6-7. Against the likelihood of the *Sharḥ Risālat Zinū* being a genuine work of Fārābī, see Puig, "Un tratado de Zenon el Mayor. Un comentario atribuido a al-Farabi," *La Cuidad de Dios* 201 (1988), 287-321, who dates the text to slightly after Avicenna. If that's right, it is consistent with my claim that the RO is to be taken as a properly Avicennian principle for the reasons mentioned.

two reasons. First, because at *Metaphysics* VII.13, 1039a3 Aristotle agrees with a claim of Democritus (i.e., “one thing cannot come from two nor two from one”) that sounds like the RO. The context of this passage, however, isn’t efficient causality but mereology i.e., it’s about why substances cannot be composed of other substances actually present in them. The second reason, which does involve efficient causation, is because at *Generation and Corruption* II.10 336a27-28, Aristotle states that the eternal continuous motion of the world and the processes of generation and corruption require different causes: “for nature by the same cause, provided it remain in the same condition, produces the same effect”. This again seems to nebulously presuppose something like RO, without any justification. Further, in connection with this second reason, in his commentary on *Metaphysics* XII.6, specifically the claim at 1072a-10-12 about the fact of generation and corruption, the shaykh states:

If there is generation and corruption, they must proceed from multiple acts. And from the one insofar as it is one multiple acts don’t proceed. Therefore, it’s necessary that a single act proceeds from His essence [...].⁹

إذا كان كون و فساد فيجب أن تصدر أفعال شتى و لا يصدر عن الواحد من حيث هو واحد أفعال شتى فيجب أن يصدر عن ذاته فعل واحد (...).

This, then, suggests that Avicenna himself understood Aristotle as presupposing a principle like RO.

Let that much suffice by way of introduction to some of the background of RO. Now, let me take up the *qā’ida* itself.

Taṣawwur of RO

As far as I can tell, the shaykh has about three distinct arguments for RO.¹⁰ In my view, two of these are supposed to be general in scope i.e., applicable to every kind

9 Avicenna, *Commentary on Metaphysics Lambda of Aristotle (Chapters 6-10)*, eds. M. Geoffroy, J. Janssens, and M. Sebti (Paris: Vrin, 2014) lines 22-23, 45.

10 First, there’s what I’m calling the *Mubāḥathāt* argument; second, the *Ta’liqāt*, ed. with Introduction and notes by S.H. Mousavian (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2013) §966 argument; and third, there’s the *Ishārāt*, ed. M. Zāre’ī (Qum 1381/2002) V.11 argument. The latter argument is also found in a very condensed version in some of the other main works, like *Kitāb al-Shifā’; Ilāhiyyāt*, eds. M. Y. Mūsā, S. Dunyā, and S. Zāyid (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-‘amma li-shu’ūn al-maṭābi’ al-amiriyya, 1960), IX.

of efficient cause, while one of them is specific i.e., applicable only to the divine case. Our focus here in this article will be on only one of the general arguments i.e., the one from the *Mubāḥathāt*. The other two arguments for RO, as well the related issue of the actual ‘emanative order’ from First principle that RO governs, I hope to deal with on another occasion.

Note that when I say the shaykh has ‘arguments’ for RO, I’m using the term ‘argument’ loosely i.e., in the sense of ‘justification’ or ‘explanation’ (*bayān*), not in the strict sense of ‘proof’ or ‘demonstration’ (*dalīl, burhān*), where these latter, in relation to the mind, are supposed to make some proposition *p* known on the basis of some *p** more known than it. And the reason for this is because, according to the shaykh, the proposition expressing RO is self-evident (*badīhī*). This is why in the context of the *al-Ishārāt*, for example, he labels the chapter introducing and justifying RO a *tanbīh* i.e., a reminder. In general, the function of a *tanbīh* is not to make the mind go from the known to the unknown i.e., it is not directed at someone ignorant (*jāhil*) of some *p*; rather, it is to jog or alert the mind, to make it attend to something already known i.e., it is directed at someone heedless (*ghāfil*) of *p*.¹¹

If, then, RO is among the *badīhiyyāt* on the shaykh’s principles, what kind of *badīhī* proposition is it given that there is more than one type? The answer I think is that RO is to be counted among the *awwaliyyāt* (primaries). And the primaries, in short, are propositions which the mind assents to in virtue of merely conceptualizing their notions/terms.¹² Accordingly, to understand just what RO asserts, we should first clarify its constituent concepts.

11 And more generally still, this is what Avicenna’s so-called ‘indicative method’ is mainly about, especially in the *Kitāb al-Ishārāt*. It isn’t, as some fancy e.g., see *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Brill 2014, 2nd ed.), 346-350, about ‘hiding knowledge’ from others and the like. For the *ishārāt* there concern propositions that are *naẓarī* in nature i.e., theoretical claims that must be demonstrated i.e., on the basis of propositions more known than them, and the *tanbīhāt* concern propositions that are self-evident and clear in themselves, though they may not be fully transparent to the mind (for whatever reason), and so only need to be drawn attention to, not demonstrated. So, the ‘hiding knowledge’ interpretation (i.e., of the chapter headings of the *Ishārāt* and wherever else such terms show up in the shaykh’s oeuvre and in the tradition after him) just makes no sense. For in relation to healthy minds and dispositions, there’s no point in hiding either *naẓarī* or *badīhī* propositions - the former because they are already not evident in themselves (that’s why they need to be justified by argument), and the latter because they are already evident in themselves (that’s why they don’t need to be justified by argument).

12 Avicenna, *al-Najāt*; *Manṭiq* II.50, 121-122. For a detailed and lucid analysis of the *awwaliyyāt* in Avicenna, see Mousavian and Ardeshtir, “Avicenna On the Primary Propositions,” *History and Philosophy of Logic*, 2018 Vol. 39, No. 3,, 201-231.

In the *Mubāḥathāt*, most of the passages that concern RO come in a context where the shaykh is answering Bahmanyār's clarificatory questions about it (we'll get a sense of this when we look at the objection to it in part III below). The rule there is tersely stated as:

الواحد يصدر عنه واحد¹³

Specifically, for our purposes, three terms should be explicated: first (II.a), the subject of RO i.e., 'the one' that functions as the cause; and second, the predicate of RO i.e., 'only one directly proceeds', by clarifying here first (II.b) 'the one' that functions as the effect, and second (II.c) the notion of 'šudūr' i.e., causal procession.

II.a. The Subject of RO

The subject of RO stands for what plays the role of cause. Now, on the Avicennian account, in the basic and most generic sense, something, x, is said to be 'one'

iff x is indivisible insofar as x is what it is¹⁴

But this main sense of 'one' is predicable in many ways – by way of priority and posteriority – where these applications of 'one' are in turn determined by the 'metaphysical structure', if any, of the things the predicate is applied to. Metaphysical structure or complexity, however, comes in various types for the shaykh; hence, this basic sense of 'one' – understood as the absence of divisibility – is then said in as many ways as there are kinds of complexity.

On the shaykh's principles, there are at least 5 pairs of composition or complexity, and hence at least 5 ways of being one. We can outline these manners of being complex as follows:

1. Quiddity and existence
2. Genus and differentia
3. Form and matter
4. Elemental parts, and
5. Quantitative parts

13 Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt* §260, §673, and §740.

14 Avicenna, *al-Shifā'*; *Ilāhiyyāt* III.2, 4-5, 74.

The one as *the absolutely simple*

Now, if there exists something that doesn't have any of the 5 kinds, that thing is said to be one in the sense of indivisible (or simple) without qualification (*muṭlaqan*). Let us then call that which fails to satisfy types 1-5 conjunctively 'the absolutely one (AO).

Now according to the shaykh, these two claims are true:

1. Necessarily, AO is only true of what is a necessary being in itself (NE)
and
2. It is impossible for there to be more than one NE¹⁵

If so, then if we take the subject of RO as something that is AO, then, given 1-2, RO would then only apply in a single case i.e., the divine case. Accordingly, RO taken in this way would have to state something like:

RO*: From what is absolutely one only one directly proceeds

This then is one way to understand RO's subject term. On this reading, RO is narrow or restricted in scope i.e., as RO* - that is, it is true of one and only one being, namely, the NE.

The one as *the single aspect*

But AO isn't the only way to take the subject of RO. On another interpretation, the subject of RO is a one, but taken precisely insofar as it is one – nothing more, nothing less. In this sense, the one is considered qualifiedly i.e., as one thing in the respect (*ḥaythiyya*) - whatever that respect happens to be – in which it is one, even if that thing turns out to have other respects besides the one in which it is taken (on this reading).

Understood this way, RO would state something like:

RO**: From what is one *qua one* only one directly proceeds

Note that this reading the *qā'idat al-wāḥid* is broad in scope. That is, RO** applies to both what satisfied being an AO, and what is not i.e., what exhibits some

15 Ibid., *al-Shifā'*; *Ilāhiyyāt* I.7 for the justification of both claims.

complexity or other. So RO** is neutral about the metaphysical profile of the one thing that's taken as its subject. For, again, it just specifies the respect (*ḥayth*) in which that subject is one, whether or not that one thing in question has other features, and hence other respects, whatever they may be turned out to be.

Given these two readings of the subject term of RO, is the Avicennian view best understood as being RO* or RO**?

I submit it is RO**, and for three reasons:

- i. At least twice, when the shaykh either explicitly appeals to RO, he formulates it in the RO** way: 'from the one *in the respect* it is one, etc.'¹⁶
- ii. The fact that he appeals to RO in both the *Ilāhiyyāt* and *Ṭabī'īyyāt* contexts, when establishing substantial philosophical theses.¹⁷ The two metaphysical theses are about the proof for the existence of nature (*ṭabī'a*) or causal powers (*quwā*) in bodies¹⁸ and emanation from the First principle. The physical theses have to do with establishing the existence of soul and sensible qualities in bodies, as well as the refutation of Democritean views about bodily properties.¹⁹
- iii. Even in the AO case, the principle in version RO** applies to it, since according to the shaykh (as I understand him), the AO i.e., the NE, *is in fact* a source of multiplicity, though indirectly and on the basis of different causal aspects.

Reasons (i) and (ii), but especially (ii), would not make sense if RO was taken in sense RO*. For that narrow scope reading, as we saw, cannot be applied to any but the divine case. Reason (ii) is evidence against this. Further, given reason (iii), even in the divine case, RO is applied in sense RO**, since, on the Avicennian view, it turns out that the divine can be the origin of multiplicity, and hence in

16 See *al-Shifā'*; *Ilāhiyyāt* IX.4, 13-14, 405, and *al-Shifā'*; *al-Nafs*, in *Avicenna's De Anima (Arabic Text): Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā'*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) II.2, 14-15, 54.

17 In the metaphysical context, there are at least two cases, *al-Shifā'*; *Ilāhiyyāt* IV.2 and IX.4. In the physical context, there are at least three cases, see *al-Shifā'*; *Ṭabī'īyyāt*; *as-Samā' al-ṭabī'i*, ed. S. Zāyed (Cairo: The General Egyptian Book Organization, 1983), II.1, 87-88 and *al-Shifā'*; *al-Nafs* I.1, 5, as well as *al-Nafs* II.2, 53-54.

18 For a detailed analysis of this specific issue, see Dadikhuda, "Not So Ridiculous': Avicenna on the Existence of Nature (*ṭabī'a*) contra Aristotle and the Ash'arites," *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, 7 2019, 1-43.

19 If this is right, then it follows that anyone who rejects RO must also reject the arguments for these theses.

a sense bear a causal relation to such a multiplicity, provided there are different respects involved. That is, on the Avicennian view, the First principle can give rise to a multiplicity, so long as we take into consideration various aspects in virtue of which it does so. And this is consistent with RO taken as RO** because qua each individual aspect, only one thing is produced by the First principle.

Let this much suffice about the subject of RO.²⁰

II.b. The predicate of RO

As noted, what the predicate of RO refers to is, on the one hand, what functions as the effect, and on the other, immediate causal procession. Let me clarify the former before moving onto the latter notion.

How then must the effect proceeding from the one itself be ‘one’? To answer this question, we have to first set down, by way of a different consideration, some premises about the ways something can be ‘one’ in the sense of ‘simple’ (*basīṭ*) according to the Islamic philosophers (*ḥukamā*).

Briefly put, there are basically three ways of being simple:

- i. external simplicity
- ii. mental simplicity, and
- iii. true (*ḥaqīqī*) simplicity

And given that the opposite of ‘the simple’ is the ‘complex’, then to (i-iii) there correspond the following basic opposites:

- iv. external complexity
- v. mental complexity, and
- vi. true complexity

Now because the first triad is best understood after its opposite - for the latter are more known in relation to us - we begin with (iv-vi).

Something is said to satisfy (iv), then, *iff* it is has form and matter as constituents. Accordingly, what is simple in sense (i) would be what is not hylomorphically composed. As for (v), something is said to exhibit (v) *iff* it is

20 For further clarification of these two ways of taking the subject of RO, see Azimi, “Naqdi bar “naqsh rawshan shenākhtī qā ‘ida al-wāḥid”, 5-18, esp. 11-13.

composed of genus and differentia. In view of that, what is simple in sense (ii) would be what has no genus and differentia. Finally, what is said to be complex in sense (vi) is anything that has a quiddity distinct from its existence. For anything like this, (iv) and (v) are also disjunctively necessary for it; that is, anything of which (vi) is true, necessarily, either (iv) or (v) is true of it as well. Consequently, something is said to be simple in sense (iii) *iff* it doesn't have a quiddity distinct from its existence. According to the Islamic philosophers (*ḥukamā'*), this last would only hold true in the divine case i.e., AO.

Given the above, what kind of 'one-effect', then, must the predicate of RO designate?

At the very least, no matter what the effect the predicate term refers to must be one in the numeric sense. And one reason for that is precisely the argument we'll consider below. Apart from that qualification, though, that single effect may or may not display some complexity i.e., of types (iv-vi), that's mixed with the fact that it's one in number. But whether it does so or not would depend on the nature of what the cause is that the subject term of RO refers to

Hence, if the referent of the subject happens to be something one or simple in sense (iii) i.e., AO, which is the divine case, then that constrains what sort of one the effect can be. In this case, not only can it not be numerically more than one thing, but it also cannot be characterized by (iv) and (v).²¹ All this, however, depends on independent considerations, considerations we need not get into right now because they aren't strictly relevant to the purpose here as far as the *Mubāḥathāt* argument goes.²²

If however, the subject-one is complex in some way i.e., in ways (iv-vi) say, and so is not an AO, the one-effect in the predicate position can also exhibit that relevant complexity or not, but some other type. But again, here too strictly the one that's the effect must be numerically one – for, you'll recall, even if the subject is complex in the above ways, it must here be taken with the relevant *ḥayth* i.e., taken in the one relevant respect (as on the RO** reading in general), in which the predicate will reference the one relevant effect (whatever it is).

21 Kakayi/Hushmandi, "Barasi-ye taṭbīqī-ye ma'nā va mafhūm e qā'ida al-wāḥid az dīdgāh-e Ibn Sinā va Mullā Ṣadrā", 136.

22 Those considerations are rather relevant to (1) the *Ishārāt* argument for RO and (2) the issue of the actual emanative order from the First principle.

As an example of this latter case, consider something familiar: fire acting on wood, say, producing heating and burning of the wood. Fire is a hylomorphic substance, and so (iv) (and also (v-vi)) is true of it; and its causal action on wood produces heating, E_1 , and burning, E_2 , of the wood. The effects E_1 and E_2 are accidents, and so (i) and (v) and (vi) are true of them. Hence, in this causal scenario, the subjects and predicates of RO would be complex in various ways, even though they are numerically one.

One shouldn't object here, saying: clearly, E_1 and E_2 are numerically two direct effects in the above example. Hence, it seems that RO is false; for it seems that we have a counter-example to it.

For we'll respond: the objection fails to take in the relevant qualification(s) on the side of the cause. For, properly stated, E_1 is produced by fire qua its fiery form; and E_2 is produced by it qua the matter of the wood its heat acts on. Hence, the scenario doesn't amount to a counter-example to RO.

In sum, then, given the above, let us state RO most fully as saying something like:

R***: From the one qua one only numerically one thing directly proceeds

II.c. *Şudūr* in RO

One last conceptual clarification before delving into the verification of RO: the notion of *şudūr* – 'procession' or 'production' - at work in the rule.

'Procession/production (*şudūr*) is obviously a causal notion. Generally speaking, the term according to the Islamic philosophers applies to 'efficient causes', and refers to a giving or bestowal of existence on their part. But this is of two kinds: the bestowal of what we can call 'existence as such' by the per se cause (and this itself is divisible into 'substantial existence' i.e., cases where a substantial form is brought into being, and 'accidental existence' i.e., cases where some accidental form is brought into being (in some suitable subject)), and what we can call the bestowal of the existence of motion of some sort by the per se cause.

Now clearly, 'bestowal of existence' of either type entails a dependence relation between per se causes and their effects. From this, though, one might fancily suppose that 'causal procession/production' (*şudūr*) in any given scenario doesn't require a priority/posteriority relation but just a 'togetherness' relation.

That wouldn't be correct though. For, in one sense, the cause is simultaneous with its effect, but in another it is before it. The shaykh explains:

And 'prior' is said 'in causality'. For the cause in deserving of existence is prior to the effect. For insofar as both are two entities, the property of 'together' doesn't follow on them, but qua being relatives (a cause and an effect) the two are together [...]. And insofar as one of the two has existence first, not derived from the other, and the other has existence derived from [the first], [the first] is prior to [the second].²³

ويقال قبل في العلية. فإن العلة في استحقاق الوجود قبل المعلول فإنهما بما هما ذاتان ليس يلزم فيهما خاصية المع و بما هما متضايقان و علة و معلول فهما معا. (...). و بما أن أحدهما له الوجود أولا غير مستفاد من الآخر والآخر الوجود مستفاد منه فهو متقدم عليه.

That is, the cause is prior to the effect in that it is true of it that the effect derives its existence from it but not vice versa. This is what its being 'more worthy of existence' (than its effect) consists in.

In light of this point, the notion of '*ṣudūr*' can be considered in two ways: one, from the side of the cause; and two, as it pertains to both cause and effect. The former is *ṣudūr* insofar as an effect's existence derives from the cause or, what amounts to the same thing, insofar as the cause 'bestows existence' i.e., on the effect. This is the sense in which 'priority' is true of the cause; as such, it is a non-relational property of the cause i.e., it doesn't depend on there being an effect. The latter consideration is *ṣudūr* insofar as an actual causal relation obtains between its terms i.e., when both cause and effect exist. This is the sense in which 'togetherness' is true of them; as such, it is a relational property of the cause i.e., it depends on there being an effect.

As far as RO goes, what we are interested is in the first, non-relational sense of *ṣudūr*. For in that case, we'll be looking at the state of the one-cause in isolation or alone i.e., in a state prior to being subject to the accident of 'relation', and wondering whether, in that state, it can directly and in exactly the same manner give rise to two effects, such that we can truly affirm distinct non-relational predicates of it. Whether or not we can (truly) affirm relations of it posterior to that state (and we

23 Avicenna, *al-Hikma al-'Arūḍiyya*, ed. M. Ṣāliḥ (Beirut 1428/2007), 39.

surely can) – that is not what’s at issue. And in general, the shaykh’s teaching is that a single thing can indeed have multiple (causal) relations – but in one case i.e., the divine case, these must be ordered; in all other cases they need not be. But even in these latter cases they must obtain in virtue of different (causal) respects.

Let this much then suffice by way of *taṣawwur* of RO as

R****: From the one qua one only numerically one thing directly proceeds

Taṣdīq of RO

How does the shaykh justify the truth of RO (i.e., in sense RO**** above)? For that, as noted, we’ll draw on the argument in the *Mubāḥathāt*.

The argument adduced there runs as follows:

ما دام الشيء ممكننا كونه عن علته و لم يجب عنها بعد فليس بموجود فإنه إذا وجب وجد. فإن كان عن الواحد إثنان فإما أن يجب عنه من جهة واحدة حتى يكون من حيث يجب عنه أ يجب عنه ب أو يجب عنه من جهتين. فإن كان من حيث هو يلزم عنه أ يلزم عنه ما ليس بأ كان من حيث يلزم عنه أ قد يلزم عنه لا أ. وهذا خلف. (...).

[T1] As long as a thing’s being from its cause is possible and not yet necessary, it doesn’t exist. And so when it’s necessitated, it exists. If, then, two come to be out of the one, then either (1) the two necessitate out of it from a single aspect – such that in the respect in which *a* is necessitated from it *b* is necessitated from it - or (2) they necessitate out of it from two aspects. If (1) the respect in which *a* necessarily follows from it what is not *a* necessarily follows from it, then indeed in the respect in which *a* necessarily follows from it non-*a* necessarily follows from it. This is a contradiction.²⁴

The argument says that in general if we assume that two things come out of the one, then somehow we get a contradiction. But on the face of it, it might not seem clear how. One way to parse it would be something like the following:

Let *c* be ‘the one’ that is the cause i.e., taken with the qualification ‘in one and the same respect’, *R*, and let us suppose that *a* and *b* are its two immediate effects.

24 Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt* §787.

The argument then seems to go something like:

We can truly say:

c qua R is cause of both a and b

Let us parse this into these two claims

1. c qua R is cause of a

and

2. c qua R is cause of b

Now, it's true that

3. b is what is not a ()

If so, then from 2 and 3, we get

4. qua R is cause of non-a

But, it seems, 1 and 4 contradict each other; for *a* and non-*a* are contradictories. And hence the assumption which gives rise to it i.e., that two things have one thing as their cause in one and the same respect, should be rejected. And this is just to say that RO*** is true.

But one might resist the argument here by saying: 'yes, *a* and non-*a* contradict. However, how does that show that the predicates 'causing *a*' and 'causing non-*a*' contradict?' It seems perfectly consistent to truly affirm the latter two of a single cause.

An initial response to this worry might then go as follows: 1 and 4 contradict by way of obversion. For 4 i.e.,

c qua R is cause of non-a

obverts to 4*:

c qua R is not cause of a

Now, 4 and 4* are logically equivalent. But 4* clearly contradicts the initial 1. Therefore, 4*'s logical equivalent, i.e., 4, contradicts 1. Therefore, a single cause cannot in the same respect have more than one effect.

But this response wouldn't work; for the reason that the obversion of 4 isn't 4*, but rather 4**:

c qua R is not non(cause of non-a)

And at the very least, it's not clear that 4** contradicts 1. Granted; however, there's another way to be followed in parsing the line of reasoning at T1, one I think more in keeping with the intention of the shaykh. It consists in taking the word of negation as qualifying the entire predicate in 4, and not a part of it (i.e., the individual referred to in it), so that we get 4***:

c qua R is non(cause of a)

And 4*** does contradict 1. But how can we get something like 4***?

A worry from Bahmanyār

We can see how in light of a concern the shaykh's star student Bahmanyār raises about the argument in the following passage from the *Mubāḥathāt*:

[T2] In showing that 'from the one [only] one proceeds', it is said 'if in the respect in which *a* proceeds from a thing *b* proceeds from it, then in the respect in which *a* proceeds from it non-*a* proceeds from it. This is a contradiction.' But in my assessment this contradiction doesn't [follow] necessarily; for [the second claim] does not contradict the first, since it is a *ma 'dūla* [proposition].²⁵

In our reconstruction above, apparently, the *ma 'dūla* ('metathetic') proposition is 4.²⁶ Bahmanyār is urging that 'a proceeds from c' and 'non-a proceeds from c' don't in fact contradict, i.e., that 1 and 4 (in our version) are consistent.

In another passage, he explains himself further:

[T3] It's said: 'from the one follows one. For if in the respect in which *a* follows from it *b* follows from it, then [in one and the same respect *a* and] not-*a* follow from it. And this is a contradiction.' If it's said '*a* does not follow from it', then there's a contradiction. But [the contradiction] doesn't arise if it's said 'what is not-*a* follows from it'. Hence, this contradiction isn't necessary.²⁷

25 *al-Mubāḥathāt* §740

26 For the basic account of *ma 'dūla* proposition, see *al-Najāt*; *Manṭiq* I.1.42, 26-29.

27 *al-Mubāḥathāt* §673.

Basically, then, as I understand it, Bahmanyār’s worry about the argument in T1 is that the real contradictory of our 1 i.e.,

‘c qua R is cause of a’

is not 4 i.e.,

‘c qua R is cause of non-a’

nor is it 4**, but rather is something like:

4****. c qua R is not cause of a

but the shaykh has only given us 4, which seems consistent with 1. Hence, no contradiction. And so the *Mubāḥathāt* argument as stated fails.

In the post classical tradition, one of those who object to the *Mubāḥathāt* argument is, unsurprisingly, Fakhr al-Dīn. In his major works (e.g., *al-Mabāḥith*, *al-Mulakhkhas*, and *al-Maṭālib*), he endorses the worry Bahmanyār raises. But now in al-Rāzī the objection takes on a more forceful tone, and he makes much of it, to the point of even breaching *adab* (see below at the end).

In the *Mabāḥith*, for example, the Imām says:

[T4] As for the second argument [i.e., for RO], it’s very weak. For when we say that ‘a proceeds from this [thing]’, its contradictory is ‘a does not proceed from it’, not ‘what is not a proceeds from it’.²⁸

And then he illustrates his point with what I take is a purported counter example to the principle involved in T1:

[T5] And among the things which establish this [i.e., absence of contradiction] further is that a body, when it receives motion and blackness, and blackness is not motion, then it has received motion and what is not motion. But from that no contradiction follows. And the same in what he said.²⁹

28 Fakhr al-Din Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fī ‘ilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabī‘iyyāt*, ed M. Baghdādī (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘Arabi, 1990), vol. I, 592.

29 Ibid., 592.

And pretty much the same argument shows up in the later *Mulakhkhaṣ*:

[T6] [The response] to the second [argument for RO] is that the contradictory of ‘*a* comes to be from it’ is ‘*a* does not come to be from it’, not ‘what is not *b* comes to be from it’. And hence from ‘*a* and *b* come to be from it together’ no combination of contradictions follows.³⁰

Given the above, the question then is: does the argument at T1 commit the mistake Bahmanyār wonders about and Rāzī thinks it does? Or have they misunderstood it? Or perhaps they understood it, but it can be modified to avoid the issue they raise? I tend to think that, at most, the initial worry Bahmanyār raises is a good “clarificatory” concern - in that, like with Bahmanyār’s questions in general throughout the *Mubāḥathāt*, it gives good occasion for the shaykh to clarify and expand on things.

So does the worry raised receive a response in the *Mubāḥathāt*? Yes – on at least three occasions. And Avicenna’s answers I think reveal a certain realist presupposition about the relation between notions and the things they are about. And it is on the basis of this presupposition that I think he tries to get the contradiction needed in T1 i.e., to get something like 4***, when we assume that there’s something, *c*, that’s the direct cause two effects *a* and *b* in one and the same respect *R*.

In one passage, then, the shaykh responds as follows:

[T7] Because *b* is not *a*, then in the respect in which *b* proceeds from [*c*] what is not *a* proceeds from it.³¹

which response might not be that helpful. But he expands on this in another answer to the same question:

[T8] The notion from the two respects is different, and to each one of the two there belongs another relation. And that whose notion (*mafḥūm*) is different its reality (*ḥaqīqa*) is different. So either the two together are concomitants or one of the two is. And the argument is completed on [the same basis] as what was said about the mover and mobile.³²

30 Fakhṛ al-Dīn Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* MS Leiden, fol. 298, 9-10.

31 *al-Mubāḥathāt* §740.

32 *Ibid.*, §261.

Note for the moment here that the two respects here are the fact of ‘a’s coming to be’ (from c) and the fact of ‘b’s coming to be’ (from c), *not* ‘the respect in which c causes a and b’; for recall that the assumption is that c causes them in one and the same respect R.

The shaykh then further clarifies the matter in another passage asking the same:

[T9] The *ma‘qūl* ‘b follows from [c] is *ghayr* the *ma‘qūl* ‘a follows from it’.³³ And hence, the existence of the respect in which b follows from it is *ghayr* the existence of the respect in which a follows from it. Therefore, the respect in which a follows from it is not the respect in which b follows from it. And so if b follows from it, then it does not follow from it in the respect in which a follows from it [i.e., contrary to the initial assumption, and so a contradiction].³⁴

That is, if ‘b doesn’t follow from c in the respect in which a follows from it’, this contradicts the initial assumption that ‘a and b follow from c in the same respect’.

So how are we to understand these responses to the question/objection? Two preliminary premises are in order, the first explicit in the responses above, the second implicit.

Let us begin with the second first. It concerns a point treated in *Logic*, namely, that a simple negative (*sālība baṣīṭa*) and an affirmative metathetic/ambiguous (*mūjiba ma‘dūla*) propositions are equipollent (*mutalāzimān*) when the subject exists. That is to say, assuming that some subject, s, exists, if it’s true that

‘s is not F’

then the truth of

‘s is non-F’

follows, and vice versa. That is, when the subject exists, the truth conditions for the ‘simple negative’ and ‘affirmative metathetic’ are the same.³⁵ Let us call this ‘the equipollence’ rule (EP).³⁶

33 Reading the variant ‘ghayr ma‘qūl anḥ yalzam ‘anḥ a’ in some of the manuscripts instead of Bidarfar’s text ‘ghayr ma‘qūl annaḥ laysa yalzam ‘anḥ a’.

34 *al-Mubāḥathāt* §673.

35 Avicenna, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-awsaṭ fi al-manṭiq*, ed. and introduction S.M. Yousofsani (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2018), III.18, 62-63. When the subject doesn’t exist, however, their truth conditions are not the same, and though from the truth of the ‘affirmative metathetic’ the truth of the ‘simple negative’ follows, the reverse is not true.

36 EP is also known as the rule of obversion (as a type of immediate inference).

As for the first preliminary premise, it concerns a point gleaned from *Psychology* and *Logic*, and is expressed in T8 as: “that whose notion (*mafḥūm*) is different its reality (*ḥaqīqa*) is different”. We can reformulate this claim like so:

(P): For any concepts x, y , if $x \neq y$, then x and y correspond to distinct things

where

(P*) For any concepts x, y , if x can be cognized without cognizing y , then $x \neq y$

Otherwise, there would be an identity at the level of intension and so extension. We can see this if we consider why the shaykh, at the end of T8, likens the argument for RO to one for the distinction between mover and mobile. For when Bahmanyār asks for the justification for the latter distinction, the shaykh responds as follows:

This had been explained in other places by the verification that a thing’s ‘being a mobile’ is not its ‘being a mover’, nor is it a constituent of it. Otherwise, it would follow that every mobile is a mover. [...]. If that’s the case, then the principle by which a thing is a mover, whether its essence or a power of its essence, is not the principle by which a thing is a mobile. [...]. Therefore, in each thing, the basis of its being a mover, which is the aspect and respect in virtue of which it is a mover, is other than the basis of its being mobile, which is the aspect and respect in virtue of which it is a mobile.³⁷

But note that (P)’s consequent is not a requirement that the things (i.e., to which the notions of x and y correspond) be (ontologically) *separate*, only that they be *non-identical*. This is another reason why at T8 the shaykh likens the argument for RO to one for the mover/mobile distinction. For when Bahmanyār asks for further clarification, thinking that the initial one presupposed the two are separate, the shaykh corrects him by saying:

How have you become heedless of this point? The meaning of my argument is that the notion (*mafḥūm*) of a thing’s being a mover is other than the notion of its being a mobile, not that the subject (*mawḍū‘*) of both is different and other, so that there’s a begging of the question. In the mover and mobile in natural things, then, though it’s tolerable in those [cases] to say ‘[in] every mover there’s a mobile’ – the meaning of that is that a single subject combines both things. Hence, the two things have one subject, it is not the case that the two things have one notion and one form (*ṣūra*). The demonstration depends on the notion and the reality of the form.³⁸

37 Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt* §679

38 *al-Mubāḥathāt* §265

What we get instead is a difference or non-identity at the level of whatever the concepts strictly refer to e.g., properties or attributes of a subject.

In sum, then, both (P) and (P*), set out against the background of Avicennian epistemic principles, are to be reckoned as self-evident propositions (*badīhiyyāt*).³⁹ And with these two premises in place, the argument in T1, together with the line of the thinking supporting it in T7-9, can then in my view be unpacked (*taqrīr*) in these two ways:

The first way

When we know or cognize

c qua R is a's cause

and that

c qua R is b's cause

then on the basis of (P-P*), we can conclude

'c's being the cause of a' is different from 'c's being the cause of b'⁴⁰

Otherwise, i.e., if, on the part of c, 'being the cause of a' was not different from 'being the cause of b' at the level of notion (*mafḥūm*), then this is just to say the two claims *mean* the same thing, in which case a and b themselves would be identical. All this is evident in light of the considerations raised above. But the assumption at present is they're not identical. So a contradiction follows if we assume their identity.

Given their difference, though, this shows that two really different causal predicate-concepts are true of c, which refer to two different causal attributes or properties in c.. But, c, as we've taken it i.e., as a cause of a and b qua R, can't sustain this predication qua R. For given that the two predicate-properties are different, we can truly deny one of them of the other. And if that's so, we can then, on the basis of (EP), truly say, with T9, that:

c's being the cause of b (or a) is c's not-being the cause of a (or b)

39 For an explanation of their self-evident status, in connection with how (P) and (P*) function in Avicenna's Floating-Man argument, see Dadikhuda, "Avicenna's Floating-Man Argument; exposition and defense" (forthcoming).

40 Or equivalently, that: 'a's proceeding from c' is different from 'b's proceeding from c'.

That is, one of them e.g., *c*'s (attribute/property of) causing *a*, is its non-causing *b*; for, again, *c*'s being the cause of *a* is not its being the cause of *b*. And if that's the case, then it's true of *c* that (1) it is cause of e.g., *a*, and that (2) it is the non-cause of *a*, where its being the non-cause of *a* is derived, given (EP), from the fact that its being a cause of *a* is not its being the cause of *b*.

In other words: the assumption, again, is that in the respect in which 'cause of *a*' is true of *c* 'cause of *b*' is true of *c*. And yet, *c*'s 'being cause of *a*' and its 'being cause of *b*' are really different. How so? Because their notions are different. This is based claim (P). But what grounds is there for holding that their conceptions are different? Because of the fact that we can cognize one without the other. This is based on claim (P*). And given that they are different, one can be truly negated of the other: it's true that 'c's being cause of *a*' is not 'c's being cause *b*'. And this, on the basis of (EP), entails that: 'c's being cause of *a*' is its 'non-being cause of *b*'. And thus: it turns out true both that

'*c* is cause of *b*'

and that

'*c* is non-cause of *b*'

which is a contradiction.

The gist (*al-ḥāṣil*) of the argument in T1, and the subsequent clarification in T7-9, can then be crisply stated along the following lines:

Take again our subject, *c*, and let now the predicates 'cause of *a*' and 'cause of *b*' be B and J respectively. Premises 1 and 2, reformulated, then state:

c is B

and

c is J

Now, given (P-P*), it is no doubt true that

J is not B

(3) is a key premise, and what it states, as noted, is: ‘a’s being caused (by c)’ is not ‘b’s being caused (by c)’. In other words, that the causal fact involving a as its effect-term is not the causal fact that involves b as its effect-term.

If so, then from (3), coupled with (EP), it follows that

J is non-B

If that’s so then, as regards the issue in question, from the conjunction of (2) and (4), it follows that

c is non-B

And what (5) states is just what we needed earlier i.e.,

4*** c qua R is non(cause of a)

But:

(5) and (1) clearly contradict:

For c is both B and non-B in one the same respect R. Hence, the initial assumption – that c causes a and b in one and the same respect R - must be rejected. Therefore, a given cause, c, cannot qua one i.e., in one exact sense or way, directly cause two things (i.e., sustain two different predications).⁴¹

The main point in the argument seems to be this: when we assume a cause c produces a and b directly in one and the same respect, this entails two different predicate-concepts holding of c. The justification for this entailment is (P*). And from this difference at the level of concepts, a difference in whatever the concepts refer to i.e., realities (whether we call them properties or attributes or features doesn’t matter) is inferred as being true of c. And the justification for this inference

41 We can also construct the argument with the *ma’ādūla* stated directly (premise 3 below) i.e., without involving the simple negative in the inference:

1. c is B
2. c is J
3. J is non-B
4. Hence, c is non-B
5. 1 and 5 contradict.

And if you wonder how 3 comes up, I’ll say: P* gives us two concepts (i.e., J and B) and then P gives us two realities (what J and B refer to i.e., in c). On the basis of that, we then say ‘J is non-B because J is not B’.

is (P). The next claim is that whatever attribute or property or realities these concepts refer to are different i.e., not identical; and then, on the basis of (EP), we can truly state that this one property/attribute is non-the other one, which then gets us the contradiction between the subject having or instantiating the relevant property (e.g., signified by the predicate-concept B) and its contradictory (signified by the predicate-concept non-B) i.e., in a single respect.⁴² There's no resisting this consequence by distinguishing another aspect in virtue of which the subject is said to be non-B. For this option isn't available on the initial assumption of this argument. All of the preceding I believe is the *tahqīq* of the shaykh's argument.

In the above explication of the *Mubāḥathāt* argument, we're in basic agreement with the one the philosopher Mehdi Ashtiyānī offers when he states:

Another explication: whenever from a simple unitary thing, such as c, there proceed a and b for example, then because the predication of each one of the other by way of 'said of predication' and 'identity' is not possible, but rather each one of the two things is truly negated of the other i.e., it is true of a that 'it is not b' and likewise [true] of b that 'it is not a', then it is true of c that from it there proceed 'a' and 'what is not a'. And because of the explanation mentioned in the premises, the aspect of c from which 'a' proceeds it is not possible that from that same identical aspect 'b' - which is 'what is not a' - proceeds. [...]. Therefore, of that aspect [i.e., of which it's true that 'a' proceeds from it] it must be true that 'b' doesn't proceed from it, whereas the assumption at present is that there are no two aspects in the essence of the principle that is c and that b also proceeds from it from the very same aspect that a proceeds. Hence, it is then true both that 'a proceeds from it' and that 'a does not proceed from it'. And this entails a combination of contradictories.⁴³

And then refutes the mentioned doubt (*shubha*) as follows:

By this explication, the objection of the Imam of the doubters to this demonstration - namely, 'that the contradictory of 'the proceeding of a' is 'the non-proceeding of a', not 'the proceeding of something that is not a i.e., that is b', and hence the combination of contradictories doesn't follow' - is rebuffed. For it's not possible that 'the procession

42 In this respect, the *Mubāḥathāt* argument is analogous to this one, which may be a clearer case:

- i. 'x is red'
- ii. 'x is round'
- iii. red is not round
- iv. Hence, red is non-round
- v. Hence, x is non-round
- vi. ii and v contradict.

43 Mehdi Ashtiyānī, *Asās al-tawḥīd*, (Tehran: Mawla, 1360), 92. And for the crucial presuppositions of his analysis (i.e., the 'mentioned premises'), see *Ibid*, 79-86.

of b' be identical to 'the procession of a' but rather must be 'the non-procession of a'; otherwise, b would be identical to a. Therefore, it is true that the aspect of c from which 'b' proceeds 'a' does not proceed from it. And since the source and cause [i.e., c] is supposed to be simple with no more than one aspect being conceived in it, for that reason, it is true that from it from this aspect [i.e., from which 'b' proceeds] 'a' does not proceed, though the supposition is that from this aspect 'a' does proceed from it. Consequently, then, it is the case both that 'a proceeds from it' and that 'a does not proceed from it'. This is what the philosophers mean by the combination of contradictories in this *qā'ida*.⁴⁴

What about the Rāzian purported counter-example mentioned in T5? It's no good according to us. For it is easily explained away as involving two different respects in the body in virtue of which both motion and blackness are said to apply to it - unless the Rāzian means to say that the way in which the body is said to be black in that same way it is also said to be in motion. But this view I think is obviously false, and one which the mind naturally rejects in any case. For it is clear that a body has blackness qua having a surface or qua some external cause, say, and it has motion qua being material, say, where surfacehood or the causality of an external agent and materiality would be the different qualifying aspects that ground the true predications made of the body.

But this kind of dual consideration is not available on the initial terms of the argument in T1: for we are taking our subject, the one, precisely qua one, i.e., as indivisible in the relevant respect. And, self-evidently, it cannot be characterized by two different (i.e., and so opposed) predicates in that one and the same respect. And, self-evidently, when it is truly characterized by two different predicates, then it is not describable by them in one and the same respect without contradiction, as we saw above.

The second way

It is much more concise, and goes as follows: the initial assumption was:

a and b proceed from c in one and the same respect R

But it's self-evidently true, as we saw, that:

'a's proceeding' from c is not (identical to) 'b's proceeding' from c

44 Ibid., 92-93.

Should someone fail to see this though, there are two justifications for the claim. One is *ilzāmī*, the other *taḥqīqī*:

Ilzāmī: otherwise, a and b would be identical. This is obvious.

Taḥqīqī: the two are different because of (P*) i.e., we can cognize one without the other.

If so, then, given (P), it follows that: a's and b's processions are really different. And this is just to say that: a proceeds from c qua R, say, and b does so qua R*. That is, a and b don't proceed from c in one and the same respect R, which contradicts the initial assumption that they do.

This second line of reasoning, at least partly, is similar to the justification muḥaqqiq Tūsī offers for RO in one of his letters (though I attained it independently of him) when he writes:

I say: from the one with the mentioned description [i.e., qua one respect], without the consideration of [anything] other than its essence, it is not possible for there to proceed except one thing. For if two things proceed from it, then the consideration of their proceeding from it are not the same and the respects of their proceeding are different. Therefore, there's together with it two considerations or respects. But we had supposed their denial. This is a contradiction.⁴⁵

Conclusion

If the argument in T1 is understood along the considerations raised above, the worry/objection can be met. If one wants to resist the argument, though, a better approach might be to question Avicenna's realism as expressed in (P-P*): the premise that to a distinct notion a distinct referent out there corresponds. And some of the later ones (*muta'akkkhirīn*) in the post-classical tradition will do just this, which suggests that (P-P*) is the proposition that does the philosophical heavy lifting in (both explications) of the *Mubāḥathāt* argument: for it is what licenses the inference two really distinct causal features or attributes or properties holding of c, which then serve as the basis of two really distinct predicates, and thereby compromises the "oneness of respect" in which our subject is taken in the RO proposition, to then derive the contradiction.

45 Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī, *Ajwiba al-maṣā il al-naṣīriyya*, ed. and introduction Abdullah Nurani (Tehran: Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1383/2005), 42.

One final point before closing. In the *Mabāḥith*, al-Rāzī concludes his objection to the *Mubāḥathāt* argument we considered by disrespecting the shaykh, stating:

And the slip in an argument like this, in relation to weak minds, is more apparent than hidden, so I don't know how it remained obscure to those that claim erudition. What is amazing is that one who passes his life in the teaching and instruction of logic, so that he may have an infallible instrument to protect his mind from error, when he comes to [dealing with] exalted topics, discards that instrument such that he falls into an error which even children would laugh at.

و مثل هذا الكلام في السقوط أظهر من أن يخفى على ضعفاء العقول فلا
أدري كيف اشتبه على الذين يدعون الكياسة. والعجب ممن يفني عمره في
تعليم المنطق وتعلمه ليكون له آلة عاصمة لذهنه عن الغلط ثم إذا جاء إلى
المطلوب الاشراف أعرض من استعمال تلك الآلة حتى وقع في الغلط الذي
يضحك من الصبيان.⁴⁶

But once that argument is properly understood i.e., in light of the above analysis, the ikhwān should judge fairly (*bi-l-inṣāf*) as to which of the two is more worthy of the insult.⁴⁷

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46 al-Rāzī, *Al-Mabāḥith*, vol.I, 592.

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