

Lawh-i-Hikmat: The Two Agents and the Two Patients

by Dr. Vahid Rafati (Andalib, vol. 5, no. 19, pp. 29-38)

(provisional translation by Keven Brown)

The Ancient Beauty in the Lawh-i-Hikmat (Tablet of Wisdom) says:

"That which hath been in existence had existed before, but not in the form thou seest today. The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different. Thus doth the Great Announcement inform thee about this glorious structure. The two agents and the two patients are indeed created through the irresistible Word of God, which is the Cause of the entire creation, while all else besides His Word are but the creatures and the effects thereof. Verily thy Lord is the Expounder, the All-Wise."(1)

To explain each of the significant philosophical points and allusions present in this passage cited from the Lawh-i-Hikmat an extensive, separate study would be necessary for each one,(2) which is naturally beyond the scope and purpose of this paper. The aim of this essay is to set forth in general the meaning of the two terms fa`ilayn and munfa`ilayn (the two agents and the two patients), which have been mentioned in the above passage, to explain the opinions of some of the best known Islamic philosophers, and, afterwards, with the support of examples from the writings of the Shaykhis and the sacred Baha'i texts, to elucidate this subject and bring it to a conclusion.

To begin with, the reader's attention is drawn to some points mentioned in the above quotation:

1. The creation has always existed and a temporal origin for it cannot be conceived; however, it has not always existed in the form that it is in today.(3)
2. The creation has ever come into being through the heat resulting from the interaction of the active force and that which is its recipient, and although these two are not the same, neither are they different.
3. The active force and its recipient are created by the Word of God, and the Word of God is the cause of the entire creation.(4)
4. Other than the Word of God, all things are created and caused.

From a philosophical perspective, once the premise of "creation" is laid down as an object of investigation, this question is raised: How has creation come into being from the Divine Essence? In other words, what is the connection of the Invisible Essence to that which is created? Notwithstanding all the studies that, in this connection, have been undertaken, the origin and source of creation has remained unknown, and always will remain unknown, for the act of creating is through the essential divine attributes, and since the Divine Essence is sanctified from every kind of [human] knowledge, actions, also, which originate from the Essence, must inevitably remain unknown. The Ancient Beauty himself in the Lawh-i-Hikmat has clearly pointed to the antecedent of existence, to a cause and firstness which are not known. He says: "It [the creation] is preceded by a Firstness that cannot be regarded as firstness and originated by a Cause inscrutable even to all men of learning."(5) In explaining and confirming this subject, the Ancient Beauty, in a significant Tablet addressed to the famous Ahmad by the preface: "All praise be to Him Who hath sent down the verses in former times, Who hath none before Himself...", states:

"Know that thy Lord hath ever been a treasure concealed within His invisible Essence and shall remain concealed forevermore from the vision of His creatures, for, verily, the perceptions

cannot perceive Him, but He comprehendeth them. He indeed is the Subtile, the All-Informed! He it is Who hath sent forth the Messengers in former times and caused the Books to descend thereafter. No God is there but Him, the Exalted, the Most Luminous, Whom none can know and to Whom the birds of the hearts of the desiring ones cannot attain. He it is Who hath created all who are in the heavens and on the earth by the word of His Command, which He hath designated as the "B" before the "E," as ye are doubtless aware. That which He hath created by His command and His sovereignty, by His might and His power--how could it draw nigh unto Him or know Him in His own state? Far exalted is He above that which His servants who make mention of Him are able to imagine....Know, then, that the invisible of invisibles, the treasure of treasures, and the essence of essences cannot be alluded to by signs, known by knowledge, perceived by the understanding, nor called to mind by remembrance. All who would describe Him are unable to do so; all the Prophets have confessed their powerlessness to attain to His knowledge, and all the Messengers have recognized their inability to fathom His true nature, as their souls, their intellects, and their tongues have testified, did ye but hearken. This is the station of sheer hiddenness, the absolute secret, if ye are of those who know...."(6)

According to this divine exposition, whose theme has been set forth repeatedly, emphatically, and clearly in numerous other Tablets, the state of creation resembling the state of the Divine Essence remains unknown. Whatever philosophical or scientific theory will be offered in regard to this theme, will never ascend higher than the limit of expressions and reflections founded on the experiences and principles of human sciences, which are qualified and limited by the conditions and exigencies of thought in every age. The mysteries of the likeness of creation to the Divine Essence in His inaccessible station will forever remain fixed beyond any true understanding.

As for the creation which has been alluded to in the Lawh-i-Hikmat, it consists of that whereof He has said: "The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient." In this statement, the question of how and from where the heat itself was created is not explained. A similar kind of creation has also been mentioned in the noble Qur`an. For example, in a number of verses this theme is repeated: "We have created them from a sticky clay" (37:11) or "He created man from sounding clay like unto pottery" (55:14). These verses allude to the creation of an existence which is made from "sticky clay" or from "sounding clay," without indicating how the sticky clay or the sounding clay was created.(7) Verse 34 of the Sura of Jonah and verse 104 of the Sura of the Prophets, which also refer to the beginning of creation, tell only of the outpouring of existence to the world and its creation from nothing, without making clear or explaining the source of creation.(8)

Just as it says in the Lawh-i-Hikmat that the world of existence came into being from the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and the recipient, the active force and the recipient themselves came into being from the effusion of the Word of God, which is "the Cause of the entire creation." Now, this idea of the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and the recipient being the first thing to be created, as stated above, has a very ancient legacy in Islamic philosophy and before that in the philosophy of ancient Greece.

Perhaps the oldest careful study of this subject in the history of Islamic philosophy can be found in the writings of Abu Yusuf Ibn Ishaq al-Kindi. Al-Kindi was born in Kufa around the year 185 A.H./796 A.D. His family was from the tribe of Kinda in southern Arabia. Al-Kindi, whose father was the governor of Basra, completely mastered the sciences of his time. In Baghdad, he became the object of care and attention of the `Abbasid caliphs, i.e. Ma'mun (218 A.H./833 A.D.) and Mu`tasim (227 A.H./842 A.D.). But during the caliphate of Mutawakkil (232 A.H./847 A.D. - 247 A.H./861 A.D.) and the severe opposition which took place during his rule to the Mu`tazila, he also became the object of persecution. At last, he passed away in Baghdad around the year 252 A.H./866 A.D. Al-Kindi lived in the time of the renaissance of the

translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic. For this reason, he became acquainted with some of the philosophical and metaphysical writings of Aristotle, which were being translated into Arabic at this time, and was influenced by his ideas. Unfortunately, the greater part of the writings which are associated with the name of al-Kindi are lost. But from his remaining writings it is apparent that al-Kindi was accomplished in mathematics and had a great interest in astronomy, music, and the natural sciences. He had a special love for philosophy and metaphysics and became a proficient philosopher. In fact, he was known as "the philosopher of the Arabs."(9)

One of the basic principles of al-Kindi's philosophical system is his belief that the world was created from nothing, that it has come to be as a result of the action of God and the lamentation of existence. Like the Neoplatonists and the Isma'ili philosophers, he held that the First Intellect is an emanation from the Divine Will. From the collection of al-Kindi's philosophical views, we can conclude that he was one of the first followers of the philosophy of Aristotle in the Islamic world, and Peripatetic philosophy had a strong influence on religion after his time.

Among al-Kindi's extant treatises is one which is directly connected to the discussion of the two agents and the two patients. The treatise is summarized under the title "Concerning the explanation that the nature of the celestial sphere is contrary to the nature of the four elements." In this treatise al-Kindi considers the simple bodies at motion in the world to be four: water, earth, fire, and air.(10) In his view, the first two bodies, i.e. water and earth, move in the direction of the center, while the other two bodies, i.e. fire and air, move away from the center toward the periphery. Al-Kindi also divides the four qualities, i.e. heat, coldness, moisture, and dryness(11), into two categories. The first category is the active quality and the second category is the recipient quality.

The two active qualities, which are the same as the two agents, are termed heat and coldness, while the two recipient qualities, namely the two patients, are termed moisture and dryness. In the discussion on the relation between the bodies and the four qualities, al-Kindi proposes that of the two agents (heat and coldness), heat, which is lighter than the other, is the greater active quality and has ascendancy over fire and air. Coldness, which is the lesser active quality, has ascendancy over earth and water. In the same manner, of the two patients (dryness and moisture), he believes that dryness is the greater recipient quality and has ascendancy over fire and earth, while he reckons moisture to be the lesser recipient quality, having ascendancy over air and water. According to this, fire and earth will be two swiftly moving bodies, and air and water will be two slowly moving bodies. The upshot of this discussion is that heat causes lightness, coldness causes heaviness, dryness begets speed in both the light and the heavy, and moisture causes slowness in both the light and the heavy.(12)

From the point of view of the type of motion which is in them, the four elements are contraries to one another. The opposition between fire and earth is through the two agents present in these two elements, because heat produces lightness and coldness begets heaviness. Accordingly, fire is hot and dry, and earth is cold and dry. But from the point of view of the two patients, fire and earth are in harmony with each other, because dryness is the cause of speed in both the light and the heavy.

In the same way, from the standpoint of the two agents, air and water are contrary to each other, because one causes lightness and the other causes heaviness. But from the standpoint of the two patients, they are in harmony, because moisture produces slowness [in both]. However, water and fire, from both standpoints, are contrary to each other, because fire is hot and dry, and water is cold and moist. The opposition between water and fire is true in all respects: in lightness, heaviness, speed, and slowness.

Similarly, air and earth are contrary to each other from the point of view of both their agents and their patients, because air is hot and moist, and earth is cold and dry. Therefore, these two are opposites in all respects: in lightness, heaviness, speed, and slowness. All of this may be summarized in the diagram below:

coldness (minor agent) coldness (minor agent)

(1) water (2) earth

moisture (minor patient) dryness (major patient)

heat (major agent) heat (major agent)

(3) fire (4) air

dryness (major patient) moisture (minor patient)

two agents: heat (major agent), coldness (minor agent)

two patients: dryness (major patient), moisture (minor patient)

A few passages from al-Kindi's treatise "Concerning the explanation that the nature of the celestial sphere is contrary to the nature of the four elements" are quoted hereunder so that his original words and terminology may be studied. Since it is impossible to present all of the issues here, interested readers are referred to the aforesaid treatise.

"We find that the simple bodies which move away from the center and toward the center are four: water and earth move toward the center and fire and air move away from the center. We find that the active qualities are two: heat and coldness. That is to say, their essences affect us directly. The recipient qualities are also two: moisture and dryness. That is to say, their essences do not affect us directly....

We see that heat, which is the greater power among the two agents, is predominant over fire and air, while coldness, which is the lesser power among the two active qualities, is predominant over earth and water. It is clear that among the simple bodies the movement of a hot body is, by nature, away from the center, and the movement of a cold body is, by nature, toward the center. It is evident that dryness, which is the greater power among the two patients, is predominant over bodies in rapid movement, in other words, fire and earth, and that moisture, which is the lesser recipient power, is predominant over bodies in slow movement, in other words, air and water. And it is clear that heat is the cause of lightness, and coldness is the cause of heaviness. Dryness is the cause of speed in both the light and the heavy, moving each toward the specific place that is natural to it, and moisture is the cause of slowness in regard to the same thing."(13)

Avicenna, in the section on physics in his *Shifa'*, has also undertaken to explain the properties and relationships existing between heat, coldness, moisture, and dryness:

"The primary perceptible qualities are these four. Two of them are active, in other words, heat and coldness, due to their being agents of that which they join together by action, for it is said that heat separates contrary things, while it joins together homogeneous things, as is true in the case of fire. Coldness joins together homogeneous things as well as contrary things, as is true in the case of water. Two of them are recipient, in other words, moisture and dryness, due to their being patients of what they join together by passivity alone. It is said that moisture is the quality by which a body is easily confined and formed into a particular shape and just as easily departs from it. Dryness is the quality by which a body is confined and molded into a different shape

with difficulty, and, for the same reason, departs from it with difficulty. Therefore, moist bodies join together easily on contact, while it is difficult or impossible to separate them from their bond, which is preserved until they become separated, even from union, very easily. Dry bodies are the opposite of this.

Therefore, the first two are termed active, while the second two are termed recipient or passive, even though the hot and the cold both act on each other and receive influence from each other. In like manner, the moist and the dry both act on each other and receive influence from each other. However, if the hot and the cold are brought into contact with the moist and the dry, we see that the latter have no influence on the former, while the hot and the cold do have an influence over the moist and the dry, as we observe to be the case with dissolution and coagulation, and other such phenomena."(14)

The explanations of Avicenna in regard to the composition of the elements, the formation of the four natures, and the conditions and properties of each one have been enumerated in much greater detail than it is possible to give here. Thus, studying this part of the *Kitab al-Shifa'* for a comprehensive acquaintance with this extraordinary subject is important.

Among the persons who have made the four elements an object of extensive research and have commented on and explained the particulars of this theme in detail is Imam Fakhr Razi (543 - 606 A.H./1149 - 1209 A.D.). He has devoted part of his important philosophical work, *al-Mabahith al-Mashriqiya*, to this subject. In one of the chapters of this book, he explains the following statement: "To heat and coldness belong active properties, and to moisture and dryness belong recipient properties." He says: "Heat and coldness are both active toward each other as well as to moisture and dryness, but moisture and dryness are neither active toward each other nor to heat and coldness. Hence, of course, they have made heat and moisture active and moisture and dryness receptive."(15) That which has been set forth of the views of al-Kindi, Avicenna, and Imam Fakhr Razi is sufficient for a general knowledge of this subject in the writings of the greatest of the ancient philosophers. But among more recent philosophical writers, the one who has examined this matter most thoroughly and explained this question is Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i.

In the eighth *fa'ida* [benefit; moral lesson] of his *Sharh al-Fawa'id*, Shaykh Ahmad says that the first thing God created was "heat," which was brought into existence through a "generative motion" equivalent to God's power. Thereupon, it became the cause of the creation of all moving things. After the heat, God created coldness, the origin of which is a "generative state of rest." The coldness became the cause of the creation of all stationary things. By this arrangement the first pair, which consists of heat and coldness, was created. After that, heat and coldness interacted with each other, so that from the heat dryness came into existence and from the coldness moisture. By this arrangement four separate natures (heat, coldness, moisture, and dryness) became deposited in the first spiritual, single simple body. Then the heat and moisture ascended [within this simple body comprising the proto-cosmos], and from them life and the celestial spheres of the highest regions came into existence. The coldness and dryness descended, and from them death and the spheres of the lowest regions came into existence. Since dead bodies require animating spirits, God brought the highest sphere down upon the lowest sphere for a time to obtain another degree. This time heat and coldness intermixed with moisture and dryness, and from this interaction the four elements came into existence according to the scheme below:

heat + dryness = fire

heat + moisture = air

coldness + moisture = water

coldness + dryness = earth

Then, as a result of the third revolution of the highest sphere upon the lowest sphere, plants and four-footed animals came into existence. With the fourth revolution, the rational animal, i.e. man, who is the last, best, and most perfect of all God's creatures, came into existence.(16)

Summaries on this theme, similar to what has been expressed in Shaykh Ahmad's Sharh al-Fawa'id and his other writings, like the Sharh al-'Arshiya(17), can be found reflected in the earliest writings revealed by the pen of the Ancient Beauty. One of the first writings of the Ancient Beauty devoted, in part, to explaining the question of creation is his commentary on the disconnected letters of the Qur'an, revealed in Baghdad to Mirza Aqa yi Rikab-Saz Shirazi. In this work, Baha'u'llah says that the first things brought into existence in the worlds of creation were the four elements (fire, air, water, and earth). Then the four natures(18) (heat, moisture, coldness, and dryness) were created. Therefore, as a result of the interaction of the elements, two natures appeared from each one: from fire, heat and dryness; from air, heat and moisture; from water, coldness and moisture; and from earth, coldness and dryness. Then God created whatever exists in the worlds of creation, whether of the higher or the lower worlds. Those creations having a balanced nature, like the sun and the moon, continued to exist for a long time, while those creations not having a balanced nature quickly vanished. The same statement in Baha'u'llah's own words is as follows:

"Know that the first tokens brought into existence by the pre-existent Cause in the worlds of creation are the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth. The elements of which We speak are the same as those with which you are already familiar. Then the natures of these four appeared: heat, moisture, coldness, and dryness--those same qualities that you both reckon and know. When these elements interacted and joined with one another, two pillars became evident for each one: for fire, heat and dryness, and likewise for the remaining three in accordance with these rules, as you are aware. By them God created all that there is in the worlds of creation, whether of the higher or lower realms. In whatsoever thing these natures came into equilibrium that thing endured the passage of time, as you behold with the sun and the moon; and in whatsoever thing these natures came not into balance, that thing passed quickly into extinction, even as you observe to be the case with the creatures of the lower worlds."(19)

Although the subject of the four elements and four natures has been given a fundamental and important part in the category of physics in philosophy and has been used frequently to explain the physical world, in the writings of this new Revelation, the four elements and four natures are often referred to, according to the conventions and beliefs of the people, in a loftier sense than their materialistic understanding. The formal meanings and understandings of the people were viewed in a new light and were used to explain and clarify spiritual realities. In other words, these technical terms were applied to new, mystical concepts and ideas, and certain spiritual truths became understood from them which increased their spiritual depth and the vastness of their meaning a hundred fold.

This adoption of the four elements and the properties of each of them was used both to explain outer phenomena and, with the same terms and allusion to the same properties, to explain and clarify inner, heavenly, spiritual realities, for it is the Word of God which, in every world of existence, is in action or being acted upon. It manifests from itself the properties which have been taken into consideration in ancient philosophy for the four elements and four natures, and therefore they gradually accept a domain vaster than the notions which had been given to them. In such a mystical view, fire, water, air, and earth are both explained as a formal creation and accounted among the requisites of the Will of God and the properties of His heavenly Word, which causes various active and recipient manifestations and dawning-places to appear in the world of creation. This mixing together and the use of one element or one property to know both

the spiritual and material worlds has to an extent brought them close together and they have become mixed with one another, so that it is as if the separate domains between this mortal world and the kingdom, between the outer and the inner, the visible and the hidden have been completely obliterated and unity of existence, in other words, the unity of the Primal Will or unity of the Word of God, outside of which there is no other thing created, is completely realized.(20) According to this, whatever exists and has "existence" attached to it is a manifestation (tajalli) of the Word of God, which proceeds out of the Mouth of the Manifestation of the Divine Will, and in every degree and stage of creation, in proportion to the opportunity and place, it causes the accident of the biological form to appear.

This point is not only true in regard to the terminology and properties connected to the four elements. It is also evident when the Pen of the Most High, in the alchemy Tablets, engages in a very detailed exposition of the principles and rules of the hidden craft, i.e. the elixir.(21) "Transmutation," "calcination," "alembic," and "supreme elixir," which are among the subtle terms used in connection with the formal transmutation of copper into gold, acquire precise meanings for the transmutation of the copper of man's natural existence into the pure gold of man's spiritual existence, and become clear by [Baha'u'llah's references to] the necessity of nurturing the fire of the love of God in the alembic of the heart, and [His statement that] the meaning of the "supreme elixir" is the Word of God and He Whom God Will Make Manifest.

The divine texts in confirmation and clarification of what has been said are so numerous and varied that it is not possible to draw from more than a fraction of them in this brief article. But some of the blessed expositions recorded below will prove useful for obtaining a greater insight on how to apply the meanings and notions of the four elements. In one of his Tablets, which is dated 23 Muharam, 1291 A.H., Baha'u'llah states:

"Praise be to God, Who created the water from His manifest utterance in the Kingdom of Eternity. Then He gazed upon it and, lo, it trembled within itself and a part of it became congealed. Thus the dusty earth appeared by His established decree in the world of origination. When these two elements became separated and distinguished from each other, the Tongue of Grandeur pronounced another word, and this water generated by the Will of the Most Manifest in the world of contingency moved, in that same realm of contingency, upon the earth generated by the Purpose of the All-Merciful. By the interaction of these two a subtle, spiritual, luminous heat ascended by virtue of its potency to the uppermost degree in order to attain the station of which its all-glorious Lord speaketh. When it reached the utmost level, it stopped at that loftiest station, which indicates the formation of the highest sphere. Then the water became partially mixed with the earth and from them ascended another heat, which, on account of its weakness, did not attain to the level of the first. It stopped at another station, which indicates the second sphere. In like manner, a heat ascended from these two one time after another until all the stations, which mean the spheres, became completed. Then the Tongue of Grandeur pronounced another word which caused the stations and spheres to revolve. From the force of the rotation [of the spheres] a light shone forth and encompassed the face of heaven. Then brilliant stars and shining orbs appeared. When the majesty of His name, the Self-Subsisting, encompassed them from all directions, each one of the two became spherical, as is seen in the case of the sun and the moon. Exalted be the wise and almighty Creator, Who made His exalted Word to be the origin of the creation of the higher and lower worlds, the four elements, and the exalted, originated natures. I testify that, verily, He is mighty to do whatsoever He desireth. No God is there but He, the Powerful, the Mighty."(22)

....In another Tablet He says: "The substance (jawhar) is a single word which hath shone forth from the mouth of the Will, and by it the heat appeared which God made to be the cause of motion in the universe. By it all things came forth."(24)...

But the passage in the Lawh-i Hikmat that is most significant is this: "The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction of the active force and the recipient of that force, which is the same as it, yet different from it." According to the explanation of Baha'u'llah in answer to the well-known Muhammad, who had asked about the antecedent of "which" in this sentence, the word "which" refers to the recipient (munfa`il). Therefore, from this sentence it can be understood that munfa`il in one stage is the same as fa`il, and in another stage it is different.(29)

The possibility of the sameness and difference of these two exists when we consider [for example] the action and receptivity of the four elements by the relation of each element to the center. So we may say that each of the four elements in proportion to its heaviness or lightness will be active or receptive. In other words, the four elements have been arranged from heavy to light in this order: earth, water, air, and fire, where earth is the heaviest and fire is the lightest of the elements. Thus, with respect to the quality of activity, fire is the most active of the elements and earth the most passive. In the same manner, fire from the point of view of passivity is the weakest of the elements and earth the most perfectly passive, but in none will the active power not be possessed. Air, which is higher than water, is more active than water, while water, which is lower than air, is more passive than air. The relation of the activity and passivity of the elements may be illustrated as follows:

Fire active

Air

Water

Earth passive

It can be seen from this that in fire and air activity is predominant, and in water and earth passivity is predominant. Fire and air are also passive but the passivity of these two is dominated by their action. Likewise, in water and earth, despite the presence of activity, their passivity is predominant.

A point that should not be overlooked in discussing the elements and their properties is the division of the months of the Baha'i calendar as given in the Bayan into four different groups. Each of these groups is distinguished and designated by the name of one of the four elements. In the third Bab of the fifteenth Vahid of the Persian Bayan, the Bab associates the first three months of the calendar with fire, the next four months with air, the following six months with water, and the remaining six months with earth. He also enumerates certain attributes and characteristics for each group.(30) According to these explanations, fire includes 57 days, air 76 days, water 114 days, and earth 118 days (including the days of Ha), or 119 days (in leap years). This is outlined as follows....

Although a commentary or explanation from the writings of the Bab on the division of the months of the Bayan Calendar and their connection to the four elements has not come to the attention of the author, still research and investigation into the relation of the names of the months to the properties of the elements, on the one hand, and the rotation of the heavenly sphere and the progression of the four seasons to the properties of the elements, on the other, should prove very fruitful and worth studying.(31) Nonetheless, we can see from the above table that the Bab correlates the four elements to the divine names and attributes, to the four pillars of the house of unity, to the days of the year, and to the stages of heart, spirit, soul, and body in human existence....

Despite the strong relations existing in these stages that have been mentioned, it is always necessary to remember the exaltation of the Word of God from external conditions, elements, and foundations, just as the Blessed Beauty has stated in a Tablet addressed to Jinab-i Ashraf Lahiji. He says: "Say: We have set ablaze the Fire of Utterance in the contingent world, and it is not among the elements which were explained to you and which ye know. Verily, it is an element that cannot be indicated by any word, referred to by any allusion, nor described by any description. All the elements have appeared from it notwithstanding its transcendence from them...."(32)

The Ancient Beauty in answer to the well-known Muhammad referred to above has also stated regarding the word "active force" (fa`il) in the Lawh-i Hikmat: "In regard to what you have asked, the intent of the `active force' is the lord of the species (rabb al-naw`), and it has other meanings...."(33)

The "lord of the species" in the customary terminology of the philosophy of illumination, and also in the view of the philosophers like Mulla Sadra and his followers, means that every species of elements, animals, plants, planets, heavenly spheres, and so on which exist in the material world has a species lord in the world of incorporeal beings which is its creator, director, and administrator. In fact, according to the statements of Mulla Sadra in the first Safar of his book of Asfar, the lord of the species is a solitary intellect free from matter which is the master and lord of its species in the world of bodies. It is inconceivable for the lord of the species to vanish or disappear from its incorporeal domain. It is the source of perfections. It emanates perfection and existence to the individuals of its species, which are as its shadows in the world of bodies. The connection it has to the individual members of its species is like the connection of the members of the body to the brain.(34)

Among the mystic knowers there are other views concerning the lord of the species. To some philosophers the lords of species are equivalent to the most beautiful names and the lofty attributes of God, exalted be His Glory. So they have considered each name of the divine names the lord of one of the species of bodily existents.(35)....

In the book Sharh-i Golshan-raz of Lahiji in this way it has been explained: "Each thing among the things and each delimitation from the particular and universal delimitations is the manifestation of a name among the particular and universal divine names. And the divine names with respect to the contrary and complimentary attributes, like mercy and wrath, pleasure and displeasure, are confined to beauty and splendor. Every creature other than man delights in only some of the names, like the angels, who are the manifestations of the Praised One, the Holy....But man, who consists of comprehensive configurations, is the locus and manifestation of all the names..."(36)

It is very significant that `Abdu'l-Baha in a section of his Tafsir-i Kuntu Kanz, without reference to the name of Shaykh Muhammad Lahiji but with reference to "some of the mystic knowers," has related part of the passage quoted above....He says:

"The True One (praised be He) has manifested every created thing through one of His Names. Thus some of the mystic knowers have said that the angels are the manifestations of the Praiseworthy One and the Holy One, while devils are the manifestations of He who leads astray and He who is proud. Similarly, everything else is under the revelation of one of the Names of God. And if this heavenly subtlety and eternal spiritual element were to become separated for a single moment from a thing, it would certainly become absolute non-existence and sheer nothingness. But humanity is the dawning place of light, which is to say he is the beginning of the day of unity and guidance, and the end of the night of plurality and error. He is the mirror impressed with all the contrary and conflicting names and the source of the manifestation of all the divine and heavenly attributes..."(37)

As observed in the statement of the Ancient Beauty quoted earlier, He considers the meaning of the agent (fa`il) to be the lord of the species. Then He adds that "it has other meanings." In other words, the term fa`il has other meanings besides "lord of the species." Exploration of the philosophical texts shows that other meanings of fa`il include "the cause of existence," "the giver of existence," and (in physics) "the cause of motion."(38)

Two statements revealed in the Lawh-i Hikmat: "That which hath been in existence had existed before, but not in the form thou seest today" and "The world of existence came into being through the heat generated..." have been explained by `Abdu'l-Baha in a letter to Aqa yi Shaykh `Ali Akbar Quchani. He says:

"That which hath been in existence had existed before, but not in the form thou seest today." From this blessed verse it is clear and evident that the universe is evolving. In the opinion of the philosophers and the wise this fact of the development and evolution of the world of existence is also established. That is to say, it is progressively transferred from one state to another. But some of the philosophers of Europe think that evolution takes place from the genus to the species. For example, that the animal evolved until it became a human being. But the prophets teach that this theory is in error, as we have explained already in the book *Some Answered Questions*. Nay, rather progress and development take place within the species itself. For instance, the seed of man gradually develops, passing through the stages of embryo, fetus, infant, childhood, and adolescence until mental maturity is attained. All the while it has progressed within the same species. It has grown and developed from the stage of the seed, which is a wormlike existence, until it evolved to the stage of "the best of creations."

"The world of existence came into being through the heat generated [from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different]." That is to say, the substance and primary matter of contingent beings is the ethereal power, which is invisible and only known through its effects, such as electricity, heat, and light--these are vibrations of that power, and this is established and proven in natural philosophy and is known as ethereal matter. This ethereal matter is itself both the active force and the recipient; in other words, it is the sign of the Primal Will in the phenomenal world. "God created man by the Will, and He created the Will by means of itself."(39) The ethereal matter is, therefore, the cause, since light, heat, and electricity appear from it. It is also the effect, for as vibrations take place in it, they become visible. For instance, light is a vibration occurring in that ethereal matter. From these vibrations the power of sight is affected, and the result is visibility. Likewise, vibrations take place in the air and from them the eardrum is affected. That effect is sound, and the result is hearing."(40)

It is not possible to end this essay without acknowledging its failure to adequately examine these themes, or confessing that it is impossible to encompass divine wisdom through definitions and scholarly interpretations. The truths included in divine revelation are much more profound, vast, and complex than the human intellect can fathom....(41)

Footnotes [not translated yet]