

Plato's Ideas, Mosol and A'yan-i-thabita

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to review the interpretation of Islamic thinkers about Plato's theory of ideas. Islamic philosopher like Farabi, and Mulla Sadra after accepting the theory of *Ideas*, as Mosol which is one meaning of *Ideas*, offered various interpretations.

In Islamic Mysticism, *A'yân-i-thâbita* (immutable visible objects) is equivalent for the term of Ideas. Despite the many similarities between theory of Mosol and the doctrine of *A'yân-i-thâbita* but there is some differences among them.

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1. Introduction

The theory of Ideas is the basic axis of Plato's ontology and also epistemology. He has proceeded with it in much of his writings.

In Greek language there is a gerund which is neither intransitive nor transitive. This gerund is "idein" which means "vision". The two nouns "eidea" and "eidos" are derived from that gerund. (Borman, 1375, p.62). These two terms have been applied in different meanings such as form, species, figure, something that is seen, substance (Ousia), pattern (paradigm), nature (fusus) and so on. The primary meaning of both words has undoubtedly been "visible form". (Ross, 1951, p.13). "Ideas" in Islamic philosophy has been translated into "Mosol" and only indicates to one of its meanings, namely patterns (paradigms).

In Islamic mysticism the closest equivalent for Ideas is *A'yan-i-thabita* that mystics use it, because "Eyn" is the singular form of *A'yan*, which means vision.

In Plato's philosophy in the same manner that existence world is hierarchical, knowledge is also hierarchical. Hence, vision also from "sight" to "insight" has degree-hierarchies. In other words, from "seeing" the shadows and images of objects of sensible world to "intuition" of the fixed principles and facts of rational world's objects, namely Ideas and then the idea of Super ideas, Supreme Good, there are some stages.

The theory of Plato's Ideas (as Mosol) has had different reaction in Islamic philosophy. Ibn Sina, alike Aristotle, explicitly announces this theory void with philosophical reasons. Farabi and Mirdamad, each one in some way interpret it. Sheikh Eshragh and Mulla Sadra also accept Mosol theory with their

own particular interpretations and in the meantime answering to the opponents' criticisms they rationalize it.

Here, we review briefly some of these theories on the basis of Mulla Sadra's opinions in the most important and the most comprehensive book of his own Called "Al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-**asfar** al-'aqliyya", which is a philosophical encyclopedia, and his other book titled "Mafatih-ol gheib" and also on the basis of "Hekmat-ol Eshragh" And "Al-talvihat".

2. Mosol Theory from Farabi's view

Moallem Sani (the second teacher), Abu Al-Nasr Farabi, has interpreted the theory of Platonic Ideas in his work, "Aljam Bayn Ray Alhakamain" and says:

"Mosol theory indicates to this point that for creatures, in Supreme God's knowledge there are some forms that do not change". He also says: "These forms in God's knowledge are self-existent of God and the ancients' intention (like Plato) from this point that they have said: these forms are self-existent is that these forms are dependent to the supreme God, because God is closer to those forms than themselves (Farabi, 1405, pp. 105-110).

Such interpretation far from Plato's view because for Plato, Ideas are self-existent not forms in divine wisdom. Plato believes, the Designer (Demiurge) makes the objects of this world from Ideas (Timaeus, 30 A). Therefore, Plato could not have such word.

3. Mirdamad's Interpretation about Mosol

Sadr-olmoteallehin in the second volume of Asfar quotes his master's opinion, Mirdamad, about Mosol theory says:

“The creatures are temporal-spatial; although in comparison with each other and in themselves are in need of space, time and positions... but on the aspect that they exist in divine knowledge and divine's illuminato, intuitive and surrounding knowledge include them, these do not have any decline, primacy and posteriori and from this respect they tantamount to abstracts. Plato's aim from separate Mosol is the same aspect of the creatures” (1380, p 50).

This interpretation is also far from Plato's view.

4. Molla Sadra 's Interpretation on Mosol

Molla Sadra after that studies and criticizes Islamic philosophy notables' interpretations titled “Platonic Divine Mosol” represents different interpretations in volumes 1, 2, 3, and 6 dispersedly. On the basis of “principality of existence” and “Unity of Existence” he offers an interpretation close to “A'yan-i-thabita” of the mystics.

Sadr-ol-Mote'allehin, (Molla Sadra) in the third volume of Asfar writes:

“And it should be known that Platonic light Mosol, substantially are essences and are the origin of this world's essences and their natures. Mosol are the truths of these material sensibles. For each natural kind in this world, whether it would be multiple kinds or just has individual, there is a rational self-existent form in divine rational world, as divine Plato's opinion is also as such. (Molla Sadra, 1380, pp504-507) In the sixth volume of Asfar on “Divine Knowledge” he has been put forward the subject of the relation of Mosol to God and there knows one of the viewpoints about the Divine Knowledge, Plato's viewpoint and about it says:

“The fourth, is the way that divine Plato has gone and that is proving separate forms and rational Mosol and that they are divine knowledge and by means of them God has knowledge to all of the beings” (Ibid, vol 6, p 181). Then, he studies all of the theories until he reaches to Plato's opinion and criticizes it in this way:

“We the school of believers in Mosol, although confirm it, as we defended it and set up a logic for it and reinforced its demonstration and solidified its pillars and elevated its structure..., but using these forms as criteria for eternal mature divine prior to all of the creatures are discussible; because firstly, God Almighty's knowledge is old and self-existent, but these forms are after God Almighty's essence and are also recent-existent from God's knowledge to their

essence; now how they themselves may be God's knowledge to objects in eternity?

Secondly, as these separate forms themselves are objective beings, not subjective, we refer to the quality of God's knowledge to themselves, before emanation from God's essence, which is the outcome of it or infinitive series or expressing that God does not have knowledge to many of these objects (Mosol) before their existence and his knowledge about them has been used by themselves and that if these objects did not exist, God would never had knowledge about anything. The principles that were passed before invalidate all of the alternatives (Ibid, p.188). Molla Sadra also in Mafatih al-ghayb writes:

“The separate divine forms” which are with God, are not aware of their own essence and other than God, also nobody does have knowledge to him. The reason of this point with Plato and The Stoic philosophers is that, in their opinion these separate forms do not have any attention to philosophers, its own luminous essence and are dissolved in God through their complete servitude and their survival are dependent on divine survival and their existence are based on God's existence” (Molla Sadra, 1363,p436). “Separate forms are not components of the world at all and also are not something from creatures rather they are the forms of divine knowledge...” (Molla Sadra, 1380, vol 1, p 198).

5. A'yan-i-thabita and Ideas

In Islamic mystics viewpoint the truth of existence and reality is integral and has true unity and that is also nothing except God's existence and the existence of apart from God also is nothing but the appearance and phenomenon of divine names and qualities.

Muhi-d-Din Ibn Arabi in Fusus al-hikam says: “Know, whatever is called by other name than God or is called world, in relation to God is like shadow regarding the person and the owner of the shadow”. Gheisari Rumi in explaining this word says: As shadow does not have existence except to the person, the world does not have existence except to God and also as shadow is following the person, beings apart from God is subject to God and needful of him”(Gheisari, 1375, pp 691-692).

Mystics believe that the appearance of existence (God) has some positions as following:

First is the position of essence, which is called “Ahadiat” (Unity) position and it has no diversity and multiplicity. This position also has been called “Jam-Al-jam” (absolute totality) and “Gheib-Al-Ghoub” (absolute absence). In this position “Ahad” (One) with “Feiz-Al-Aghdas” (supreme blessing) emanates to the next position that is the same holiness “Vahediat” (Oneness) and “divine names and

adjectives" and "A'yan-i-thabita" are realized, namely they do not have external existence and are in divine's knowledge stage; then they appear with "Feiz-e-Moghaddas" (holy blessing) in the next world that is the same objectivity of existence of "Ayan-e Kharejeh" and the realization of the existence worlds (Ashtiani, 1344, pp 118-119).

Ibn Arabi does not know "A'yan-i-thabita" as existent, namely some externalized facts and out of divine essence and in divine knowledge he believes they have "sobout", namely they neither have external existence nor nihil. (Ibn Arabi, vol 2, 1990, pp 280-281).

Davoud Gheisari in explaining this subject expresses as such that A'yan are not independent existence from God in respect of existential, but they exist through "Hagh"- God's substantial knowledge and with his eternity are eternal (Gheisari, 1375, p 21). Although some similarities are seen between "A'yan-i-thabita" and "Platonic Ideas", and as discussed before, the best equivalent for Ideas is "A'yan-i-thabita", but it seems that there are three main differences between them:

Firstly, Plato's Ideas are not divine knowledge and does not have inner aspect toward supreme Idea (absolute goodness) namely God, rather they have outer and independent aspect.

Secondly, they are not general; rather every particular object has also *sobout* in A'yan. In A'yan-i-thabita, particular objects also are distinguished from each other, while Plato's Ideas are related to species not individuals.

Thirdly, Plato's Ideas have nominative, while A'yan-i-thabita have only passive. For this matter some other researchers believe that whatever are similar to Platonic Ideas in Ibn Arabi's system are "divine names", not A'yan-i-thabita because they are subjective (Kakai, 1382, p.584).

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