The Sadrean Theory
of the World of Divine Command

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And God said, “Let there be light”, and there was light. And God saw that the light was
good and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day” and the
darkness He called “night”. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

And God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate
the waters from the waters…”.

And God said: “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according their kinds: cattle
and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds and it was so….”

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have
dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air and over the cattle, and over
all the earth…. So God created man and his own image, in the image of God.”

These are some quotations from the beginning verses of the Holy Bible which
depict to us in clear terms the creation of the heavens, the earth, light, and darkness,
the sun, the moon and the stars, the water, the seas, the vegetation and the plants,
the seed-bearing fruits and fruit-yielding trees, the great sea-monsters, the living
creatures, the winged birds, animals, cattle and beasts of burden and creeping
animals. Finally, after creating the heavens and the earth and all elements of the
mineral kingdom and all creatures of the vegetative and the animal order, He made
man in his image and in his Likeness and gave him Dominion over all creatures
on earth, whether fish in the sea, or birds in the sky, or cattle and other beings on
earth. And, moreover, He taught man the name of everything He had created.

It is very interesting that the first verse of the Old Testament starts with the
problem of creation: “In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the
Earth….”. Needless to say, the problem of creation is one of the most significant
themes in the whole Bible and, moreover, in the Abrahamic religions, in Judaism,
Christianity, and Islam. But even if there is a picturesque depiction of the creative
activity of God in the Holy Bible, there is no ontological or a metaphysical justifi-
cation for the fiat or the Divine creative act.

It is almost a truism to say that Greek philosophers were not acquainted with
the biblical notion of creation. In the Timaeus of Plato, perhaps the best cosmo-
logical treatise ever written in the Greek tradition or western culture on the whole,
no creative activity is attributed to the Divinity. God is, at most, the Artificer, or
the maker of the world, not its creator. He is the Demiourgos who imposes ideas
or forms on the pre-existing or primordial matter. Plato’s Demurge is far from
being the creator ex-nihilo found in the Abrahamic tradition.
But when we come to the *Holy Quran* we see that, as in the *Bible*, there is much emphasis on the creative act of God in its various modes and in the different levels of existence. God is the creator *par excellence*, even if man, in a secondary sense, is the creator, being the image and the vicegerent of God on earth. There are many verses in the *Quran* relating to the act of creation and, more importantly, which in a manner deserving of a holy book give many ontological hints and allusions as to the necessary conditions for the possibility of such a creative act (which, by the way, have been the focus of attention of the greatest philosophers, theosophers, mystics and the sages of Islam and a theme of paramount significance in the Transcendent philosophy of Mulla Sadra).

We might ask, “What is the nature of the ‘fiat’ or the creative act?” It might possibly be answered that it is an ontological command for the existence of something that was previously a non-entity. God said, “Let there be light! And there was light”. God in other words intends or wills that there should be something or that something should come into Being and then addressing it commands it to be and immediately it existentiates, i.e. it comes into being. This is how the *Holy Quran* views the issue of the creative act of God and, generally speaking, the ontological command. “His command is such that when he wills something (to be), He says to it ‘be’ and lo, there it is” (*Quran*, Chapter 36, Verse 82) “and when he decides something (addressing it) he says to it be and then it is” (*Quran* II-117).

In his analysis of this verse, Ibn Arabi, one of the greatest speculative mystics of Islam, says that certain conditions prerequisite for the existence of a thing should be realized before the existence of that thing. First, it should be a thing within the sphere of possibility rather than impossibility, because an impossible thing is an illusory no-thing and hence can never see the light of existence. So, prior to existence, it should be a self-subsistent possible thing, or what he calls an ‘*ayn ath-Thabitah*, being a determination of Divine Knowledge, not of the Divine will or power. Second, in order to exist, it should become the object of Divine volition, without which existence is impossible and the thing would for ever stay within the sphere of subsistence or sheer possibility. Third, the thing should be addressed by the Divine word “be” or in other words by Divine speech. Now, Divine volition does not make a thing what it is, but only wills it by addressing it to be, as when by the mere act of volition and vocal determination of our breath, we human beings bring words into being. That is why, calling the pure act of being “The Breath of The Compassionate” (*nafas ar-Rahman*) and following the terminology of the *Holy Quran* in calling all entities “words of God” (*Kalimat-llah*), Ibn Arabi maintains that, as ontological words, all beings (*maujudat*) are determinations of the Infinite Divine Breath, which is itself the first determination of Divine speech (*qaul*, referring to “He says” in the verse mentioned).

Furthermore, every command, including this ontological command, necessitates a recipient or a receptacle which in this case is the thing in the state of possibility. A possible or self-subsisting thing is neither existent (otherwise it would not become the object of the ontological command), nor non-existent by itself (because a necessarily non-existent thing could never come to be). It is this contingency that makes it a pure recipient of the ontological fiat. In addition, every word or speech (in this case the Divine word ‘Be’) requires a kind of ontological audition