
16th century Persian tiles in dialogue with 21st century digital tiles in the Sadrian universe

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Abstract

This article brings together tiles of 16th century Persian architecture and 21st century digital tiles of moving image to explore new potentials beyond the perceived image. As minimal parts of a bigger image, they both appear still and motionless. However, Persian Islamic philosopher, Mulla Sadrā Shirazi's (1571-1640) theory of 'substantial motion' (al-harakat al-jawhariyya) argues that, at the level of substance, an invisible internal motion and change takes place. Due to this internal change, aspects of the Divine Being constantly manifest in the existence of entities. Sadrā's unique view on existence suggests that all living and non-living entities, as manifestations of the Divine Being, have certain experiences of the universe. To think that an image, a tile, or a pixel, as an existing entity, has certain experiences can unfold new avenues for creative thinking/making in digital moving image that can reveal what is hidden from human perception.

Keywords: Digital video, Islamic philosophy, Mulla Sadrā Shirazi, Persian-Islamic art, tiles, pixels, Gilles Deleuze

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Figure 1. Dome of Friday Mosque (Masjed-e-jameh) [Photo: Author, 2011, Yazd-Iran]

Introduction

In Islamic architecture, the dome can be seen as a mirror of the cosmos and its beauty, hiding and exposing Divine beauty. The apparent universe of multiplicity, God's "infinite visible symbols" (Barry, 1996: 40), can be both leading and misleading, revealing and obscuring, like the "polychromatic adornment on a mosque's wall" (Ibid. 40). Connecting the dome to the cosmos, Michael Barry likens the geometric network across the walls and domes of a mosque to Qu'ranic interpretations of the spider web (Ibid. 39-41). In *Ankabut* (meaning The Spider, that is also a title of a section in the Qu'ran), the dwelling of a spider is most fragile and untrustworthy. However, according to Islamic traditions, the web is also protective; once, when the Prophet fled from his enemies and took refuge in a cave, a spider quickly shaped a web over the cave's entrance, tricking the enemies to

think the cave must be empty. The maze-like quality of the universe resembles the spider web; it reveals God's manifestation while concealing Him. Likewise, the interconnected forms and shapes of the patterns and tiles on the dome and its surrounding parts are reminders of systems like the spider web and the universe (e.g. fig. 1). Every entity in the universe, and so every element of the mosque, and every tile, enfolds layers of meaning. Each can reveal aspects of the Divine reality. An individual's attention can be occupied by an ornament's external beauty, but s/he can also experience the deeper layers of meaning through contemplation.

This article proposes that similar to the tiles and patterns of Persian-Islamic mosques, pixels – digital tiles of the video – are revealing and obscuring. While exposing images of the world, their experience of existence is concealed.

Pixels' main function is to transfer codes and algorithmic data into simple coloured units; collectively, these changing units produce a moving image. In the human eyes, pixels' only significance seems to be as building blocks of the digital image. Their higher number results in a higher image resolution that can be associated more closely to human perception. That is to say, technology of the digital image attempts to hide the underlying activities of the pixels in favour of a realistic image. By doing so, we disregard a whole new level of potential that exists in the underlying structure of moving image; such as pixels' experiences of the universe and their changing nature.

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The structure of a video resembles Mulla Sadrā Shirazi's (c. 1572-1640) moving universe, where simple entities, known as substances, have their own time and motion as part of a bigger motion of the universe. Sadrā's theory of Substantial Motion (*Al-harakat al-jawhariyya*) is about an invisible transformation that takes place continuously in the inner structure of entities; their substance (*jawhar*). This internal motion interconnects all beings and enables every existing being to influence the whole. He argues for recognising the constant change of interconnected things, which provides every existing entity with a singular experience of the universe and the Divine. This not only includes living beings, for Sadrā's ontology non-human entities are also included. This has been

marginalised in Western philosophy and has only recently been rediscovered by new materialists and post-humanists (see Van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2012). Sadrā questioned appearances in order to move beyond the already known and to recognise becoming and change at the level of substance. What we see as an image is always only a small part of reality, and whatever enters human understanding is then subjected to abstraction, which Sadrā considered unhelpful for understanding. Sadrā's emphasis on experience makes his philosophy interesting for creative thinking/making. His philosophy is particularly helpful for thinking about digital video and ways in which video can open up new perceptions through its minimal parts (i.e. its pixels).

Moving image, pixels and tiles

For the purpose of this article I briefly address the contribution of moving image towards expanding human perception in the context of cinema studies and analogue film. An already established body of knowledge by film theorists and philosophers, which discusses the ways in which the camera has provided a different form of perception (see, Deleuze, 1986; Sobchak, 1991), can assist in thinking about the novelty of digital video and its ability to reveal something beyond an already perceived image.

The invention of cinema initially was to "imitate natural perception" (Deleuze,

1986: 3). Primarily, the fixed point of view from an immobile camera was to follow the human point of view, resulting in strictly immobile shots with passing still images/frames to create an expression of movement. The true novelty of cinema was revealed by the introduction of “camera movement”; when the shots were no longer spatial and immobile but temporal and mobile. The moving camera gave a mobile section “not an immobile section + movement” (p. 2). The mobile section created an alienation from normal perception, exposing different qualities previously not seen (such as blurriness, extreme close up and fast speed images). It was the camera’s lack of “interest” that enabled it to expose the world differently. Unlike the human eye, the camera does not perceive based on its identification with what it sees, nor does it perceive based on socio-economic interests or survival needs (Deleuze, 1986).¹ Following Deleuze and with a phenomenological approach, Sobchak (1991) considers the film with a body that is capable of hearing and seeing. The camera, with a body that perceives, articulates the world as it is experiencing. Hence, a moving image is an expression of the camera’s experience of the universe (Ibid.,p 3-8). Recognising the capacities of the moving camera opened up new possibilities toward exploring the universe through the camera’s perceiving body.

Currently, digital moving image and its technology attempts to recreate our already

existing perception of the universe. But, like in early cinema, relying on human-centric points of view and perception has concealed digital video’s capacity to express its experience of the universe. Our point of reference in understanding digital image has been mainly the analogue film; most film theorists study and analyse video images in a similar way to the analogue film and its characteristics, such as twenty five frames per second, sequential movement of frames, and a linear experience of movement and time (see Doane, 2007; Rodowick, 2007; Cubitt, 2004). Such a comparison has resulted in videos to be largely criticized for its pixel-based structure, which permits an easy manipulation of the image through codes. The algorithmic quality of the digital image caused many film theorists to suspect digital image for its so-called “lack of materiality” and inability to “represent reality” (Rodowick, 2007: 102). This is because analogue film allows for the reflected light from the filmed object to leave an imprint on the film that can be traced back to the recorded object. Unlike analogue, in digital video the process of digitalisation cuts out the ‘reachable’ connection between the image and the recorded object as the light is converted into codes (p. 119). Although digital video is criticised for its algorithmic quality and its apparent lack of connection with the recorded object, such a critique is debatable. For the purpose of focusing this paper and following a



Figure 2. Sheikh Lutfollah Mosque [Photo: Author, 2012, Isfahan-Iran]

similar approach to Deleuze and Sobchak, I stay away from the material study of film and video and focus on encouraging the understanding of the digital body for new perceptions. Interpreting the digital body of contemporary moving image according to human perception (and in relation to analogue film) detract our attention from the new possibilities that digital video and its materiality are offering. Like with analogue film, and unlike human perception, digital video perceives with no interest and need.

Despite our attempt to form a more realistic image, by either hiding pixels (e.g. using HD technology) or condemning pixels for their apparent lack of materiality (e.g. digital qualities) or a connection to the filmed object, they continue to reveal their own experiences of existence. Yet, our perception is mostly occupied by the perceived image. We begin to notice pixels' activities when

their harmonious collective change is disrupted due to delays in received codes and the uneven transitions between pixels. Resulted pixelated image, disturbs our perception of smooth and continuous motion of the changing frames. Similar to the introduction of the movement camera in early cinema, the dissonance amongst pixels and transition of data brings awareness to the underlying motion and activities within the structure of the moving image. But how can pixels, these isolated, static and unchanging units, contribute to human perception?

Returning to the tiles of traditional Persian mosques, like in the dome of the Shaikh Lutfollah Mosque (1619) in Isfahan, each simple coloured tile occupies a fix location and in relation to other tiles. Unlike the blinking pixels that change colour, tiles appear to stay unchanged. Even though the tiles stay immobile, their togetherness forms patterns that create an experience of movement in viewers



Figure 3. Sheikh Lutfollah Mosque [Still from video: Author, 2012, Isfahan-Iran]

perceptions; one looks and soon eyes find no rest; constantly moving on the surface of the patterns from one point to another. This is not an external motion caused by changing frames or moving events, but an internal motion that suggests an experience and change beyond seemingly stationary and lifeless states of entities, such as pixels and tiles. The surface of the tiles continuously reflects the light and the surround environment to create an experience of a changing space. In the complex system of Persian design of mosques, every element and every tile works in relation to the whole to create a space for an internal change and transformation of individuals in the space. Likewise, in the complex system of digital video, the blinking pixels, despite their apparent fixity, work in relation to the whole and as a unified unit. The change

of each simple coloured pixel collectively creates an experience of a moving image as a whole.

While these two very different settings involve equally dissimilar media and experiences, they both involve intricate changes through motion – produced in one case, by static tiles and, in the other, by pixels. One is based on the Divinity and the other on human interest, yet both works can give a sense of motion at the level of visual satisfaction or an interest in their underlying causes (either driven by human or the Divinity) and their existence. The craftsmen of the 17th century made the tiles to express the Divine into perceptible experiences, as if each tile continuously transmits the Divine codes into a unified image with multiple layers of meaning. Each layer can

be unfolded and experienced differently by each individual; one might begin to move with the patterns as s/he looks up (see fig. 3), the other might become part of the patterns while contemplating the invisible beyond the apparent patterns (see fig. 2). Substantial Motion credits the being of entities and pays attention to their invisible aspects that enables them to experience and express the universe through their being. All beings experience the universe and the Divine being in a unique way. Applied to digital video, this enables us to conceive of the pixel as having certain experiences as a part of an interconnected universe.

Sadrā's moving universe

Sadrā's moving universe helps to mobilise our current understanding of entities as isolated individuals without agility, for instance, pixels on a grid of a screen or tiles in Persian architecture. In the Sadrian worldview, the only thing that is stable and unchanged is the being of God, all others are in a process of change and becoming. God's act of being (change and becoming) that is present within entities constantly emanates their existent (Jambet, 2006: 26). His theory of Substantial Motion (*Al-harakat al-jawhariyya*) suggests intensification or an internal movement towards a greater potency. An invisible gradual transformation takes place in the inner structure of entities (M. Kamal, 2006:

72). Substance (*jawhar*), the primary component of matter, simultaneously receives God's act of being. To be receptive to God's act of being, substance must be the most invisible aspect of the entity that is connected to the unmoving Divine (Jambet, 2006). Hence, substance, for Sadrā, is not purely material/visible but also immaterial/invisible, which in its existence is subject to change.²

Through the interwoven material/visible and immaterial/invisible properties of substance, each entity reveals and conceals the Divine act of being in its existence. For Sadrā, "everything in existence is a proof and a sign of what is in the invisible. [The Divine Name] 'Self-Subsisting' [*Al-Qayyum*] corresponds to substance" (M. S. Shirazi, 2004: 100). The material body can reveal the invisible, as its constant external change is the result of an on-going internal motion. The material body is important as it initiates "a movement toward a greater potency" (Jambet, 2006: 96), in which the ultimate is a transformation toward the unmoved Divine within all beings. Yet, the material body also distracts one from knowing the reality that is present through an act of becoming (M. Kamal, 2006). Perception is always occupied with the matter that is accessible by the senses, which are then abstracted by the mind as real (Moris, 2003).³

According to Sadrā, the change of the material body in the sensible world

is a horizontal motion (e.g. an external motion, like a child growing old), and the movement towards Divine Reality and perfection is vertical motion (Akbarian, 2007: 80). While the act of being propels internal change of the material body, this horizontal change also changes the invisible vertical aspects of the being in the insensible realm. That is to say, horizontal and vertical motions are interwoven; the change of matter (horizontal motion) changes the existence of being in the invisible realm (vertical motion), which goes back again towards changing the matter and affects the horizontal motion. The interwoven relationship of internal and external change moves the entities' place within the vertical realm; the more or less perfect a being becomes in quality (intensification), the higher or lower it moves in the vertical realm, so the closer or further away it is to the Divine reality (Akbarian, 2007: 80).⁴ For example, the intensification from mineral to either vegetable or animal; or from human to perfect man. An entity's place in the hierarchy of beings allows it a certain point of view, a view that is constantly changing in accordance with the transformation of being.⁵

In the all-transforming universe that is linked to the Divine stability, beings are correlated. Beyond the material body, and at the level of substance, there is no separation between entities. All are connected and changing within the Divine

realm and through the act of becoming. The change of each entity affects the whole. The separation between entities results from the limitation of perception and the point of view that is defined by their hierarchy of being. What we see is always a fraction of the whole. The theory of Substantial Motion pays attention to the individual entity in relation to a bigger whole. It suggests diversity within the unity of the Divine being.⁶ Multiplicity never endangers God's unity. Instead, conversely, He brings about diversity, in which "the soul is in motion as 'pure act' (fi'liyya, *energeia*)" (S. H. Rizvi, 2009, p. 92). God's simplicity is alone by itself, yet able to be "present in the other being in a different way" (S. H. Rizvi, 2009: 104).⁷ Through a connection to the Divine being that interconnects and unifies all other beings, every entity experiences the universe and all beings, while affecting the whole through their experience of change.

This notion, which promotes an idea of interconnected change affecting all entities, is important for digital video. Sadrā's suggestion of change, or movement, within stillness is what makes visible the changing elements within a frame of digital video. In this instance, a seemingly stable image changes internally through pixels that are placed between the invisible algorithmic realm and the visible world of images. In the outside world of the image the tile, the pixel, the image, and the individual, are all beings in the process

of change, with their own experiences of change.

Digital tiles experiencing Sadrā's changing universe

According to Sadrā, for whom existence is all-important, all entities or beings have experiences and perceptions of the universe and the Divine. Moving images and pixels are entities with their own qualities, and both they and their filmed object/subjects are in the world and part of the process of change (Cubitt, 2004: 19).⁸ As a living, singular being undergoing change, a moving image is differentiated from other beings to which it is connected, including the subject of the video. From both Sadrian and Deleuzian perspectives, moving images and pixels are real because they exist.⁹ What matters is not their materiality, but their being. "Existence is a concrete reality that is simple and unique and there is no distinction among its individuals essentially except by perfection and imperfection and intensity and debilitation" (Sadrā in Leaman, 2013: 34). Sadrā's conception of being as constituting more than materiality is consistent with Deleuze's understanding of existence as becoming, as everything on the plane of immanence¹⁰ is in flux. It is only through human perception that entities become rigid. For example, Deleuze follows Bergson in putting into question the difference between light and matter. Positing an "identity of matter and

light" (1989: 60), he goes even further: the human eye, perception, is not essential for Appearing to take place: "the eye is in things, in luminous images in themselves" (Ibid.p. 60). Thinking of the moving image and the pixel as beings assists us to think about their perception and experiences of the universe. If there are not only many points of view other than the human, then how does the universe appear from a pixel's point-of-view?

For individuals to experience other beings and entities, their perception has to transmit information from those entities which can then be accessed by the soul. "Perception is only a preparatory stage which provides the occasion for the soul to create a form of the perceptible object" (Moris, 2003: 100). Sadrā argues that sense perception belongs to the realm of the soul and not to the category of "material objects" (Yazdī, 1992: 40). However, sense perception does have the facility to create a form (e.g. an image) from a perceived object (Yazdī, 1992: 40; Moris, 2003: 100). Though perception cannot grasp the whole reality of an entity's existence, it can identify certain aspects. Like a filter, it simplifies the object and then transforms it into an immaterial format that can be accessed by the soul, and then by the mind. In effect, this is an abstraction of the initial raw experience into a known fact. In this process, two different aspects of entities, material/ visible (matter) and immaterial/invisible (soul), are connected



Figure 4. N:O:T:I:N:G [Film: Paul Sharits, 1968, [Still from Film-Anthology Film Archive]

through perception. This connection also enables the transmission of information between the invisible and visible realms.

In a similar vein, during the process of digital moving image sampling, the captured object is transformed into codes by the camera pixels within the frame. That is, the intensity of the light reflected by the object is measured by individual pixels and the results are stored as data in the memory (see Manovich, 2001). As an element connected to the invisible realm of algorithms, a camera pixel turns aspects of an object or event into simplified formats (codes). At the other end of the process, the screen pixel transmits the codes that represent an element of an object outside the video camera into a form of coloured light. Thus, during the process of transmission the perceived object has to lose certain qualities in order for it to be accessible.

As Sadrā argues, experience is not limited to bodily senses because there are also senses “internal to the soul” (Jambet,

2006: 244) that are related to the invisible realm. *Idrak*, meaning perception, considers experience by both external and internal senses (see Dictionary of Islamic Philosophical Terms, 2001).¹¹ This suggests that non-organic beings have both a material experience (comparable to sense perception) and an experience through Substantial Motion. That is, non-organic beings can experience the cosmos through their substance that is linked to the Divine and the whole universe. At a substantial level, minimal parts are intensely connected to the Divine and can experience the Divine act of being. From a different angle, but similar to Sadrā, Deleuze argues that there is perception at the molecular level where “an atom ... perceives infinitely more than we do and, at the limit perceives the whole universe” (1986: 64). However, returning to Sadrā, even if a stone, a tile or a pixel has an intense experience of the universe at the level of its substance, the spectrum of its experience is limited in terms of its relation to the Divine being. The field

of perception that is available depends on how advanced a being is. The more change and intensification, the wider the field of perception that becomes available, and the more of the invisible becomes visible. Experience is also unique to the qualities of the perceiver. A pixel has certain experiences of the universe that are prompted by its qualities as a being, like its place on the grid and its intensity of light.

Sadrā's notion that entities in the hierarchy of beings can change their place according to their development (see above: 21), suggests that pixels, despite their apparent fixity, also change their position in the hierarchy relative to all other things. Through this change, their experiences of the universe and their points of view also expand. A pixel on the pixel-grid holds different sequential instances of information that pass through the whole frame. In each second, 25 frames pass through the pixel grid (1500 frames per minute) and while, in this process, the grid of pixels appears the same, its contents are constantly changing. A pixel contains a part of the entirety of a movie. For each movie or image it supports, it holds and experiences all information in one small spot. Over its life span, each pixel in the screen or a video undergoes certain changes in response to the information that it channels, so that a pixel with more experience of data should be a different entity to other pixels on the grid that

have less experience. Pixels on the same grid may or may not experience the same amount of new information, depending on the compression algorithm, which may leave some pixels unchanged. When a part of the filmed subject is unchanged, the relative sensors do not sample any codes and the digital image is compressed to contain less information. Certainly, pixels in different grids have entirely different experiences because of their change that is in accordance to what the outside world is to the frame.

Even though a pixel may have a limited point of view of the universe, through the process of perceiving and revealing it contributes to the whole of a moving image. The pixel poses its point of view on existence from the edge of two worlds (visible and invisible) that are constantly in motion. Part of its experience of existence is alive as a flickering light that comes and goes. What a pixel comes into contact with outside of the frame, like the objects the moving image represents, determines the accidents that befall it and thereby the colours, forms, and shapes of the image.¹² Experimental analogue films by Paul Sharits (fig. 4), such as *N:O:T:H:I:N:G* (1968), show flickering coloured lights which are analogous to a pixel's experience of the world. Every frame is a different colour and the overall experience is of a burst of many colours on the screen. *N:O:T: H:I:N:G* thus resembles a single pixel that is constantly

changing colour and perceiving the universe as if in constant shock. Another analogy can be made between coloured pixels and monochromatic architectural tiles in Islamic mosques. When put together, the tiles create a bigger surface. Each tile, as a fragment, brings an aspect of divinity into the present by contributing to an experience of the whole of the dome (Barry, 1996: 33).¹³ Pixels, even as they appear isolated and disconnected within a grid, capture a fragment of the filmed object, and through internal motion are able to contribute to an experience of the whole image. For example, while I was filming the tiles of the Shaikh Lutfollah Mosque (1619) in Isfahan, each pixel of my camera was able to experience the tiles. As a fragment of colour, each tile was captured by a fragmented colour pixel. Although my own experience was concerned more with an awareness of the whole, a pixel (closer to shock¹⁴ than to meaning) is able to focus on a smaller area with more intensity and is affected more severely by movement. For all of its lack of figuration, a pixel thus gives a more intense sense of motion and change.

Our perception of the existence to which we belong is also fragmentary. Metaphorically speaking, each one of us exists alongside all other entities as pixels contributing to a bigger image, which is the universe that, for Bergson, is a “metacinema” (Deleuze, 1986: 59). Even through fragmentation each pixel shows

aspects of the invisible realm, and it is constantly being refreshed through the Divine act of being and as part of a whole.

To conclude

This article considered an analogy between images of coloured tiles of Persian mosques in the age of Sadrā (ca. AD 1571-1640) and pixels as digital tiles of contemporary moving image. Juxtaposition suggests complementarity qualities between Persian 16th to 17th century tile craft and contemporary work with ‘digital tiles’.

Traditional Persian tile design (as in the dome of Shaikh Lutfollah Mosque (1619) in Isfahan) suggests, through visual illusion, constantly moving patterns. Yet, the tiles themselves remain immobile, not unlike the blinking pixels of video; still and motionless, they yet afford an experience of movement. Their seemingly stationary state does not mean that tiles and pixels lack movement and experience as beings. Of course, one could say that it is humans who project life and movement into tiles. However, Sadrā challenges this perception by arguing that each existent entity is a manifestation of Divine attributes, with its own particular experiences of the universe. And, indeed, 17th century craftsmen made tiles to express the Divine. They created works with multiple layers of meaning, which each person could experience from the viewpoint of his or her being. One could be satisfied with technical artistry

of the tiles and patterns of art. Another could contemplate a deeper meaning of the whole work, beyond the surface design, and a vaster and profound vision. This latter approach can also illuminate our perspectives on cinematic pixel-based imagery. Thus, this article encourages deploying pixels, the contemporary tiles of digital video, to investigate and expose what is not apparent in the overall frame of the moving image.

Endnots

1. "We perceive the thing, minus that which does not interest us as a function of our needs. By need or interest we mean the lines and points that we retain from the thing as a function of our receptive facet, and the actions that we select as a function of the delayed reactions of which we are capable" (Deleuze, 1986: 63).

2. Sadrā's philosophy of motion rejects the Aristotelian view by introducing change in substance: motion and change are not something external to substance but the reality of substance, its being, is in motion (Cooper, 1998). Here, it is not substance that is primary, as in the Aristotelian view of motion, but being: "the subject (i.e. the substance) is bound to change gradually, and not suddenly, from one species to another or from one class to another" (Sadrā quoted in Ibrahim Kalin, 2003: 78). Substantial Motion is not "a motion affecting substances with extrinsic modifications but a transformative motion that affects their substantiality itself" (Jambet, 2006, p. 96).

3. I thank Professor Laura U. Marks for studying Sadrā's philosophy with me and for working with me to understand the complex

relationships between Sadrā and Western process philosophies such as that of Deleuze.

4. Also see Emadi (2013: 2).

5. Sadrā, unlike the Sufis, believes that direct transcendence is not possible: it is necessary to work up the scale of being from matter to higher beings, from the sensible to the imaginal to the intelligible, because everything individuates in a single way and in time. It is not possible to say the universe is one with God, and matter and everything else are an illusion. He is arguing not against materialism but against concepts, abstractions or mental being. (S.H. Nasr, 2006: 74-75)

6. Most Islamic philosophers proposed an ontological distinction between God and creatures to protect God's unity. This separation, however, poses an ontological challenge: if there is no link between God and existing entities, how did they come to be in the first place? For a cause to have an effect, for one thing to bring about another thing, there needs to be either an opposition or something equally the same. God, however, has no opposition, and there is nothing equal or similar to him either. To resolve the problem of multiplicity, Ibn Sina modifies the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic concept of the First Cause that has nothing equal or opposite to it. God is the First Cause who created the First Intellect from which all other things come into existence in immaterial and then material form. It is "the first limit and the first cause to which the existence of all other beings is bound" (al-Kirmani, 1983: 155, quoted in Andrey Smirnov, 1997). "The contemplation by the Necessary Being of Itself generates the First Intellect; and the First Intellect's contemplation of the Necessary Being as well as of itself as contingent being and as necessitated by the Necessary Being (al-wājib bi'l-ghayr) leads to the generation of the Second Intellect, the Soul of

the First Sphere, and the First Sphere” (S.H. Nasr, 2006: 141). Similarly, in the Sufi tradition, from the number one all other numbers exist. Although ‘one’ is in all other numbers, it is separated and different. All other numbers are inside the one without endangering the unity of one. “The universe in itself is similar to the central dot, the circle and what is there between them. The dot is God, the emptiness outside the circle is non-existence, ... and what is between the dot and the emptiness is possible being” (Ibn ‘Arabi, 1859, Vol. 4: 275, quoted in Smirnov, 1997).

In the relationship between one and many, the notion of “simple reality” is significant. For Sadrā what is prior to all things is the most simple and it is different from anything that comes after. God is the simple being that is devoid of quiddity, and his simplicity cannot be affected by multiplicity, imperfection or any negativity. His being cannot be brought down by the complexity of quiddity.

7. The reality of existence is both many and one, which is the principle of singularity and sameness, multiplicity and difference (Rahman, 1975: 38).

8. See also Sobchack (1991, pp. 164-168) and Cubitt (2004: 19). Despite the differences between phenomenological and Deleuzian approaches, Sobchack’s view of the perceiving camera is similar to Cubitt and Deleuze insofar as a film can perceive differently from a human.

9. There is no need to critique cinema’s supposed non-reality. Similar to Deleuze and other recent approaches that regard cinema as just as real as the rest of the world of which it is part, this study considers moving image as real. Therefore, Sadrā’s approach supports the contemporary view that moving image is not just as a representation of reality.

10. “A plane of immanence can be conceived as a surface upon which all events occur, where events are understood as chance, productive interactions between forces of all kinds. As such, it represents the field of becoming, a ‘space’ containing all of the possibilities inherent in forces. On this plane, all possible events are brought together, and new connections between them made and continuously dissolved. To think of this field of possibilities means arranging it according to some concept (in Deleuze’s specific sense of the word), thereby constructing a temporary and virtual arrangement according to causal, logical and temporal relations.” (Stagoll, 2005: 204-205).

11. The internal senses are a concept that goes back to Islamic and Greek philosophy – memory, estimation, imagination, etc.

12. This multiplicity in a changing whole governs the accidental changes that occur to an entity as an individuated whole (such as growing, or movement in space). An accident that befalls quiddity of matter, such as colour and form, “has no existence independent of substance” (Sadrā’s view discussed in Akbarian, 2007: 79).

13. This refers only to a certain method of tile-making, known as *haft rang* (seven colours) where every single tile is made individually, see Barry (1996) for more details.

14. Or affect, in Deleuzian terms.

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