

*Original Research Paper*

## **Tendenz zur ontologischen Einheit in der westlichen und islamischen Philosophie im 17. Jahrhundert, eine Fallstudie zu Spinoza und Mulla Sadra**

Hosein Rahnamaei

*Assistenzprofessor an der Universität Teheran, Iran*

Marjan Nourhejabi

*Master in Englisch-Übersetzung, Universität Teheran, Iran*

Empfangen: 20.12.2024; Akzeptiert: 23.01.2025

### **Zusammenfassung:**

„Einheit oder die Vielfalt des Seins“ waren eines der wichtigsten philosophischen Anliegen unter westlichen und islamischen Denkern im 17. Jahrhundert. Diese Forschung, die mit der Methode der Bibliotheksrecherche und unter Bezugnahme auf islamische und westliche philosophische Werke durchgeführt wurde, zielt darauf ab, die Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen den Denkern, insbesondere Spinoza, dem niederländischen Philosophen, und Mulla Sadra, dem muslimischen Weisen, bezüglich der Einheit des Seins zu finden.

Beide Denker betrachteten die äußere Vielfalt als unwirklich und suchten nach einer einzigen Wahrheit hinter der scheinbaren Vielfalt. Sie unterscheiden sich jedoch in der Art und Weise, wie sie diese Einheit ausdrücken. Der wichtigste Unterschied zwischen den beiden liegt in der Identifikation und Nicht-Identifikation der ultimativen Realität der Welt. Laut Spinoza gibt es nur eine Essenz im Sein, und die Vielfalten, die in den Objekten der Welt erscheinen, besitzen keine unabhängige Wahrheit. Es findet sich jedoch kein Hinweis auf die Intelligenz, Vernunft und Einzigartigkeit dieser Essenz.

Dagegen widmet sich ein wesentlicher Teil von Sadras Philosophie der Beschreibung der Vollkommenheit der ultimativen Realität. Diese beiden Weisen haben weitere Punkte der Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten in Bezug auf die Einheit des Seins, die in diesem Artikel behandelt werden.

**Schlagerwörter:** Existenz, Vielfalt, Einheit, Mulla Sadra, Spinoza, Essenz

---

<sup>1</sup> E-Mail: [h\\_rahnamaei@ut.ac.ir](mailto:h_rahnamaei@ut.ac.ir); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8098-1675> | Verantwortlicher Autor

<sup>2</sup> E-Mail: [mnoorhejabi@yahoo.com](mailto:mnoorhejabi@yahoo.com) ;

#### **So zitieren Sie diesen Artikel:**

Rahnamaei H., Nourhejabi M. (2024). Tendency to ontological unity in Western and Islamic philosophy in the 17th century, a case study of Spinoza and Mulla Sadra. *Spektrum Iran*, 37 (2), 259-279.

<https://doi.org/10.22034/spektrum.2024.491219.1010>



Copyright © Der/die Autor(en); Dieses Werk ist lizenziert unter einer Creative Commons Namensnennung – Nicht kommerziell – Keine Bearbeitungen 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC) Lizenz. Homepage: [www.spektrumiran.com](http://www.spektrumiran.com)

## گرایش به وحدت‌شناسی وجودی در فلسفه غرب و اسلام در قرن هفدهم، مطالعه موردی

### در باب اسپینوزا و ملاصدرا

حسین رهنمایی

استادیار دانشگاه تهران، نویسنده مسئول

h\_rahnamaei@ut.ac.ir

ORCID: 0000-0002-8098-1675

مرجان نورحجابی

کارشناس ارشد ترجمه انگلیسی، دانشگاه تهران

mnoorhejabi@yahoo.com

#### چکیده:

«وحدت یا کثرت هستی» یکی از مهم‌ترین مسائل فلسفی در میان اندیشمندان غربی و اسلامی در قرن هفدهم بود. این پژوهش که به روش مطالعه کتابخانه‌ای و با ارجاع به آثار فلسفی اسلامی و غربی انجام شده است، در پی یافتن نقاط اشتراک و تفاوت‌های میان اندیشمندان، به‌ویژه باروخ اسپینوزا، فیلسوف هلندی، و ملاصدرا، فیلسوف مسلمان، درباره وحدت وجود است.

هر دو اندیشمند، کثرت ظاهری جهان را غیرواقعی دانسته و در جستجوی یک حقیقت واحد در پس این تنوع ظاهری بوده‌اند. با این حال، آن‌ها در نحوه بیان این وحدت تفاوت‌هایی دارند. مهم‌ترین تفاوت بین این دو در تعیین یا عدم تعیین حقیقت نهایی جهان است. از دیدگاه اسپینوزا، تنها یک جوهر در هستی وجود دارد و تمامی تنوع‌هایی که در اشیای جهان دیده می‌شود، فاقد حقیقت مستقل هستند. با این حال، در اندیشه او اشاره‌ای به هوش، عقل و یگانگی این جوهر نشده است.

در مقابل، ملاصدرا بخش مهمی از فلسفه خود را به توصیف کمال حقیقت نهایی اختصاص داده است. این دو فیلسوف علاوه بر این تفاوت‌ها، نقاط اشتراک و اختلاف دیگری نیز در زمینه وحدت وجود دارند که در این مقاله مورد بررسی قرار گرفته است.

**واژگان کلیدی:** هستی، کثرت، وحدت، ملاصدرا، اسپینوزا، جوهر

## Tendency to ontological unity in Western and Islamic philosophy in the 17th century, a case study of Spinoza and Mulla Sadra

Hosein Rahnamaei<sup>1</sup>

Assistant professor at University of Tehran, Iran

Marjan Nourhejabi<sup>2</sup>

Master of English Translator, University of Tehran, Iran

Received: 20.12.2024; Accepted: 23.01.2025

### Abstract

The concept of unity (the state of being one) or multiplicity (the quality of being numerous) of existence was one of the most significant philosophical concerns among Western and Islamic thinkers in the 17th century. This research, with the method of library research and referring to Islamic and Western philosophical works, seeks to find the points of commonality and difference between them, specifically Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher, and Mulla Sadra, the Muslim sage, about the unity of existence.

Both thinkers considered the external multiplicity unreal and searched for a single truth behind the apparent multiplicity. However, they differ in expressing this unity. The most important difference between these two is in the identification and non-identification of the ultimate reality of the world.

According to Spinoza, there is only one essence in existence, and the multitudes that appear in the world's objects do not have an independent truth, but we do not find any reference to the intelligence, reason and uniqueness of this essence, while a significant part of Sadra's philosophy is dedicated to the description of the perfection of the ultimate reality. These two sages have other points of difference and commonality in the subject of the unity of existence, which is mentioned in this article.

**Keywords:** Existence, Multiplicity, unity, Mulla Sadra, Spinoza, Essence

---

<sup>1</sup> E-Mail: [h\\_rahnamaei@ut.ac.ir](mailto:h_rahnamaei@ut.ac.ir) ; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8098-1675> | Responsible author.

<sup>2</sup> E-Mail: [mnoorhejabi@yahoo.com](mailto:mnoorhejabi@yahoo.com) ; The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

#### How to Cite this Article:

Rahnamaei H., Nourhejabi M. (2024). Tendency to ontological unity in Western and Islamic philosophy in the 17th century, a case study of Spinoza and Mulla Sadra. *Spektrum Iran*, 37 (2), 259-279.

<https://doi.org/10.22034/spektrum.2024.491219.1010>



## **Introduction**

As Discovering the enigma of existence, the howness of its genesis and the reality behind the perceptible appearance of the universe are among the most prominent issues that have always engaged the minds of the great thinkers.

Many philosophers assert that there is an intrinsic harmony and uniformity underlying the apparent diversities. The proponents of this theory, known by various citations as "The theory of Oneness of Existence," include a vast range of thinkers and mystics. These range from Indian religions and Platonic philosophers to Plotinus, Pahlavi sages, medieval peripatetic philosophers, and followers of Mulla Sadra, as well as recent intellectuals. In this article, after a brief explanation about the quintessence of this theory and its history, we have studied and compared two philosophical views of two precursors of Pantheism, one in the Europe and the other in the Islamic East.

## **Lexicology**

The term "Existential Unity" combines two concepts: existence and unity. A basic understanding of this term relies on comprehending these two concepts. In its literal meaning, "unity" signifies that since the thing is single, it cannot be divided (Nakary,(n.d)). In contrast, diversity refers to variety, abundance, and the idea of becoming numerous (Dehkhoda, 1373). The correlative meaning of these two words is in such a way that any attempt to understand the former depends on the latter's understanding and inevitably leads to the other (Mulla Sadra,1384). Existence and unity are coextensive, meaning that each entity since it has existence has unity and since it has unity, it exists (Mulla Sadra,1379). Therefore, if we consider diversity as an entity, definitely it possesses a kind of unity (Avicenna, 1376).

Each complex that its persons or components participate in doing something, arbitrary though, from that perspective will have unity. For instance, if some people that have nothing to do with each other come together with a single purpose, they are interpreted as a group. Since these two concepts are parallel they have said: " whatever that truly exists, truly

has unity and whatever that truly has unity, it truly exists."(Motahhari, 1383)

Accordingly, where there is true diversity, true unity does not exist rather it is arbitrary; inevitably its existence will be arbitrary as well. Therefore, diversity in something that is diverse is not something actual; it is arbitrary (Motahhari, 1383)

Unity is considered a secondary ineligible, referring to meanings that exist in the mind while their qualification is rooted in the objective world (the reality outside our thoughts). This means that these concepts do not have a separate presence outside the mind; rather, the mind abstracts them by comparing the relationships between acquired concepts from the objective world. According to this, unity does not have a separate existence from entities; rather it indicates an attributive existence between them.

In the section of propositions (in philosophical books), identity (it-is-it-ness) is considered as one of the effects and attributes of unity. It-is-it-ness or identification is the union between the subject and the predicate of a proposition and it is considered as the cause of the authenticity of the predication. (Tabatabaei,1359). If unity did not exist between the world's objects and only diversity were actual, basically, predication is wrong and it-is-it-ness cannot exist.

### **Unity and diversity of existence in philosophy and mysticism**

One may claim that the first explanation offered in the history of philosophy has been about unity and diversity (Copleston,1385), though some thinkers believe that the scientific and philosophical introduction of this subject was from Mulla Sadra era onwards (Motahhari, 1383). Many philosophers assert that there is an intrinsic harmony and uniformity underlying the apparent diversities.

In simple terms, the objective of the advocates of Unity of Existence is to assert the oneness of the universe; indicating that there exists only absolute unity in this world, without any duality among its creatures. Existence includes all the diversities and it is the unifier of all the discrepancies and dispersions; it is common to all beings and it flows everywhere, for everyone and everything. On the contrary, the intention of diversity is its existence that the universe is sheer multiplicity and there is no common

point of existence in all beings (Amin,1997). Greek-Ionian philosophers' efforts to refer everything in the world to a common root whether this common root is water, as Thales stated or it is air as Anaximenes of Miletus claimed, are indications of none dual attitude of the first scholars of the history of philosophy to the world surrounding them.

Heraclitus of Ephesus recognized fire as the origin of all beings and his word indicates the originality of becoming and changes in the world. In other words, it was an indicator of the belief in some kind of unity in diversity (Copleston, 1385). Parmenides, on the contrary, argued that unity and stability reigns in the world and change and diversity are nothing but illusions (ibid). This opinion radically continued in the votes of pluralistic Pythagoreans; they considered numbers as the root of everything in the world. Rejecting the unity, they accepted absolute diversity in the world.

Aristotle and following him the peripatetic philosophers, as it is attributed to them, knew the diversity of existence and existent as an indicator of the world's condition (Motahhari, 1402).

It should be noted that this issue in ancient Greek was more used to explain the creatures of the world; we can hardly find any hints concerning the unity of the origin of the universe in their words. On the contrary, we would rather say that we cannot find any cues concerning the denial of polytheism in Greek. Greek's image of God is far from being equal to the Supreme Being or ontological perfection that is the meaning of this concept in the divine religions. As evidence, Plato considered that divinity contains a class consisting of multiple objects, or Aristotle's Unmoved Mover did not possess God's special place in the Old Testament in Jewish and Christian world (Gilson, pp68-71).

Among the Alexandrian scholars, the Neo-Platonic philosopher's votes were based on the Existential Unity (Dinani, 1986). Based on Mulla Sadra's citation from the teachings of the advocates of this notion who are famous as the School of Pahlavi in the works of Islamic philosophers, existence like light is a gradational truth and has degrees. Therefore, it has diversity in unity. This fact can be fathomed from the gradation point of view of the flow of existence (Sabzevari, n.d)

Another theory that is dealt with in the works of Islamic philosophers is attributed to the researcher Dawani. This theory has become famous as the

Unity of Existence and Diversity of Beings or "the Tasting of Theosophy". Based on this theory, the existence in the external world is solely a unique truth that inside it, diversity can be found neither in the type nor in the degree, and the ostensible degrees and diversities in creatures are not real. However, their existence is due to their attribution to Necessary Existent. Thus, if they are called existent, it is illusory. The theory of diversity of existence and existent was modified to some extent by the late peripatetic such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna and Bahmanyar. Via researching and developing of the Gradation Unified theory and the Fundamental Reality of Existence by Mulla Sadra, this issue finely found a novel philosophical justification for itself (ibid).

The last famous theory that has been offered with this regard is the Mystical Unity. The mystics believe that the existence and the existent have unity, all the world's objects (quiddities) are the manifestations of Almighty God; they are emerged with one manifestation; they are the necessities and presentations of that very first manifestation; in another words, they are its epiphanies (Dinani,1986).

The mystics believe that except God and his names, attributions, perfections and properties there is nothing existent and the manifestation of creations and universe is arbitrary and virtual (Amoli,1988). They reject any kind of real existent beside God, they called it God's partner and they consider believing in it as idolatry. Therefore, the division of existence to necessary, possible, perfect and imperfect is meaningless and whatever that exists in the universe is sheer unity to them. The most famous promoter of this view, known as "Particular Unity of Existence," is Muhyiddin Ibne Arabi. He recognizes God's existence as absolute and knows nothing but God and his names and attributions in the world; to him, all the world of creation is something arbitrary and unreal (Kabir, 2005). According to this viewpoint, the relation of diversities to God's existence is similar to the relation of the shadow to its owner or that of the mirror to the picture. The entire universe is the shadow of that unified Being and all creatures are manifestations of that single essence.

The Unity of Existence theory has had different interpretations and this has caused some discrepancies as far as its attribution to mystical intellectual groups of the Islamic World is concerned. For instance, some researchers

have attributed the Unity of Existence and Existent to a group of Sufis (Ashtiyani, 1382).

Another group of researchers have considered this attribution as unbecoming to Sufis dignity. They believe that the statements and poems of mystics with this regard do not mean that the existence of diversities and possibilities is the same as the existence of God, or that the existence and existent is one and there is no existence and existent but Him (Zenozi, 1997).

If we ascribe to Muslim mystics believing in the incarnation of God's essence in the creatures, it is an unfounded interpretation and this has never been and never will be in the minds of great Islamic mystics and wise theosophists (Motahhari, 1369).

The theory of the Unity of Existence in this recent meaning has a long history. Some have searched its oldest derivation in Indian schools, they have referred to Upanishads as one of the oldest Indian religious texts that if only its surface value is regarded, they believe in the oneness of God and the universe (Stais, 1375). The influence of the first Indian Muslim Sufis is also mentioned frequently to the extent that some consider Bayazid Bastami's thoughts under the influence of Indian's thoughts and those of Vedanta (Schimmel, 1377). Additionally, some have considered Hallaj's speeches and the mentioned teachings as pertinent (Yasrebi, 1372)

In return, Al-Farabi ascribes the belief in the monopoly of existence in one existent to some of the ancient Greek philosophers. Another group also believe that most references to this theory can be found in the works of Alexandrian philosophers or Neo-Platonic (Kakaei, 2002). Among the Jewish and Christian thinkers, we can refer to people such as Baruch Spinoza, Meister Eckhart and Malebranche that despite different interpretations, they have been loyal to the Unity of Existence theory (Kakaei, 2002)

Some of the contents of the Jewish Bible can enhance the perspectives of Unitarians in the Jewish and Christian thoughts (Kakaei, 2002). For instance we read in the Holy Scripture: " Moses said to God: " now, as I go to the sons of Israel and tell them that the God of your fathers have sent me to you, if they ask me what his name is, what should I tell them God said to Moses: I am who I am" (New International Version, 2011, Exod. 3:14)

This statement very well signifies the oneness of the quiddity and existence in God's essence, the point that later became known as "the Unity of Selfhood and Identity of God" in peripatetic philosophy. Mystic Muslims in order to prove their claims have referred to some verses of Quran as confirmations of the Unity of Existence theory. Among these verses are:

"Verily I am God; there is no god but I; therefore serve me, and perform the prayer of my remembrance." (Quran,20:14),

"It is He that created the heavens and the earth in six days then seated Himself upon the Throne. He knows what penetrates into the earth, and what comes forth from it, what comes down from heaven, and what goes up unto it. He is with you wherever you are; and God sees the things you do." (Quran,57:4)"

And also "To God belong the East and the West; whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God; God is All-embracing, All-knowing." (Quran,2:115)

Moreover, is the verse 3 of surah al-Hadid: "He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; He has knowledge of everything".

Or verse 62 of surah al- Hajj: " That is because God, He is the Truth, and that they call upon apart from Him, that is the false; and for that God is the All-high, the All-great."

And many other verses that refer to the same thing.

### **Unity and diversity in theologian argumentation**

The scope of the unity debate extended to theological subjects and a special part of the works of theologians was devoted to it. However, not only was it in a sense utilized in the mystic and philosopher's dialogue that is mentioned above, but also in other issues such as divine descriptions and how they relate to God's essence. With this regard, followers of Ash'arite School considered God's attributes as diverse and separate from his nature, on the other hand, rejecting this theory, followers of Mu'tazilite School recognized it as leading to polytheism. Oppositely they posed the theory of the negation of attributes and deputation of essence from attributes so as to remove the suspicion of polytheism and composition from God's essence. However, unwillingly they were trapped in the

inability of human reason to understand divine attributes (which is known as *Tatil theory*).

On the other hand, Shia theologians strived to find a way to avoid being trapped by both polytheism and the idea of God's composition, as well as by *Tatil* and the incomprehensibility of God's attributes. They conceptually understood divine attributes as multiple and different, but existentially recognized all attributes as united and integrated with the divine essence.

Seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of two great thinkers in the area of Western and Islamic thoughts and both of them are considered as promoters of Existential Unity with its mystical readings. One of them is Mulla Sadra, the great philosopher of Shiraz school and the other one is Baruch Benedict Spinoza, Dutch philosopher. In this essay attempts have been made to have a comparative perspective to the viewpoints of these two scholars

### **Mulla Sadra**

Sadr al-Din Muhammad known as Mulla Sadra was born in 1574 in the city of Shiraz. After preliminary training, he moved to Isfahan for higher education and for many years he benefited from the philosophical school of Mirdamad, Sheikh Baha'i and Mirfendereski that were considered as great sages of Isfahan school. In his mid-life he achieved a new compilation of philosophical methods of former scholars that were divided into two major groups of peripatetic and Illuminationists.

This compilation that had observed the theoretical basis of mysticism and was done under the authority of the religious belief system of the People of the House of the Prophet (**AhlulBayt**), had remarkable impact on the later philosophical thoughts. Many of the philosophers for decades in their intellectual efforts were his followers. He, was subject to excommunication and cursing of the ignorant fanatics of his time and eventually in 1629 when his reputation was extended to all borders of Iran, passed away.

Several works have remained from Mulla Sadra, among which the most famous are: *Al-Hikmat-ol-Motaaliah Fil-Asfar-el-Aqlyat-el-Arbaah* (Divine Transcendental Wisdom in Four Rational Journeys), *Al-Shawahid Al-Rububiyah fil Manahij al-Solukiyyah* (The Divine Evidences in the Ways of Mysticism), *Almabda val-Maad* (The Beginning and The

Resurrection), *Mfatih ol-Gheyb* (Keys of the Unseen World), and *Almashaer* (The Feelings). These works highlight his contributions to philosophy and mysticism within Islamic thought. All of these works are allocated to explain his particular philosophical bases that is known as transcendent theosophy.

## **Spinoza**

Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza was born in 1632, three years after the departure of Mulla Sadra, in a Dutch Jewish family. He studied the classic philosophical works such as Descartes. In 1656, because of the statements that ostensibly were incompatible with the contents of the Bible, he was tried on the grounds of blasphemy and heresy. Then with specific Jewish procedures, he was excommunicated from Jewish community and was cursed by them. The event similar to which happened to Mulla Sadra of course with less severity.

Spinoza's prominent works include "*Treatise on the Religion and Government*", "*Treaties on the Correction of Understanding*", "*Treaties on Policy*" and most famously "*Ethics*" that contains his ideology and intellectual principles. Before witnessing the world's attention to his works, in 1677 at the age of forty-five, Spinoza passed away (Durant, 1335).

He spoke about the Unity of Existence, unlike many of the proponents of the Unity of Existence, not only did not he treat it solely based on illuminative manner, but also, he offered his statement with logical reasoning and particular geometric arrangement that is why some called his philosophy as illumination and his mannerism as peripatetic.

## **The unity of existence from Mulla Sadra's lens**

Understanding Mulla Sadra's reading of the Unity of Existence depends on the understanding of his philosophical principles. Therefore, we will briefly discuss these principles.

## **Existentialisms and arbitrariness of quiddity**

Since the mind interprets two different aspects named quiddity and existence, the question is what aspect the origin of effect and the externality of the real object is. Mulla Sadra, not only in his education but also in the early part of his intellectual genuine believed in existentialisms and regarding this issue he followed his precious master Mirdamad. However,

later he changed his statement and adduced some reason on Existentialisms and claimed that what is truly in the outer world is the existence of the object and quiddity does not have an independent existence; on the contrary, it will gain quiddity due to existence (Mulla Sadra,1379). Quiddity is merely the interpretation that the mind has regarding the limitations of the external existences, and in his essence, it is neither existent nor nonexistent; however, with the accession of existence it comes into existence and becomes external objects.

### **The necessity of compatibility between Cause and Effect**

Mulla Sadra and many other philosophers have considered compatibility between cause and effect as essential; because otherwise there is the possibility of emanation of each creature from another one and there would be no necessary causality in the world.

### **Cause is the emanation of the effect's existence**

This principle is also considered as the results of the Existentialism and arbitrariness of the quiddity. In contrast to this theory, we can refer to the votes of people that what is emanated from cause to effect is the quiddity of effect or the becoming of quiddity is nonexistent to existent.

### **Longitudinal and latitudinal diversity**

Mulla Sadra believed in two types of diversity for the existence. Latitudinal diversity is the result of the discrepancy and difference between individuals of each level of hierarchy due to the addition of existence to quiddity such as the existing diversity in our surrounding objects (Amin, 1376). longitudinal diversity that is the hierarchy and ranks of the causes and effects that are manifested in the orders of the arrangements of essence, names, attributions, intellects, imaginal and purgatorial existence and bodies and material objects.

Mulla Sadra, with his emphasis on the above-mentioned points, leads the readers of his works to the conclusion that the world of being is the unique truth containing myriad ranks of degrees and extensive layers of existence. The highest order is the mere fact of the Necessary Being, which represents pure actualization and absoluteness, devoid of deficiency and limitation,

while the lowest rank is the first matter, which lacks actualization but possesses acceptability and the potential for change into new actualizations.

According to this order, the effect has no reality but to connect and to rely upon another. Prior to its particular existence, it has always been actualized in its causal position.

Although Mulla Sadra has stated many times in his writings that his purpose of the above explanation, known as Special Gradation, had been to refer to the howness of the ordering of universe, but we witness his propensity to mystic theories and to propound personal unity of existence and particular gradation.

For instance, he wrote somewhere: "every being except the One, is the lightning and scintillation of his luminosity. All beings have a single origin and it is He who actualizes the objects; therefore, He is the origin and the rest is his epiphanies. He is the First and the Last and the Manifest and the Inward of the entire universe" (Mulla Sadra, 1984A)

Mulla Sadra reasons elsewhere that: the causal relation is between the existence of cause and the existence of effect rather than its attributions. What the perfect cause diffuses is the origin of effect and not its attributions. Otherwise, effect in its existential origin would be self-contained; meaning that effect is Necessary Existent and it contradicts its being an effect, therefore effect in its existential origin depends on the cause and this is truly belonging and linkage. Given that the causality of cause and effect is in their existences, it becomes evident that what is called effect does not have an identity and reality inconsistent and segregated from its cause and logically we cannot consider two separate identities as cause and effect. Effect does not have a true reality but its connection and relation and dependence on cause.

Regarding that the chain of beings which include causes and effects has a unique truth, this becomes clear that all creatures have one origin that is gracious to all of them, it is He who is the true existence and the rest is his grandeur and minutiae (Mulla Sadra, 1384).

In another section of his writings, he acknowledged that though he previously considered duality in the existence of cause and effect, as the result of the illumination, he realized that cause is what is original and effect

is a rank and a status of its statuses. The meaning of causality is referenced to the conversion of cause from one state to another) (Mulla Sadra,1984A)

### **Spinoza and the Unity of Existence**

The most prominent and controversial lesson of Spinoza that happens to be pertinent to this paper, is his unitary viewpoint toward universe and existence; inevitably to have an in-depth understanding of his lesson, some key concepts of his philosophy are addressed here.

The first key concept in Spinoza's cosmology is "essence". This word has had a long narrative in the history of philosophy. Plato in order to clarify existence propounded the Platonic archetypes. The design of this theory caused the bifurcation of philosophers into followers of Idealism and realism and the platonic archetypes. He believed that the essence should not be pursued in the outside elements as it used to be the case in the philosophers before Socrates. The outside elements are not sheer reality, what truly exist are archetypes or ideas such as justice, beauty and mankind. Thus essence is the archetype and the soul is his relative. So, for the first time essence was noticed in its spiritual sense. He believed in Herakleotic instability and Pythagorean plurality. However, beyond that, he believed in the stability and unity that governs the world of ideas, a stability and unity beyond plurality and the changes of the descended world. (Wahl, 1380)

By refuting his master, Aristotle defined essence as something that concerns neither the subject nor what it regards. He fathomed the Platonic mistake as the confusion between universal and essence and his essential perception of universal concepts such as virtue and justice. In his opinion, the true essence is the person that can be pointed at, but universal is the attribution that concerns the type or the matter of the objects and it exists in the objects. What is meant by "existing in the objects" is that it cannot exist without its container (Parkinson, 2002).

The discussion of essence and its reality has been always prevalent among the occidental and oriental philosophers until Rene Descartes. Following the theory of "cogito ergo sum" (I think; therefore I am), in response to the question that who then I is, he replied that I is a thinker entity. Thus, from the act of thinking he perceived an intelligent substance. He also introduced extension and God as two other substances (wahl,1380).

However, Spinoza's perception of substance is something that is inside itself and is conceived by itself; meaning that its conception is not halted by the entity from which it has been created. (Copleston, 1385)

Based on Spinoza, it is concluded that the substance is whatever that possesses an independent existence, and in the case of plurality of substances, there would not exist any cause-and-effect relationship between them, and no substance can create another substance. Moreover, regarding how Spinoza proved God's existence, it is concluded that the real meaning of a self-existent substance is God that is equal to nature (Copleston, 1385).

He knows God as a substance that is absolutely infinite; meaning that He possesses infinite attributions and it is not possible to take away any of those attributions. Such entity necessarily exists (Spinoza, 1364).

Now that we talked about attributions, it is useful to know its meaning in Spinoza's encyclopedia. In Spinoza's opinion, the attribute is what the intellect fathoms as subsistence of the essence of substance. This point that every entity must be understood based on an attribute is the clearest thing in the universe, Spinoza believed. If two substances are supposed, they ought to possess two different realities and attributes, they should not have any shared traits. (ibid)

According to Spinoza, substance cannot be created by any external object; therefore, it must be its own cause; accordingly so as to clarify its essence, it must be searched for inside and not outside of it. In other words, the essence and quiddity of the substance is dependent on its existence (Parkinson, 2002). The unity of God and substance in Spinoza's philosophy becomes clearer when he proves in his book, *Ethics*, that there is only one God, also there is only utmost one substance and it is not possible to exist any substance other than God or even to be conceived of. (Spinoza. 1364)

Spinoza assigns numerous and infinite attributes to God. However, among them he believed that human beings can only recognize the attributes of extension and thought (Parkinson, 2002). These two attributes are means by which the universe is understood since extension or dimension has a corporeal origin and thought or knowledge is the origin of spirituality, and the whole universe via these two attributes are recognizable and clarified.

The third terminology with this regard is mode. Mode is something that exists in something else other than itself and is conceived by means of other things (Spinoza, 1364). Therefore, an entity either exists by itself which is called substance or it exists in another entity which is called mode.

God, in Spinoza's philosophy is an absolutely infinite entity, meaning that it is a substance which is subsistence by infinite attributes each one of which clarifies his eternal and infinite essence. None of them can be taken away from him and such an entity necessarily exists. Spinoza claims that there exists utmost one substance and that is God (Parkinson, 2002/ Copleston, 1385). To prove the uniqueness of this substance, he reasons that with the infiniteness of the substance and that every entity should be clarified via an attribute in mind, in case there is another substance other than it, such substance should be clarified by means of some of the God's attributes (Parkinson, 2002). It necessitates the existence of two substances with one or two common attributes and this is impossible since the attributes clarify the essence. The uniqueness of substance or God can be inferred in another way as well; God is an absolutely infinite entity, due to his absence of finiteness, there is no other place for anything else.

Now we can better state the fundamentals of Spinoza's cosmology. He considers all objects to have two features; extension and thought. However, he points out that what we witness in bodies is the finite extension and thought that emanate the extension and infinite knowledge of the Creator's essence. Infinite extension takes the feature and mode of movement and the infinite knowledge takes the mode of comprehension and volition. These two modes as become limited, they become the prelude to corporeality and spirituality. Thus, all corporeal creatures are countless but limited modes of movement dimension (Foroughi, 2000).

The reality of the body is dimension. Dimension or extension is the attribute of substance, we can say that the body is limited aspect of the attribute extension and extension is the attribute of substance. In other words, if substance is considered to be limited, it is called the body. The accidental quality of substance is called mode by Spinoza and since the real meaning of substance is only the essence of the Creator, all modes and whatever that exists are within Him, and without Him nothing can exist and be

intellectualized, it means that whatever that exists is a mode of the Necessary Being's modes (Copleston, 1385).

He himself states that "I do not mean that God is the body. Rather I say that the body is not a substance that has an independent nature from the essence of the Necessary Being, and the creature does not mean that it is a substance that is created by the cause, since substance is not made from anything. Thus, the body cannot be known as substance, independent essence or artifact. Therefore, we state that creatures (bodies) are attributes and modes of the Necessary Being (Foroughi,2000).

Now the lesson of unity in Spinoza's cosmology can be better comprehended. God, or substance, is a unique, necessary, and self-existent entity that possesses infinite and limitless attributes. He is the only existent substance, while other objects are accidental states and modes of Him; they have come into being according to His essence, which does not imply the creation of objects separate from Himself. However, fundamentally, there is nothing but Him that desires to be created. These things have never truly come into being, so we cannot clarify their creation.

The diversity of objects is the result of our fantasized understanding of the attribute "extension" that may seem in the forms of limitations and corporeal bodies. Otherwise, the essence of the universe is nothing but the existence of the Necessary Being and the rest is nothing but its descriptions and modes. Spinoza added that there is nothing possible in the nature, but the existence of all entities in their existences, and deeds are determined in a particular way by the necessity of divine nature and nothing can be called possible unless by our lack of knowledge. The difference between God as an infinite substance and finite objects is that God in his existence or deeds is not the cause of anything outside its essence (Copleston, 1385).

### **Comparison**

After a brief consideration of the subject "unity" from Mulla Sadra and Spinoza points of views, we can elaborate on their similarities and differences.

Spinoza's Unity of Existence is very similar to the Unity of Existence that is offered in Islamic mysticism specifically its personal type; it seems that Mulla Sadra also believed in that. Spinoza believes that existence is

exclusive to substance which is God or Nature and anything other than it is null and void. Also, Mulla Sadra believed that quiddity has no genuineness; causality is nothing but existence because the effect is the same as connection and belonging to the cause and the cause emanates the origin of the effect's existence not an attribute of its descriptions. What is called an effect does not have a segregated, inconsistent and contradictory quiddity from his cause, and logic cannot refer to two independent issues as cause and effect. Thus, the effect does not have any reality but its attribute to its existential cause and without its connection and consideration of cause, the effect has no meaning.

With due attention to the finiteness and the return of cause and effect to the unique truth, it becomes clear that all entities have a common origin and stem. God has realized the reality of the objects in his essence. God is the real truth and the rest is his dignity, descriptions and names. He is the origin and the rest is his branches. Whatever that has existence, is nothing but the mode of cause. The dignity is the Unique Almighty and all of the effects are its sparks of light of existence. Both philosophers forewarn their readers that they may misinterpret their words or they may interpret the relation of the Necessary Being and objects as infusion (incarnation) and union because the utilization of the word union and incarnation may cause the illusion of the previous duality between the Necessary Essence and the objects. Although Mulla Sadra considers himself as of the adherents of the gradational unity, in some cases he claims the personal unity (Tabatabaei; 1380). If we pay attention to the comparison of Descartes and Spinoza which is made by Parkinson, we will find more common grounds between them.

Parkinson writes: "there is a fundamental difference regarding Descartes and Spinoza's way of defining God. For Spinoza, God is an absolutely infinite entity *Vis-à-vis* for Descartes, the most complete entity is God. In fact the absolute infiniteness of God seems to put aside the possibility of existence of other substances. It would not allow the existence of a substance other than the absolute and infinite entity. So God must be the only substance. But Descartes, besides his most complete entity, talks about created substances which are corporeal and intellectual that are relatively independent and they only need Divine Grace for their existence.

Spinoza claims that there is only one substance; meaning that there is only one absolutely independent entity, this entity is in a way that contemplating about him necessitates nothing else. Substance is its own cause meaning that its existence is self-evident. This unique substance is God; every attribute fundamentally is the same as what God is. He considers intellect and extension as two of these attributes. The substance also possesses some modes that exist in it and cannot be imagined without it (Parkinson,2002).

Although Mulla Sadra and Spinoza's cosmology may seem ostensibly very similar, Spinoza's philosophy differs in clarifying the grades and degrees of the world of witness. For instance, as a weak point, there is no mention of the intermediate worlds between the tangible matter and God. In Spinoza's opinion, the universe is the manifestation and modes of the attributes of dimension and extension, extension is also God's attribute. Thus, in Spinoza's philosophy there is only one truth that we can consider it as a maximum two-dimensional tolerance; one is the origin at the heart and the other one is its attributes and the modes of that attribute. He notifies one of them as the creative nature and the other one as created nature. This supposition becomes stronger when we understand that Spinoza has regarded extension to have the same meaning as matter (Spinoza, 1364).

In this case, the clarification on the case that the division of extension into matter and abstract would make clear the intermediate world via the attribute of extension would be futile. Vis-à-vis in the thought order of Sadra, the objects of the apparent universe are the faces of the divine names and they are shadows and the manifestations of the separated worlds (Mulla Sadra,1984B)

Mulla Sadra has allocated a detailed chapter of his works to the clarification of the universe or the intermediate universes between the exalting origin of the universe and the material and corporeal universe. In other words, despite Spinoza's philosophy, not only has Mulla Sadra's philosophy emphasized the Unity of Existence, also he has paid due attention to the diversity of the universe as well.

Another feature of Sadra's philosophy is his particular attention to the presence of the facts and esoteric behavior as the prerequisite to fathom the intellectual and Gnostic findings. This gap (this point is not mentioned in Spinoza's philosophy) is felt in Spinoza's philosophy which is stated quite

intellectual and logical due to its rigid patterns of Euclidean geometry. However, some historians indicated the denomination of his most important philosophical book as ethics as an evidence for his zeal to obtain tranquility and spirituality by means of philosophical thinking (Copleston, 1385).

Another difference between these two philosophical systems is the consideration of God as the ultimate end and the finiteness of universe which is considered as one of the philosophical principles of Mulla Sadra's philosophy. Mulla Sadra's world has an analogical gradation, considering the substantial movement and verse 156 of sura Baqara, the universe is becoming and the ultimate end of the creation is the Almighty God himself (Mulla Sadra, 1984B). On the contrary, not only does Spinoza reject the concept that there is a God that is the ultimate end of the universe, but also, he clearly denies that God is purposeful since when something is absolutely infinite, lacks nothing that cause Him to do some actions for it (Parkinson, 2002).

From this point Spinoza proved the necessity and the perfection of the universe, Mulla Sadra has also affirmed this point but with a different reason. Spinoza's world is an unmatched version of which a more complete one is not possible to imagine. Whatever we imagine is in God's power and it must necessarily exist. If it is otherwise, it means that there are certain things that are probable to exist but do not exist; and this in turn means that the universe is not complete and infinite. Altogether, God would be imperfect and this is contradictory to the infiniteness of God's essence.

Another point of distinction of these two philosophies is the concept of God. In Mulla Sadra's philosophy as he insists on the applicable unity of the universe, the existence of God is a personal existence and the word God refers to a clear transcendent being. This point is in tandem with the teachings of religions, whereas in Spinoza's philosophy God is the heart of the universe and the visible world is the attributes of extension and thought which is more compatible with the teachings of Indian schools rather than those of Abrahamic religions. considering God and nature as one entity is another affirmation of this understanding; its expression by Spinoza consequently lead to his excommunication and expulsion from Jewish community.

The nature has an infinite order within which there are infinite chains of causes; but the totality of this infinite chain exists only because the nature exists. Partial objects are all effects of nature. However, this does not mean that objects cannot be clarified based on their relation and lineage. We should bear in mind that the creative nature does not have a separate substance from the created nature.

Some philosophers, such as Hegel, do not consider Spinoza's philosophy as denying God. Instead, they view his concept of Existential Unity as denying everything but God, since, according to his teachings, the absolute truth and existence should be attributed to God rather than to the universe, which is seen as a limited existence (Copleston, 1385).

What can be concluded is that although Mulla Sadra and Spinoza share Unitarian views regarding the universe, they have clear differences in their understanding of Divine Essence. These differences extend to the quality of their explanations about the origin of the universe in relation to the world of diversity, the finiteness of the universe, and their clarifications of degrees of existence and the intermediate worlds. By studying the views of these two philosophers, the dominance and superiority of Mulla Sadra's philosophy and its capability to analyze the universe becomes more evident.

## References

- Amin, H. (1997). *Unity of existence in Islamic philosophy and mysticism*. Tehran: Beesat.
- Amoli, H. (1988). *Al-Muqaddimat men nas-en-Nusous* (the beginnings of nas-al-nosos). Tehran: Toos.
- Amoli, H. (1985). *Naghd-on-noghud fi maarefat-el-wojud* (critique of critiques about ontology) (H. Tabibian, Trans.). Tehran: Ettelaat.
- Ashtiani, J. (1997). *Sharhe resaleyeh Mashaeir (Description of Al-Mashaeir)*. Tehran: Amirkabir.
- Ashtiani, J. (2003). *The Being from the point of view of philosophy and mysticism*. Qom: Boostan-e-Ketab.

- Avicenna, H. (1997). *Ilahiyat min kitab al-shifa* (The Section of Theology of the Book of Healing) (H. H. Amoli, Ed.). Qom: Bustan Kitab.
- Avicenna, H. (1997). *Al-Elahiat Min Kitab-esh-shifa* (The Section of Theology of The Book of Al-Shifa). Qom: Boostan-e-Ketab.
- Copleston, F. (2006). *The history of philosophy* (J. Mojtabavi & G. Avani, Trans.). Tehran: Soroush.
- Dehkhoda, A. (1994). *Loghat Nameh* (Persian dictionary). Tehran: University of Tehran.
- Durant, W. (1956). *The history of philosophy* (Z. Khoei, Trans.). Tehran: Danesh Library.
- Dinani, G. (1986). *General philosophical principles in Islamic philosophy*. Tehran: Academic Culture.
- Folkieh, P. (1998). *General philosophy or metaphysics* (Y. Mahdavi, Trans.). Tehran: University of Tehran.
- Foroughi, M. (2000). *The flow of wisdom in Europe*. Tehran: Safialishah.
- Kakaei, Q. (2002). *Unity of being in report of Ibne Arabi and Mayster Eckkehart*. Tehran: Hermes.
- Kabir, Y. (2005). *The unity of being from the point of view of wisdom and transcendent mysticism*. *Journal of Philosophical Thoughts*, 2(4) 51-72.
- Motahhari, M. (1981). *The expanded description of the Manzume*. Tehran: Hekmat.
- Motahhari, M. (2004). *Collection of works*. Tehran: Sadra.
- Motahhari, M. (1990). *Philosophic treaties*. Tehran: Hikmat.
- Motahhari, M. (2023). *The description of the Manzume*. Tehran: Sadra.
- Mulla Sadra, S.-d.-m. (1999). *Al-Hikmat-ol-Motaaliah Fil-Asfar-el-Aqlyat-el-Arbaah* (Divine transcendental wisdom in four rational journeys). Qom: Mostafavi.
- Mulla Sadra, S.-d.-m. (2005). *Ash-shavahed-ol-Robobyah Fil-Manahij-el-Solokyah* (Divine evidences in mystical ways). Qom: Boostan-e-Ketab.
- Mulla Sadra, S.-d.-m. (1984a). *Almashaer* (cognitions). Tehran: Tahuri Library.

- Mulla Sadra, S.-d.-m. (1984b). *Mafatih-ol-Qeyb* (Keys of Hidden World). Tehran: Institute of Cultural Researches.
- Nakari, Qazi.Abdonnabi. (2000). *Dastur al-Ulama*. Beirut: Darol Kotobol-ilmia
- New International Version. (2011). Zondervan. (Original work published 1978).
- Parkinson, G. (2002). *Reason and experience in Spinoza* (M. Abdollahi, Trans.). Qom: Boostan-e-Ketab.
- Sabzevari, Mulla Hadi. (n.d.). *Collection of treatises*. Mashhad: The Office of the Endowments of Khorasan.
- Schimmel, A. (1998). *The mystical dimension of Islam* (A. Gowahi, Trans.). Tehran: Office of Islamic Culture.
- Spinoza, B. (1985). *Ethics* (M. Jahangiri, Trans.). Tehran: Center for Academic Publishing.
- Stacy, V.T. (1996). *Sufism and philosophy* ( Khoramshahi, Trans.). Tehran: Soroush.
- Tabataba'I, M.H. (2001). *Nihayat-ol-Hikmah* (The end of wisdom). Qom: Imam Khomeini Institute of Education and Research.
- Tabataba'I, M.H. (1980). *Principles of philosophy and method of realism* (M. Motahhari, Ed.). Qom: Islamic Publishing Office.
- Wahl, J.A. (2001). *Discussing in metaphysics* (Y. Mahdavi, Trans.). Tehran: Kharazmi.
- Yasrebi, Y. (1993). *Theoretical mysticism*. Qom: Boostan-e-Ketab.
- Zenozi, A.A. (1997). *Badayeol-hikam* (New things of wisdoms). Tehran: Az-Zahra.

## Die Wissenschaft der Metaphysik bei Abū Naṣr Al-Fārābī