

JTI
A Bi-Quarterly Journal of
Theosophia Islamica

Vol. 3, No. 2, 2023 Issue 6

6



Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy



In The Name of God

Proprietor:

Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy

Director in Charge:

Najaf Lakzaee

Editor-in-Chief:

Seyyed Mahmud Musawi

Editorial Board:

Ahmad Vaezi (Professor, Department of Contemporary Philosophy, Baqir al-Ulum University, Qom, Iran)

Muhammad Legenhausen (Professor, Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute, Qom, Iran)

Jari Kaukua (Professor, Academy of Finland and University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

Charles Taliaferro (Professor of philosophy at St. Olaf College, a senior research fellow at the Institute for Faithful Research, and a member of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, Holland)

Mohammed Soori (Assistant Professor of Academy of Islamic Sciences and Culture, Qom, Iran)

Executive Manager:

Isa Mousazadeh

Consultant:

Najmeh Bagherian

Language Editor

Seyyed Rahim Rastitabar

Address: Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy, Blvd. Daneshgah Pardisan, Qom, Iran.

Tel: +98 25 31156841 ♦ **Web:** <http://jti.isca.ac.ir> ♦ **E-mail:** jti@isca.ac.ir

Reviewers of this Volume

Rahman Ehtharmi, Ali Aghaeipour, Behnam Resalat, Mohammed Sourì, Mostafa Abedi Jighe, Ali Mohammadi Hoshyar, Mostafa Mokhtari, Eisa Musaizadeh.

<http://jti.isca.ac.ir>

Note

The Journal of *Theosophia Islamica* accepts papers on the comparative studies of the Western and Islamic Philosophy. The papers received will be published provided that they are written according to the house style of the journal. The authors will bear responsibility for their own papers.

Aims and Scope:

Journal of *Theosophia Islamica* has a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and international outlook.

The Main Objectives of the Publication

1. Deepening religious understanding and knowledge through theological / philosophical researches;
2. Introducing Islamic intellectual heritage and achievements in various domains of philosophy, theology and mysticism, and presenting the accomplishments, findings, and intellectual productions of Hawzah and academic thinkers and researchers;
3. Propounding rational and scholarly assessments of the views and ideas of thinkers in various fields of theology and philosophy;
4. Making comparative research and providing philosophical and theological responses to problems concerned from a theistic perspective;
5. Appreciating the crucial role of revelation and inspiration embodied in holy Quran and Hadith as precious sources of religious knowledge to reflect upon for innovative solutions to the challenges faced by man in contemporary world .

For detailed range of disciplines please go to: http://jti.isca.ac.ir/journal/aim_scope.

Publication Ethics

Journal of Theosophia Islamica and its publisher Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy adhere to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors and the Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers. The Journal also follows recommendations contained in *A Guide for Editors-in-Chief, Associate Editors, and Managing Editors*.

Copyright and Copying:

All copyrights reserved to the publisher in this Journal (Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy).

Reserved the right to accept, reject, correct and edit the article in any stage and time by the Editorial Board of the Journal.

Submission of Contributions

- ❖ Contributors are invited to submit their manuscripts by e-mail in Microsoft Word format (e.g. DOC, DOCX).
- ❖ Only one font should be used throughout the text, e.g. Arial or Times New Roman, the recent versions of which contain all the Arabic characters and specialist diacritics.
- ❖ The full name and postal address of the author should be included with the submission (but not visible anywhere on the manuscript).
- ❖ Articles submitted should include an abstract of 150-250.
- ❖ Keywords (4-7 keywords)
- ❖ Articles should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- ❖ The names of all participants of paper must be mentioned according to the idea of all authors.
- ❖ The length of the articles should be between 6500-7000 words.

Guidelines on Style

- ❖ Manuscripts are accepted in English. Any consistent spelling and punctuation styles may be used.
- ❖ Papers that are not written in excellent English will not be considered.
- ❖ Words which have not been assimilated into the English language should be italicized, except for proper nouns.
- ❖ Long quotations should be fully indented (e.g. quotes longer than 30 words). The first line of a new paragraph should be indented, except the paragraph following a heading. The tab-key may prove helpful here.
- ❖ A comma before the final 'and' in a list should be used. For example: 'one, two, and three' rather than 'one two and three'.
- ❖ Hijri years should be followed by 'AH,' unless it is clear what calendar is being used from the context. For the modern Iranian calendar use 'AH (solar)' or 'Sh.'

Types of articles:

Original article, Review article*, Case report and Letter to Editor-in-Chief.

*Review articles are accepted from people who have enough experience and a thorough insight of a particular topic, with reference to the acceptable number of published articles by the authors.

Cover letter:

Each manuscript should be accompanied by a covering letter to the Editor in Chief, signed by all authors, stating that the authors want their paper to be evaluated for publication in the *Journal of Theosophia Islamica*. Moreover, no substantial part of the paper should have been published elsewhere before the submission and during the revision time. Covering letter contains:

- Manuscript title (English & Persian) should cover the research and be typed in Bold.
- Author and/or authors' name/s, their highest academic degrees (MD, Ph.D....), academic rank and department/s should be written after the title.
- Affiliations of author/s including Department, School, University or Research Center must be completely mentioned in the submitted paper.
- The complete address of the corresponding author in Persian will be submitted in the first page for scientific contact. This address includes telephone numbers, zip code, e-mail, and fax number.
- The manuscript should contain a running title (maximum 50 characters) at the top of each page.
- If the paper is an approved project of University, the project number, the letters signed by Research Deputy or affiliated institution must be presented to publish the article in this Journal.

Article Body:

- Introduction
- Materials & Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Acknowledgment (if needed)

*All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be covered in the acknowledgment section. It should include persons who have provided technical help, writing assistance and head of the department that has provided general support. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged.

Referencing:

The number of citations at the end of research should coincide with the cited numbers in the text. The number of figures and tables in the text and references should also be the same.

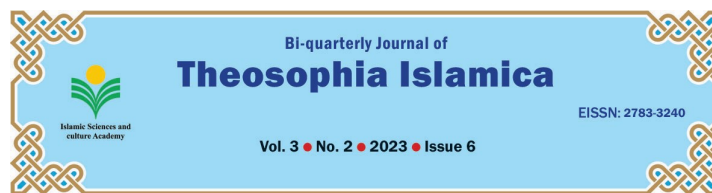
- References should be numbered consecutively with **APA** style.

Editing tips:

- The manuscript should be typed in Microsoft Word 2007 or newer.
- Line spacing across the entire paper is 1 unit.
- Texts should be typed with the Times New Roman font.
- Abbreviated words and phrases should be spelled out when first used.

Contents

"A comparative look at different interpretations of Aristotle's theory of 'being qua being'."	7
Sohrab Haghighat	
Analyzing the Rule of Emanation from the Simple One in Islamic Philosophy: From Interpretive Challenges to Transcendent Elucidation	28
Arash Rajabi _ Sayyedah Masoumeh Tabatabaei	
Examining the Nature and Definition of Imamate in the Views of Khajeh Nasir and Ibn Arabi	57
Vahide Akrami	
An Analysis and Study of Ta'zieh from the Perspective of the Philosophy of Theatre	85
Ali Aghaeipour	
Critical Analysis of the Concepts of Determinism and Delegation (Jabr and Tafwiz) with an Emphasis on the Supplications of Sahifah Sajjadiyyah	106
Mustafa Mokhtari	
Virtue-Oriented Ethics in the Thought of Plato and Mulla Sadra	129
Fahimeh Ahmadi Gazazi _ Isa Mousazadeh	



"A comparative look at different interpretations of Aristotle's theory of 'being qua being'"

Sohrab Haghighat^{*}

Received: 2025/04/11

Accepted: 2025/05/21

Abstract

Aristotle considers metaphysics a science that discusses being qua being (or "being insofar as it is being") and its essential attributes. Alongside "being qua being," he also speaks of absolute being. The multiple meanings of "being" in Aristotle's thought have led interpreters to diverse understandings of what Aristotle truly meant by "being qua being?" They would have disagreements. A disagreement that starts from ontology and impacts their theology. Among Muslim philosophers, Avicenna and Averroes (Ibn Rushd), and among Christian philosophers, Albert the Great (Albertus Magnus) and his student Thomas Aquinas, have commented on this matter. In Avicenna's view, what is meant by 'being qua being' is a universal concept that applies to all beings, including the Necessary Existent per se. Consequently, the Necessary Existent is part of the subject matter of philosophy. However, Averroes introduced the highest substance to explain "being qua being" and considered God the subject of philosophy. Consequently, he regarded the proof of God as part

1. Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy, Faculty of Theology, Shahid Madani University of Azerbaijan, Tabriz, Iran.
Email: ac.haghighat@azaruniv.ac.ir

^{*}Haghighat, S. (2025). A comparative look at different interpretations of Aristotle's theory of 'being qua being'. *Theosophia Islamica*, 3(6), pp 7-27.
<https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71858.1077>

of the problems of natural science. In Albert the Great's view, "being qua being" is the simple existence as the first creation of God, and this simple existence is the subject of philosophy. In Thomas Aquinas's perspective, "being qua being," although the subject of philosophy, applies only to contingent beings, and God is the cause of this "being qua being." A comparative study of these disagreements and the reasons behind them forms the framework of this article.

Keywords

Being qua being, Aristotle, Avicenna, Averroes, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas

Introduction

Aristotle, by making "being qua being" the subject of philosophy, breathed new life into ontology and established it as a topic for subsequent philosophers to study. According to Aristotle, "that which is sought, from ancient times and now and always, and which is always perplexing, is what being is" (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1028b3-4). Of course, the term "being qua being" was also used by Plato, but his intention was to refer to the perfect being (Ens Perfectum). Whereas for Aristotle, "being qua being" is the common being (Ens Commune), which signifies a universal concept that applies to everything from matter (hyle) to the unmoved mover (Owens, 1978, p. 1). Aristotle discusses "being qua being" (To on hei on) in Book IV, Chapter 1 (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1003a), and he speaks of "absolute being" (Ontos haplos) in Book VI, Chapter 1 (Aristotle, 1991, pp. 1025-1026a). At the end of Chapter 6, he tries to equate absolute being with being qua being, yet some interpreters believe he wasn't successful in this endeavor (Owens, 1978, pp. 35-67). This very point has led to disagreements among interpreters. Therefore, the most fundamental issue in Aristotle's metaphysics is existence. This issue, both traditionally and historically since Aristotle's time, has been the source of sharp debates and numerous disagreements among those engaged in metaphysics. In fact, ever since Aristotle defined the subject of philosophy as "being qua being," there have been differing views among his interpreters regarding its meaning. This ontological disagreement has permeated the entire structure of each philosopher's thought, ultimately influencing their theology. Among Muslim philosophers, Avicenna and Averroes, and among Christian philosophers, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, are prominent Aristotelian interpreters who disagree on the meaning of "being qua being." Such a fundamental disagreement can undoubtedly lead to

vastly different philosophical systems. It's important to remember that Avicenna's *Shifa* was translated into Latin in the 12th century, and Averroes' commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the early 13th century. Both played a significant role in the understanding of "being qua being" in the Western philosophical tradition. A comparative study of these differing interpretations forms the structure of this research.

1. Aristotle and "Being Qua Being"

Given that Aristotle spent a portion of his life in Plato's Academy, he held two distinct perspectives on the issue of "being." That is, the problem of "being" for Aristotle during his time in Plato's Academy differed from what he later developed in his own Lyceum. In writings from his Academy period, the most crucial issue regarding being for Aristotle was that of signification and naming. Existence and non-existence, in themselves, don't indicate anything; even the word "being" itself doesn't signify anything unless it's part of a compound or a combination (Aristotle, 1962, p. 16b22). As he says in *Topics*, existence and unity are predicated of every being (Aristotle, 1962, p. 16b22). Thus, at that stage of his thought, Aristotle denies a universal concept of existence. During this period, Aristotle attempts to explain existence by placing it within a specific context or correlation. Existence is always a "this" or a "that"; therefore, "being qua being" or the universal concept of being is not discussed. The focus is on the structure of beings, not their mere existence.

However, in a more advanced stage of his philosophical thought, Aristotle introduces the universal concept of being with the phrase "being qua being." At this stage, his question isn't "what is this or that thing?" but rather, "what is existence or being?" At this point, he considers existence to be both self-evident (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1041a15)

and analogical/pros hen (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1029a6-1030a21). Therefore, it can be said that in Aristotle's final view, philosophy deals with the concept of existence in its general and abstract sense. It is at this stage that Aristotle considers philosophy the science of "being qua being" and states: "There is a science which studies being qua being and the attributes which belong to it in virtue of its own nature" (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1003a21-23, 1026a31).

In Aristotle's philosophy, the concept of "being" has multiple meanings. This is why, according to him, if we don't understand the various meanings of "being," we can't investigate the elements of existing things (Aristotle, 1991, p. 992b18-24, 1088b35-1089b33). In Eudemian Ethics, he further emphasizes that, due to the multiple meanings of "being," a single science alone cannot discuss "being" because it sometimes signifies substance, sometimes quantity, sometimes quality, and so on (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1217b23-35). However, in his Metaphysics, he states that despite the multiple meanings of "being," one science can indeed exist to discuss "being and beings" (To on and ta onta) (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1003a21-b16). For Aristotle, being has different applications across the categories (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1017a22-30). At the same time, these multiple meanings of existence refer back to a single, unifying principle (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1017a8, 1033a33).

Different Meanings of "Being" According to Aristotle: Being as Causes and Principles: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 983b), Being as Truth/True: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1026a35, 993b19-20, 1017a30-35), Being as Nature: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1015a), Being as Unity: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1051b11-12, 1054a13-15), Being as Necessary: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1015b 9-15), Being as Accidental Being (Being by Accident): (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1017a5-10, 1026a35), Being as Being per se (Essential Being): (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1017a5-10), Being as Actuality (Entelechy): (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1048a32), Being as Substance: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1028b 3-4).

Among these various meanings, philosophers typically examine four: (1) Being per se (Essential Being), (2) Accidental Being, (3) Truth/True, and (4) Potency and Actuality. From this group, only two meanings—Being per se and Being in the sense of potency and actuality—are considered worthy of philosophical discussion. This is because, in Aristotle's view, accidental being cannot be the subject of any science, as this type of existence is not truly knowable or amenable to systematic study. For instance, a house possesses an infinite number of accidental attributes. Science cannot address this countless array of accidental descriptions. Likewise, truth and the true are not subjects of philosophical discussion because they pertain to propositions and judgments, not to things themselves. Therefore, only being per se (essential being) and potency and actuality are worthy of philosophical inquiry (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1026b5-10, 1027b29-35). However, precisely because Aristotle introduced philosophy as the science of "being qua being," this concept has been subjected to various interpretations and understandings among his commentators. Each interpretation, in turn, can dramatically alter the trajectory of philosophy itself.

We know that Aristotle's works were neglected and even faced destruction for a long time. It's not unlikely that this very fact contributed to the differing opinions of his commentators on numerous metaphysical issues. The disagreements among Aristotle's commentators regarding "being qua being," from his contemporaries to the present day, can be categorized into six groups. 1-Interpreters such as Theophrastus (Aristotle's friend and successor, died 287 BC), Alexander of Aphrodisias (the first Greek commentator on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, alive 220 AD), Syrianus (Neoplatonist philosopher, died 430 AD), and Asclepius (commentator on *Metaphysics*), believe that Aristotle's intention with "being qua being" is the separate, divine,

unmoved, and unchanging being. According to this group, "being qua being" is equivalent to Being par excellence (Owens, 1978, pp. 9-15). 2-Medieval philosophers, including Muslims, Jews, and Christians, interpreted "being qua being" as absolute being. They considered it applicable to all beings, from matter (hyle) to God. Thus, they regarded "being qua being" as synonymous with common being (Ens Commune) (Owens, 1978, pp. 9-15), although they still held differing views on this matter. 3- From the 19th century onwards, Aristotelian scholars also weighed in on this topic. For example, Zeller argues that the multiple meanings of substance in Aristotle's philosophy led him to consider the sciences of ontology and theology as one. In Zeller's view, Aristotle's Metaphysics can be called both a science of ontology and a science of theology (Owens, 1978, p. 18). However, some, like Natorp, consider Zeller's theory incorrect and interpret "being qua being" as an unbearable contradiction, because metaphysics cannot be equated with theology (Owens, 1978, p. 19). 4- According to Werner Jaeger, the meaning of "being qua being" in Aristotle's philosophy during the Platonic-Aristotelian period—when Aristotle, influenced by Plato, posited two realms (sensible and intelligible)—referred to the unmoved being. However, in the later period, when Aristotle solely acknowledged sensible reality, absolute being became the subject of his philosophy (Jaeger, 1962, p. 218). 5- According to David Ross, Aristotle's philosophy evolves from the study of first causes and principles to the science that investigates all existence insofar as it is existence (Ross, 1975, pp. 252-3). 6- According to Werner Marx, Aristotle's ontology is, in reality, ousiology (the study of substance); that is, the question of "being" is the question of "substance" (Marx, 1977, p. 19), which ultimately leads to theology (Marx, 1977, pp. 57-9). In other words, the study of existence is inseparable from the study of substance, and every ontology in the Aristotelian system refers back to his ousiology.

that should be noted that due to the various names for metaphysics, Aristotle listed different subjects for this science. This very fact has led to disagreements among his followers and commentators. The subjects Aristotle outlined for philosophy include: 1-The science of the highest causes and principles of things (Aristotle, 1991, p. 982b9) / Investigation into the causes of "being qua being" (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1003a26-32, 925b3-4, 1059a18-20). 2-Unmoved and Separate Being: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1026a19-23, 1064b1-6) In this sense, "being qua being" is examined as a separate being (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1026a23-32, 1064b6-14). 3- Science of Substance: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 96b, 1028b4-7, 998b31, 997a1-2, 1069a18) / Primary Substance: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1005a35) / Causes of Substance: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1005a35, 1003b18, 1042a5, 1069a18-19). 4- Divine Causes of Sensible Things: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1062a16-18, 1026a). 5- Science of Truth: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 983b2-3). 6- Science of Form: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 92a34-36 and Physics Aristotle, 1991, p. 194b). 7- Being qua being in a universal sense: (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1003a, 1060b).

He also identifies the subject of philosophy in his Physics as: 1-Unmoved being, 2-Immovable, imperishable being, 3-Movable, perishable being (Aristotle, 1991, p. 198a29).

What's been discussed highlights the disagreements among Aristotle's commentators regarding Aristotelian being and ontology. As observed, these differences have persisted from Aristotle's time to the present day, underscoring the significance of ontology itself. The views of these commentators, and their divergent interpretations, not only demonstrate the importance of Aristotelian ontology but also reveal the inherent complexity and ambiguity in Aristotle's own statements.

2- Avicenna and "Being Qua Being"

In Avicenna's philosophy, "being qua being" (or "being insofar as it is being") is a concept that applies to all existing things, from matter (hyle) to the Necessary Existent per se (God). Therefore, in Avicenna's philosophy, the Necessary Existent per se, or God, is an instance of the universal being or "being qua being," not "being qua being" itself, as Averroes later proposed, nor its cause, as Thomas Aquinas argued. For this reason, God is not the subject matter of metaphysics in Avicenna's system. This is because the subject matter of any science is considered among its established and presupposed tenets, and the science only discusses its attributes. However, God's existence in philosophy is not considered established or presupposed; rather, it is one of philosophy's problems to be investigated (Avicenna, 1363, pp. 5-6). At the same time, Avicenna emphasizes that no science other than philosophy can prove the existence of God. This is because, in his view, sciences other than philosophy consist of physics, mathematics, and logic, and God is not proven in any of them (Ibid.). In Avicenna's system, theology is a part of ontology (the science of "being qua being"), since God is proven within first philosophy. Therefore, God is considered one of the instances of "being qua being."

Aristotle also considers metaphysics the science of being, but he understands "being" in the sense of substance. For Aristotle, being and substance are one and the same. In his philosophical system, the question of existence reverts to the question of substance, and the theory of being is inseparable from the theory of substance. According to Aristotle, the number of parts of philosophy corresponds to the number of substances (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1004a, 3-4). Furthermore, in Aristotle, one of the meanings of "being" is "substance" (Aristotle, 1991, p. 1028b, 3-5). This is why figures like Werner Marx and Bonitz refer to

Aristotle's ontology as ousiology (the study of substance) (Marx, 1977, p. 57). As Bonitz states: The investigation into all concepts and meanings of substance is equivalent to outlining the entirety of Aristotelian philosophy (Burn, 1373, pp. 141-142). One who perceives in substance all forms of existence—namely, intellect, soul, matter, form, and body—and who does not consider accidents to have an existence independent of substance, can establish substance as the subject of metaphysics. Consequently, they can define philosophy as the science of substance and the essence of things. However, Avicenna cannot consider substance the subject of philosophy because substance, as a quiddity (whatness), is a contingent existent. Metaphysics, for Avicenna, is not limited to discussing only contingent beings. Based on this, Aristotle views the ten categories as categories of being, not categories of quiddity. In contrast, Avicenna, following Farabi, considers contingent existents to be composed of two conceptually distinct analytical parts: existence and quiddity. He then divides these contingent existents, from the perspective of their quiddity, into the ten categories of substance and accident (Akbarian, 1386, pp. 51-52). Avicenna, in emphasizing the distinction between "existence" and "quiddity" (or "essence"), follows Farabi's ideas. Through this distinction, he introduced existence as a distinct philosophical element separate from quiddity into Islamic philosophy. With such a transformation, Avicenna went beyond Aristotle, extending the analysis of the concept of existence beyond the realm of substance to the realm of actual existence.

3- Averroes and "Being Qua Being"

According to Averroes (Ibn Rushd), Aristotle's "being qua being" refers to the highest substance, a substance that is the first and final form (Averroes, 1377, Vol. 1, pp. 64-66, 293). Averroes views philosophy as

the study of "being qua being" insofar as philosophy is the study of the first form and the ultimate end of all beings. In his view, philosophy is the study of the first formal and final causes. In other words, philosophy is the study of the first form and the first ultimate end (Averroes , 1377, Vol. 1, p. 192). Also, he states: Philosophy is the study of the causes of beings qua beings, or the study of the primary causes of celestial bodies, or the study of all that is independent of matter. (Averroes , 1377, Vol. 2, pp. 711-712). Therefore, the subject of philosophy is God. And since the subject of every science is presupposed within that science, God must be proven in another science, namely physics (natural sciences). From this perspective, Averroes , in contrast to Avicenna , considers God to be a matter of physics, because philosophy discusses the substance that is the primary form and final cause of other things—that is, immaterial substances—and this must be proven in another science called physics.

Averroes criticizes Avicenna . According to Averroes , Avicenna , in this matter, followed and continued the path of Alexander of Aphrodisias. In Alexander of Aphrodisias's view, a naturalist cannot prove the existence of the principles of natural beings; rather, it is the philosopher who can do this. (Averroes , 1377, Vol. 3, p. 1420). According to Averroes , this is incorrect because, in the last book of Aristotle's Physics, the eternal substance is proven as the principle of natural beings. In his view, the only valid proof for the existence of God is this argument from motion. According to Averroes , the principles of sensible things, including the Prime Mover, matter, form, etc., are first proven in physics and then studied in a different way in philosophy. (Ibid., 1406-1407) The physicist studies them as principles of motion, while the philosopher studies them as principles of substance. The difference between these two is that the

philosopher ultimately studies the First Form, and the physicist studies the ultimate goal of substance. (Averroes , 1377, Vol. 3, 1421-1427, 1562-1574, and 1429-1430).

4- Albert the Great and Being Qua Being

Albert the Great, a Christian philosopher of the 12th and 13th centuries and a commentator on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, considered the subject of philosophy to be simple being (*Esse simplex*). In the first part of his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Albert the Great states that simple being, as God's first creation, is the subject of philosophy (Doig, 1972, pp. 52-53), and he does not contradict this view in later sections. Therefore, for Albert the Great, being qua being is synonymous with simple being. Albert the Great believed that the principles of simple being are beyond natural phenomena. Because these principles are discussed in philosophy, it's also referred to as metaphysics. Furthermore, philosophy is called divine science because the divine and primary principles of simple being are the completers and perfecters of everything else (Doig, 1972, p. 78). Like Averroes , Albert the Great accepted the natural argument for the Prime Mover (Doig, 1972, p. 53). The key difference, however, lies in their understanding of philosophy's subject: Albert the Great considered the first creation as the subject of philosophy, while Averroes viewed God as its subject.

Albert the Great considered being (To be) to be identical with existent. According to Roland Gosselin, this identification allowed Albert the Great to consider the first creation as "being" itself (Gosselin, 1948, pp. 175-9). However, Doig argues that Gosselin's interpretation relies on a distinction between existence and essence that Albert the Great did not understand in the way Gosselin suggested (Doig, 1972, p. 80).

5. Thomas Aquinas and Being Qua Being

For Thomas Aquinas, metaphysics, first philosophy, and divine science are used interchangeably in a certain sense. Although he believed that metaphysics discusses the First Cause, spiritual substances, and universal being, it is only universal being that becomes the subject of philosophy (Aquinas, 1995, p. XXXII). In other words, being qua being is the subject of philosophy. This doctrine is presented and explained in several places within his commentary on the *Metaphysics* (Aquinas, 1995, pp. 196-206; 396-403; 695-701; 707-711).

According to Wippel, while 13th and 14th-century thinkers followed Avicenna's path, they were divided on how to explain the relationship between the science of being qua being and divine being. Siger of Brabant and Scotus, in the late 14th century, believed that God, in His capacity as existent, was an instance of being qua being, which is the subject of philosophy. Thomas Aquinas, however, took a unique stance on this matter. In his view, the subject of philosophy is being qua being and universal being, but God is not an instance of universal being. God is the cause of universal being (and in effect, the instances of universal being). Thomas Aquinas considered the ultimate goal of philosophical inquiry to be the knowledge of God. This, of course, implies that the proof of God's existence is one of the central issues in philosophy. However, in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Aquinas also presents texts where he asserts that God, as an unmoved mover and an immaterial essence, must be proven in natural philosophy (physics). He views this as a necessary prerequisite for beginning philosophical study (Aquinas, 1995, 398; 593; 1169-1170; 2267). Essentially, whether God's existence is to be proven within physics or philosophy in Aquinas's thought system remains a point of contention among contemporary interpreters.

Thomas Aquinas likely adopted the term "universal being" (or "common being") from Avicenna , who frequently used the term. Thomas utilized "universal being" in numerous instances, notably in the first part of his *Summa Theologiae* when explaining the distinction between likeness and image (or imagination/conception). He states that likeness is, first, a type of image, and second, the perfection of a being—a being that is itself the image of something else (Aquinas, 1947, 636-7; 1983, 28; Aquinas, 1995, pp. 222-3). Thomas considered universal being to be the most fitting and real effect of the highest cause, which is God (Aquinas, 1947, p. 1166). Therefore, Thomas applied "being qua being" or "universal being" to contingent beings, viewing God as their cause. In other words, for Thomas, if "being qua being" or "universal being" is the subject of this science, then the philosopher must reason from knowledge of this subject to understand the cause or principle of everything that falls under "being qua being." For Thomas Aquinas, being qua being cannot be predicated of God. In his view, God is the cause of the instances of being qua being, not an instance Himself. If God were an instance of being qua being, it would imply that He is His own cause, which is a contradiction. It's important to note that, for Avicenna , the concept of "being" extends from the Necessary Existent (God) down to prime matter. Therefore, for Avicenna , one would say that a contingent being is composed of existence and essence. However, in Aquinas's system, since being qua being refers to contingent beings, and God is not an instance of being but rather its cause, it is perfectly acceptable to state that a being is composed of existence and essence.

Following Avicenna , Thomas Aquinas held that the discussion of God should be addressed within philosophy, not in physics, a view contrary to Averroes 's belief. Nevertheless, it's worth noting that Thomas, at the conclusion of his commentary on

Aristotle's *Physics*, acknowledged that the unmoved mover—which he identified with God—could indeed be proven within that science. This approach allowed Thomas Aquinas to defend the unity of philosophy and divine science in a way that was unique among 13th-century thinkers (Wippel, 1995, pp. 85-86). For Thomas, the philosopher discusses God indirectly, specifically in God's role as the cause of the instances of being qua being (Wippel, 1995, p. 86). Thomas distinguished between theology based on reason and theology based on revelation. He believed that reason-based theology begins with "being qua being" and culminates in God, while revelation-based theology starts with God and ends with "being qua being" and creatures as reflections and resemblances of God. This harmony between these two types of theology in Thomas Aquinas stems from his theory on the relationship between reason and faith. In his view, reason and faith originate from a single source: God, who is both the revealer of divine truth and the creator of human reason. Therefore, no inherent contradiction exists between the two. If an apparent conflict arises, it must mean one of them is false or mistaken, because otherwise, it would imply that God propagates falsehoods, which is impossible. For this reason, Thomas accepted that theologians should utilize philosophical argumentation in their theological discourse.

It's worth noting that whether "being" (ens) and "existence" (esse) are used synonymously by Thomas Aquinas is a point of contention among Thomists. Consequently, there are disagreements in interpreting Aquinas's statement that "being is imposed from existence" (Ens imponitur ab esse). According to Doig, this statement indicates that being is distinct from existence (Wippel, 1995, pp. 111, 114). However, for Gilson, this same statement signifies that being is identical with existence (Gilson, 1994, pp. 29-45; Gilson, 1960, pp. 190-215). It should be noted that Gilson's theory has been criticized by McNerny (McNerny, 1959, pp. 315-335).

Thomas Aquinas held some key disagreements with his teacher, Albert the Great, on these points: Albert the Great rejected the threefold classification of philosophy's subject matter—namely, existence, primary causes, and God. Thomas, however, accepted this division, but reinterpreted it not as a segmentation of the subject itself, but rather as distinct issues or questions within philosophy. Here's a breakdown of the differences between Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on key philosophical points: 1- Albert the Great rejected any form of argumentation concerning the cause of being qua being. Thomas, conversely, strongly argued for God's causality in relation to being qua being. 2- Albert the Great considered philosophy "divine" because it engaged with the most divine aspects of things. Thomas, on the other hand, deemed philosophy "divine" because it discussed God as the ultimate cause of philosophy's subject, which is being itself. 3- Albert the Great called philosophy "first philosophy" because it discussed its subject in a universal manner. For Thomas, philosophy was "first philosophy" because it discussed spiritual substances as the primary causes of being. 4- Albert the Great reduced all things to simple being as the universal form, thereby placing philosophy at the end of the hierarchy of sciences. Thomas, however, reduced all concepts to being as the fundamental basis of the reality of things. Similarly, for Thomas, philosophy is studied last, thus also placing it at the end of the hierarchy of sciences. 5-): Albert the Great referred to philosophy as "metaphysics" because the principles discussed in it transcend natural things. Thomas, however, called it "metaphysics" because it is situated at the end of the hierarchy of sciences. Due to this distinction, we can say that for Albert the Great, it was Transphysics (meaning beyond physics), while for Thomas, it was Metaphysics (meaning after physics).

However, a critique of Thomas Aquinas's theory could be raised by pointing out that, firstly, he created a gap between God and

universal being. This then begs the question: how is the separation and chasm between being qua being and God bridged in Thomas's thought? This question can't be answered through causality because a similarity (or kinship) between cause and effect is necessary. Both equivocation (shared word, different meaning) and univocity (same word, same meaning) are dismissed by Thomas Aquinas himself, so we must resort to analogy. Secondly, Thomas has confused universal being with particular beings. God is an instance of universal being, and the cause of particular beings. Therefore, universal being, or being qua being, has no cause. What is an effect are the instances (particulars), not the general concept of existence. However, Thomas elsewhere states that being qua being is not an effect because if it were, all beings would have to be effects, leading to an infinite regress of effects. Thus, there must be a being that is not an effect (Aquinas, 1947, II, 52; ST, q, 44, 1, ad, 1). This latter point would support Thomas's view.

6- Differences Among Avicenna , Averroes , Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas

The key difference among Avicenna , Averroes , and Thomas Aquinas lies in their understanding of the subject of philosophy: "being qua being." Avicenna considered "being qua being" (as the subject of philosophy) to encompass all existent things, from prime matter to God. For this reason, he accepted the univocity of being (meaning "being" has the same fundamental meaning across all existents) and consequently considered God's existence a matter to be discussed within philosophy itself. In contrast, Averroes equated being qua being with separate substances, considering God as the very subject of philosophy and thus a topic for the natural sciences (physics). Thomas Aquinas, however, applied being qua being exclusively to contingent beings, positing God as their cause. Simultaneously, for Thomas, God is a concern of both philosophy and the natural sciences. Another

fundamental disagreement between Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna lies in their explanation of the relationship between universal concepts and the subject of philosophy. For Avicenna, common notions are considered essential accidents of being qua being. However, for Thomas Aquinas, common notions are the essential accidents of being composed of existence and essence. Thomas also believed that philosophy, like being and unity, discusses "thing" (*res*), and "thing" can be predicated of everything that "being" can be predicated of. Such a conception of "thing" is not found in Aristotle, nor in Averroes or Albert the Great. Therefore, it can be seen as an influence of Avicenna on Thomas Aquinas.

Thomas says that both Plato and Aristotle consider God as the cause of all beings (Aquinas, 1947, pp. 304-306). He also states in his commentary on *Metaphysics*, section 1164, and in *Physics*, that Aristotle's book *Alpha of Metaphysics* contains a proof for the cause of existence. According to Gilson, the aforementioned substantial cause (*causa substantia*) in section 1164 and the cause of being (*causa esse*) in section 259 do not mean the cause of existence in the sense of creator (Gilson, 1960, pp. 70-71). However, for Avicenna, Averroes, and Albert the Great, the concept of a cause of existence is not present in Aristotle's philosophy.

Conclusion

It's clear from what has been discussed that ever since Aristotle defined the subject of philosophy as "being qua being," there have been disagreements among his interpreters regarding its meaning. This disagreement in ontology has permeated the entire structure of a philosopher's system, ultimately influencing their theology. For instance, Avicenna considers "being qua being" to be a universal concept that applies to all beings, including the Necessary Existent.

Therefore, his theology is considered an integral part of his ontology.

As a result, being qua being is the subject of philosophy, and God is one of its issues. However, Averroes, by critiquing Avicenna's view, offered a theological interpretation of being qua being, equating it with separate substances and considering God as the subject of philosophy. Since the subject of any science is assumed within that science, it must be proven in a higher science. Therefore, he considered it among the issues of physics. In the Christian tradition, Albert the Great rejected Averroes' view. Contrary to Averroes, who considered God the subject of philosophy, Albert believed the first created being of God, namely simple existence, to be the subject of philosophy. In his view, what Aristotle meant by being qua being was precisely this simple existence, and thus simple existence is the subject of philosophy.

Finally, Thomas Aquinas, by qualifying "being qua being," applied it only to contingent beings and considered God as their cause. At the same time, for him, God is considered an issue of philosophy from one perspective and an issue of physics from another. The differences in interpreting "being qua being" thus alter the relationship between ontology and theology on one hand, and the relationship between theology and metaphysics and physics on the other.

References

- Akbarian, R. (2007). *Hikmat Muta'aliyyah va Tafakkur Falsafi Mo'aser* (*Transcendental Philosophy and Contemporary Philosophical Thought*) (1st ed.). Tehran: Sadra Islamic Wisdom Foundation.[In Persian]
- Aquinas, Thomas. (1947). *Summa Theologica*, Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province.
- Aquinas, Thomas. (1983). *On Being and Essence*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Armand Maurer, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.
- Aquinas, Thomas. (1995) *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Translation and Introduction by John P. Rowan, Indiana, Dumb Ox Books.
- Aristotle. (1962). *On Interpretation (Peri Hermeneias)*, Commentary by St. Thomas and Cajetan Translated from the Latin with An Introduction by Jean T. Oesterle, Milwaukee.
- Aristotle. (1991). *The Complete Works of Aristotle the Revised Oxford*. Translation Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Averroes. (1998). *Tafsir Ma Ba'd al-Tabi'ah* (Commentary on Metaphysics), Corrected by Maurice Bouyges (Vols. 1, 2, 3, 1st ed.). Tehran: Hekmat.
- Avicenna. (1984). *Al-Shifa, Al-Ilahiyyat (Theology)* (Edited by Abu al-Qetwati, Saeed Zaied, 1st ed.). Tehran: Nasser Khosrow. [in Arabic]
- Bern, J. (1994). *Aristotle and Peripatetic Philosophy* (Translated by Seyed Abolghasem Pourhosseini, 1st ed.). Tehran: Amir Kabir. [In Persian]
- Doig, J. C. (1972). *Aquinas on Metaphysics: A Historico-Doctrinal Study of The Commentary on the Metaphysics*, Martinus Nijhoff.
- Gilson, E. (1960). *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, New York, Doubleday.
- Gilson, E. (1994). *The Christian Philosophy of ST. Thomas Aquinas*, Translated by L. K. Shook, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press.

-
- Jaeger, W. (1962). *Aristotle: Fundamentals of The History of Development*,
Translate by Richard Rabinson, London.
- M.D.Rolland G. (1948). *Le De Ente Et Essentia*, Paris, Librairie
Philosophique J. Virin.
- Marx, W. (1977). *Introduction to The Aristotle's Theory of Being qua Being*,
Translated by Robert S.Schine, the Hague Nijhoff.
- McInerny, R. (1959). Some Notes on Being and Predication, *Journal of The
Thomist*, XXII, pp 315-335.
- Owens, J. (1978) *The Doctrine of Being in The Aristotelian Metaphysics*,
Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.
- Ross, D. (1975), *Metaphysics*. (2vol). A Revised Text with Introduction and
Commentary by W. D. Ross, London, Oxford University Press.
- Wippel, J. (1995). *Metaphysics*, in the *Cambridge companion to Aquinas*,
Edited by Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, Cambridge
University Press.



Analyzing the Rule of Emanation from the Simple One in Islamic Philosophy: From Interpretive Challenges to Transcendent Elucidation

Arash Rajabi¹ Sayyedah Masoumeh Tabatabaei²

Received: 2025/03/27

Accepted: 2025/05/08

Abstract

"One of the most crucial philosophical rules and a cornerstone of rational principles is the " Nothing but the One emanates from One." This article, employing a library research method for data collection and an analytical and descriptive approach for data analysis, aims to accurately explain this rule. It also seeks to address the arguments of those who oppose the rule, as they haven't correctly grasped its underlying premises. By carefully considering these premises, we find that the "unity" referred to in the rule is not numerical unity, but rather true, real, and original unity. Furthermore, the "One" signifies a simple entity from all aspects and dimensions. "Emanation " implies direct emanation and illuminative emanation, and "homogeneity " refers to shadowy homogeneity . With these introductions, the meaning of the rule becomes clear: From the

1. PhD in Theoretical Foundations of Islam, University of Islamic Knowledge, Qom, Iran.

Emails: Eshragh.sadra@Gmail.com

2. PhD in Islamic Theology, University of Qom, Qom, Iran (Corresponding Author).

Email: Eshraghm@yahoo.com

*Rajabi, A.& Tabatabaei, S. M. (2025). Analyzing the Rule of Emanation from the Simple One in Islamic Philosophy: From Interpretive Challenges to Transcendent Elucidation. *Theosophia Islamica*, 3(6), pp 28-56.

<https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71703.1068>

One that is simple in all respects (basīṭ min jamī' al-jihāt), by virtue of the principle of shadowy homogeneity (Senkhīyyat ḡillīyyah), and without an intermediary and with an illuminative relation (iḏāfah ishrāqiyyah), nothing but the One emanates.. Indeed, according to the elucidations of Mystics and Transcendent Philosophers (Muta'allihīn), the single effect that emanates from the utterly simple One (God) is precisely what they call Expanded Existence or Expanded Grace.

Keywords

Rule of the One, Unity, Simplicity, Homogeneity , First Intellect, Islamic Mysticism, Ash'arites, School of Segregation.

Introduction

The Rule of the One (Qā'idat al-vāḥed), which states that "from one thing, only one thing can appear" (Dinani Ibrahimi, 1986, p. 611), has been one of the most fundamental and crucial philosophical and intellectual principles. It has long been a subject of attention for both ancient Greek philosophers and Islamic theologians, who have consistently strived to explain and elaborate upon it (Suhrawardi, 2001, pp. 64-226; Khajeh, 1996, pp. 261-1405, 74; Damad, 1988, p. 351; Mulla Sadra Shirazi, 1981, p. 332).

Allamah Helli considered the belief in the core idea of this rule to be the doctrine of the early philosophers, specifically the ancient Greek scholars (Allamah Helli, 1312, p. 44). Averroes attributed this rule to Themistius among the ancients, as well as to Plato (Averroes, 1377, p. 163). Plotinus explored this rule in his "Enneads" (Theology), and this very book was a key text that drew the attention of Muslim philosophers to this important principle (Plotinus, 1413, p. 134). According to Hanna Fakhoury and Khalil Georr, Plotinus was influenced not only by the schools of Pythagoras and Philo but also by Plato. From the Stoics, he adopted the principle that "all beings emanate from the One." Thus, the origin is the Oneness (the One), but the question remains: how do all beings issue forth from the simple Oneness? (Hanna Fakhoury & Khalil Georr, trans. Abdolmohammad Ayati, 1386, p. 91).

In the history of Islamic thought, this rule has always been a subject of great interest. Its Greek origins never prevented philosophers from thoroughly discussing and exploring its implications; the geographical source of knowledge was never considered an impediment to acquiring wisdom. Consequently, Muslim philosophers across various schools—including Peripatetic philosophy (Hikmat al-Mashsha), Illuminationist philosophy (Hikmat

al-Ishraq), theoretical mysticism (Irfan Nazari), and transcendent philosophy (Hikmat Muta'aliyah)—as well as theologians, and at times even Qur'anic exegetes, jurists, legal theorists, and hadith scholars, have considered this rule in their respective fields. Both proponents and opponents have sought to affirm, negate, critique, or elucidate it in accordance with their own schools of thought and principles.

In Western philosophy during the Middle Ages, this rule gained prominence following the translation of Avicenna's (Ibn Sina) philosophical works. Medieval philosophers referred to Avicenna's rule of issuance as Emanation, signifying something that has emerged from a source. Thomas Aquinas also addressed this rule in the fourth section of his book, "Summa contra Gentiles," (Mahdi Ha'eri Yazdi, 1361, p. 113; Aquinas, 1362, Vol. 1, p. 38).

This rule states that, by virtue of the principle of homogeneity, nothing more than a single, unified entity can emanate from a simple entity in all its aspects.

Throughout the history of Islamic thought, this rule has been met with two main approaches. One approach, despite diverse interpretations of the rule, has consistently focused on explaining, justifying, and providing arguments for it, largely praising its significance. The other approach, manifesting in various forms, has fiercely opposed and challenged this rule.

The first approach is adopted by most investigative Peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophers, mystics, and transcendent sages. They have elaborated on the rule, each offering their distinct interpretations.

The second approach is championed by most Ash'ari theologians, the Salafiyya sect, some Imami theologians, and adherents of the School of Segregation.

Imam Mohammad Ghazali, Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi, Allamah Hilli, Ibn Taymiyyah, and the followers of the School of Segregation have directed their opposition towards the "effected One". They argue that through this rule, philosophers have limited God's power and free will, because, according to this rule, God only has the power to emanate one creation. (Ghazali, 1382: p. 129; Fakhr Razi, 1986: Vol. 1, p. 335; Allamah Hilli, 1425: pp. 172 & 395; Ibn Taymiyyah, Vol. 5, p. 292; Mirza Javad Tehrani, 1374: p. 240; Mohammad Reza Hakimi, 1388: p. 171).

Mūḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Qāḍī ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, and Taftazani also do not consider the causal One, which is the agent of issuance, to have an external referent. Based on the multiplicity of divine attributes over the essence, they hold that God possesses multiplicity in His affirmative attributes and beautiful names (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1404: Vol. 1, p. 199; Ibn Taymiyyah, undated: Vol. 5, p. 292; Al-Ījī, 1425: Vol. 7, pp. 188, 201, 207, and Vol. 8, pp. 57, 61; Taftazani, 1409: Vol. 2, p. 99).

It's clear that many misconceptions about the Rule of the One stem from a lack of precision regarding its fundamental premises, particularly unity, simplicity, and homogeneity . Therefore, it's essential to first provide a clear picture of these premises.

This article aims to present the approach that supports this rule based on Islamic philosophy. In this research, Islamic philosophy refers to, in historical order of Islamic rational sciences, Peripatetic philosophy, Illuminationist philosophy, theoretical mysticism, and transcendent philosophy. The article will elaborate on their various explanations, while also considering the opposing views, to clarify the correct interpretation of the rule.

1. Elucidating the Principles of "The One" (Al-Wahed)

1-1. The Concept of Unity

The concept of unity is undefinable; like the concept of existence, it's self-evident. The One (Wahed) is synonymous with the existent. Of course, the "One" that is synonymous with the existent refers to a specific kind of unity, namely, absolute unity.

To elucidate the concept of unity and how something is attributed to it, we must state:

- A. When something, in its attribution to unity, is independent from all aspects, considerations, and perspectives, such that by virtue of its external reality, existence, and objective realization, it is pure unity and the very essence of that reality—not something for which unity is established. Rather, the concept of unity is abstracted from the core essence and intrinsic nature of that thing, independent of all causal and restrictive aspects, negating all additions, attachments, existential and non-existential dimensions, and without any substantive or accidental intermediaries. It is abstracted by itself and for itself, and the essence is pure, unadulterated, and the very essence of unity. In other words, unity applies to it by an inherent, eternal, everlasting, and perpetual necessity. This type is called the True, Real, and Original Unity (Wahdat-e Haqqah-ye Haqiqiyyah-ye Asliyyah), and sometimes it's referred to as Collective Unity (Wahdat-e Jam'iyyah). This type represents the true individual and the real instance of unity. (Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani, 1377: p. 44 and Hasanzadeh Amoli, 1383: p. 26)
- B. If the concept of unity is not abstracted from the core essence of the One and the very truth of its reality without a causal aspect, and if, in the intellect's view, it resolves

into two things—meaning that in reality, it is "a substance for which unity is established" (*dhatun thabata lahu al-wahdah*) rather than "a substance that is unity itself"—yet the subject of unity, in its attribution to unity, does not require a mediating cause or a restrictive aspect, then this type is called the Real but Not True Unity (*Wahdat-e Haqiqiyyah Ghair-e Haqqah*). (Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani, 1377: pp. 44-45 and Tabataba'i, 1414: p. 140)

- C. If the concept of unity is not abstracted from the very essence of the One, and if, in the intellect's view, it is analyzed into two things, and in its attribution to unity, it requires a mediating cause (*wāsiṭa dar 'urūd*) and a restrictive aspect (*ḥaythiyyat-e taqyīdiyyah*), as well as a unifying aspect that is inherently attributed with unity and is truly one—then this is called the Unreal One (*Wāḥid Ghayr Ḥaqīqī*). (Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani, 1377: p. 45).

Since the Almighty God is pure existence (*wujūd-e maḥḍ*) and has no existential limit, the second assumption (referring to the "Real but Not True Unity") is impossible and unattainable for Him. No form of multiplicity can enter into Him. His existence, His beautiful names (*Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*), and His exalted attributes (*Ṣifāt-e 'Ulyā*) exist by eternal necessity. He is the true instance of the concept of unity and the One with True, Real, and Original Unity (*Wāḥid bi-Wahdat-e Haqqah-ye Haqiqiyyah-ye Aṣliyyah*).

1-2. Simplicity (*Basāṭat*)

Simplicity is the opposite of composition. By simple (*basīt*), we mean a thing in which no kind of composition is present. As Farabi states, "The simple is that which has no part in its essence" (*Al-Basīt huwa al-ladhī fī dhātihi lā juz' lahu*). (Farabi, 1405: p. 125)

The most complete concept and perfect instance of simplicity is an existence that is absolutely pure and free from composition—a pure simple. Other existents are simple from one perspective and compound from another. Thus, a simple entity in all respects is an existent in which no kind of composition can be found. Other individual simple things are considered relatively simple.

Only the Necessary Existent by Essence (Wājib al-Wujūd bi al-Dhāt) is pure simple (basīt maḥḍ) and simple in reality (basīt al-ḥaqīqah), meaning no type of composition can enter into it. According to the wise Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani, the most perfect kind of simplicity is exclusively confined to the holy essence of the Reality of Realities (Ḥaqīqat al-Ḥaqā'iq) and the Origin of Origins (Mabda' al-Mabādī). Simplicity in this sense is identical to true, real, and original unity (waḥdat-e ḥaqqah-ye ḥaqīqiyyah-ye aṣliyyah). This means that the One with true, real, and original unity is a pure simple, and no negative limitation can enter into its essence and existential identity.

(Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani, 1377: pp. 54-55)

1-3. Emanation (Şudūr)

According to the philosopher Shahrazuri and many philosophers who followed him, including Sadr al-Muta'allihin, the philosophers' intent behind "emanation" in this rule is that the cause must be in a state where the effect emanates from it. In this sense, the cause precedes the effect and the relationship between them. (Shahrazuri, 1383: p. 337 and Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981: Vol. 2, p. 205)

The meaning of emanation here is positive, creative, or illuminative emanation. This refers to the cause bringing the effect forth from absolute non-existence, inherent nothingness, quiddative contingency, perpetual annihilation, and primordial darkness into the realm of existence and luminosity. This is achieved by expelling all

forms of non-existence and negative aspects, and by bestowing the overflowing grace of existence through a prior necessity and antecedent obligation. In other words, in illuminative emanation, the source brings the emanation from the hiddenness of non-existence into the arena of existence, and by way of positive necessity, it blocks all paths to non-existence for it, thereby granting it existence. (Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani, 1377: p. 54)

Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani divides emanation into two types:

1. Direct Emanation (Şudūr bi al-Dhāt)
2. Indirect Emanation (Şudūr bi al-‘Araḍ)

Direct emanation refers to emanation without an intermediary, while indirect emanation refers to emanation with an intermediary. This means that an effect or emanation that comes directly from a cause is a direct emanation. Conversely, an effect or emanation that comes through an intermediary of the cause—meaning an effect of an effect, or an emanation of an emanation from the cause—is an indirect emanation. In reality, an indirectly emanated effect or emanation is a direct emanation of the intermediary, and an indirect emanation of the cause of the direct effect. Therefore, the first emanation from a cause is a direct emanation, and other emanations that stem from this first emanation are indirect emanations of the cause of the first emanation. Similarly, an emanation directly from the first emanation is a direct emanation from the first emanation, and its further emanations are indirect emanations of the first emanation and indirect emanations of the cause of the first emanation. Consequently, all the emanations of the contingent world, by the rule "Whatever is indirect must eventually terminate in that which is direct" (Kullu mā bi al-‘araḍ lā budda an yantahī ilā mā bi al-dhāt), are direct emanations from the First Cause and direct emanations from the Necessary Existent by Essence. (Ibid., p. 69)

According to this classification, the meaning of emanation in the rule of "The One" is direct emanation, not indirect, because the emanation of multiplicity from the true One through an intermediary raises no doubt regarding its permissibility and possibility. Furthermore, the intent is not that only one thing emanates from the One at a single time, but rather that absolutely, eternally, and perpetually, nothing but one emanates from the One. Thus, the direct emanation of the One is always one. (Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani, 1372: p. 451)

1-4. Homogeneity (Senkhīyyat)

The principle of homogeneity is one of the confirmatory premises of the "Rule of the One." Philosophers use the term homogeneity to describe the inherent suitability and likeness between a cause and its effect. This means that the root and kind of the effect's perfections are present in the cause, such that, due to this inherent characteristic, not every effect emanates from every cause, nor is every cause the cause of every effect. (Tabataba'i, 1414: p. 166)

In the universe of existence and the realm of contingency, all contingent beings, to move from the state of equilibrium and non-existence into the sphere of being and existence, are dependent on something other than themselves. The existent on which the being of a quiddity depends is called the cause, and the quiddity that, in its very existence, needs a cause is called the effect. (Ibid., p. 156)

The fundamental impact that the cause leaves on the effect is none other than the very existence of the effect. The cause's creation is the effect's existence itself, not the effect's quiddity, nor the mere coming-into-being of the effect's quiddity. (Ibid., p. 157)

Therefore, causality and effectuality represent an existential relationship between the existence of the cause and the existence of

the effect. The existence of the effect is pure need, dependence, and intrinsic lack of independence, subsisting through its bestowing cause. In other words, the relationship between cause and effect is an illuminative relationship, where the cause bestows the existence of the effect, and the effect is pure connection and attachment to the cause. It has an existential dependence and need for the cause, and the cause bestows existence upon its effect. Thus, an inherent suitability must exist between the cause and effect to specify the emanation of the effect's existence from the cause, ensuring that a specific effect emanates. If such suitability were absent, it would necessitate that every cause could be the cause of every effect, and anything could emanate from anything.

To avoid the fallacy of equivocation, it is important to note that homogeneity is conceptualized in two ways:

1. Productive Homogeneity (Senkhīyyat Tawlidīyyah): This is like the homogeneity between a small amount of water and a large amount of water, or between mist and the sea. In this type of causality, the addition of the effect to the cause results in an increase in the cause, and its separation leads to a decrease or reduction. Scholars deny this form of homogeneity for God Almighty and created things, indeed, for any cause that bestows the existence of an effect. Most of those who deny homogeneity for God and attack those who affirm it have understood homogeneity in terms of productive homogeneity. (Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiani, 1380: p. 43)
2. Shadowy Homogeneity (Senkhīyyat Zillīyyah): This is like the homogeneity between a reflection and its reflected object, a branch and its root, a thing and its shadow, or a reality and its subtle manifestation. In this type of homogeneity, the addition or non-addition of the effect to the

cause does not result in increase or decrease. In fact, addition is intrinsically impossible. This type of homogeneity ultimately leads to disjunction (*tabāyun*). (Ibid., p. 44)

The homogeneity of the Almighty God with the contingent world is shadowy homogeneity. The world is a reflection, a shadow, and an indication of God Almighty's existence.

2- Elucidating the Approaches of Proponents of the Rule of the One

In explaining the Rule of the One and articulating its intent, various perspectives exist among the schools of Peripatetic philosophy (*Hikmat al-Mashsha'*), Illuminationist philosophy (*Hikmat al-Ishraq*), Mysticism (*Irfan*), and Transcendent Theosophy (*Hikmat-i Muta'āliyah*). Each of these schools has interpreted the rule based on its specific philosophical foundations.

2-1 The View of Peripatetic Philosophy (*Hikmat al-Mashshā'*)

Avicenna, across his various works, made a special effort to explain and elucidate the Rule of the One. He believed that from the true One, only a single numerical emanation occurs (Avicenna, 2005, p. 684). He held that it's impossible for the creation from God, the Great Creator, to be multiple, neither numerically nor in terms of matter or form. Therefore, the first creation from the First Cause is a numerical unity, and its essence and quiddity are singular, not material. Thus, none of the corporeal forms that manifest bodies can be directly related to the First Cause. Instead, the first entity related is the pure Intellect, because it's devoid of matter. The First Intellect is of the type of simple unity; hence, from a simple entity, due to its simplicity,

undoubtedly a single unit is created, and there is no multiplicity in simple wisdom (Avicenna, 2006, pp. 435-437).

Accordingly, Avicenna believed that the First Source (First Cause) is absolutely pure, and the initial emanation from it is not in the form of multiple things. Instead, the First Emanation is the "Pure Intellect" or "First Intellect," which is the manifest aspect of this matter. The One emanates precisely because there exists a necessary being called the First Originator, and this is the singular, unique First Principle, which is necessarily existent. Similarly, Bahmanyar held that an absolutely simple being, which has no composition whatsoever, cannot be the cause of two things that possess a natural congruity with each other. This is because nothing can emanate from it unless the emanation of those things becomes necessary. Therefore, if this simplicity is preserved, what emanates from it is a natural unity; meaning, two things that have a natural relationship with each other do not emanate from a perfectly simple entity (Bahmanyar, 1996, p. 531).

2.2. The View of Illuminationist Philosophy (Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq)

Suhrawardī, the founder of the Illuminationist school, explains the Rule of the One by asserting that from a true One, which is a real unity, no more than one effect can emanate. This is because it is impossible for darkness to emanate from light, whether that darkness is pure or something else. This is due to the fact that the necessity for light is something other than darkness, and God's essence is not composed of what causes both light and darkness. Darkness does not come into existence without God's mediation, and light will not need anything other than light. From a single light, no more than two lights will arise, because one of them is not the other. Thus, the first thing that emanates from that light is a "single, abstract light," even though

it is unified, and it's impossible for darkness to be created from two lights simultaneously (Suhrawardi, 2001).

Suhrawardi believes that the "single light" refers to a simple, abstract light composed of all other lights, and that the emanation of multiplicities occurs directly. In his view, the First Emanation is the proximate light, the greatest light, and the single, abstract light, which is neither corporeal (as corporeality entails composition) nor psychical (which would require a material body), but rather Intellect. It possesses no distinction other than its perfection, due to the necessity of congruity between cause and effect (ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 40-226).

2.3. The Approach of Theoretical Mysticism

Although Sheykh Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi didn't fully endorse the application of the Rule of the One, we can't truly consider him an opponent or enemy of this rule.

In his book *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* (which was mistakenly referred to as *Futūḥāt* in the source text, as *Futūḥāt* is another work by Ibn Arabi and this discussion appears in *Fuṣūṣ*), he argues that God is absolute. He believes that the emanation of things from God is due to His boundless grace, not merely His singular essence. Therefore, the emanation of the cosmos can be explained by the multiplicity of divine names, and he debates Islamic philosophers on this rule. Ibn Arabi maintains that, as Mystics state, more than one thing does not emanate from a simple One, yet the world possesses multiplicity. Thus, this multiplicity came into existence in this manner, and the multiplicity in names is a different matter (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 4, p. 231). What's put forth in Mysticism is the emanation of grace from an effusion, not the emanation and creation of an existent from a necessary existent. What we understand from Ibn Arabi's discourse is not a critique of the Rule of

the One itself. Rather, he either contemplates the unity of the emanated entity because the nature of the emanation is not an absolute identity that would be an absolute unity but relates to God's many names; or he contemplates the multiplicity of the world because all these are manifestations of a single grace that has encompassed all people and the world. Therefore, he never explicitly stated that two things emanate from a single simple cause.

As Javadi Amoli states, if Ibn Arabi's intention behind "drawing a comparison" (likely referring to a type of analogy or distinction) isn't to negate the Rule of the One, but merely to point out its shortcomings despite accepting all its aspects, then he hasn't expressed a sound view (Javadi Amoli, 2003, p. 129).

However, Sadr al-Din Qunavi believed that God is one by His essence, as it's impossible for more than one thing to emanate from a single unity. In Qunavi's view, that unity is a universal unity, and what has been created and what has not yet been created both exist within divine knowledge. This existence is shared between the "great ones" (who are the First Existence, also called the First Intellect) and other creations, and not as philosophers from the Peripatetic school have mentioned (Sadr al-Din Qunavi, p. 74).

As Mirza Hashem Eshkevari, the mystic, believes, the First Emanation is the "universal pervasive existence" or "general effusion," not the First Intellect. And the First Intellect is not the primary intermediary in all creatures; rather, a universal and pervasive existence is the intermediary.

2.4. The Approach of Transcendent Theosophy (Ḥikmat-i Mutaʿāliyah)

Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi, the founder of Transcendent

Theosophy, explained the Rule of the One by stating that if a simple emanated entity is the cause of something, its causality must be such that its natural analysis is impossible, ensuring its causality is identical with its essence. However, if this cause operates through multiplicity, conditions, precision, or other factors (which, consequently, are not the origin of simplicity and composition), then it will not be the origin of simplicity and composition. Therefore, a simple origin means that its reality is intrinsically the origin for other things and is not divisible into two parts, where one part of its reality is realized by one means and the other by another. Unlike us, whose natural existence is realized through two distinct things (like speaking and writing), in such a case, more than one thing would emanate from it, while it is undeniable that "order" is something more than that. Thus, the nature of "order" is understood from two different meanings, which contradicts this assumption. Therefore, if we assume the cause is a true simple entity, its effect will also be a true simple entity, and vice versa. Something whose effect is more than one, and some of these effects do not exist for others, is in reality divisible in both its essence and its existence.

Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Mulla Sadra) believed that the first thing emanating from an existent is both its essence—which encompasses all its states, beauties, and unity—and a simple existence called "Imā" (sign), "Martabat al-Jam" (rank of collection), and "Ḥaqīqat al-Ḥaqā'iq" (reality of realities). Sometimes, it is also called "al-vaḥdat al-Kubrā" (the greatest unity). Similarly, God Himself is called "Martabat Wāḥidah" (the single rank) or "al-vujūd al-Ilāhi" (the Divine Existence) due to the attribution of His names to causes and other external existents. This (what was just mentioned) is not causality, because causality by its very nature requires both a cause and an effect. Therefore, causality is realized for specific matters and

their relationships with each of their established existents, and this is what the mystics refer to as the "First Intellect". This is thus a brief statement that can be compared with other explanations. Relative to other existents and creations, priority here pertains to other matters. However, here, in rational analysis, we prove the priority of the First Intellect relative to the absolute essence and the specific nature of other things. This means that the First Emanation is a simple existence, and it comes into being based on its own rank along with a specific essence to which a particular possibility is linked (Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi, 1981, pp. 204-231).

He reconciled the belief of mystics who agree with the first emanation of a simple entity with the belief of mystics who consider the First Intellect to be the first emanation. He believed that this simple effluence or absolute unity encompasses the various stages of creation, each possessing unique characteristics in its own place. The First Intellect initially defines this simple effluence, and all other creatures are subsequent determinations of it.

In explaining the Rule of the One, Mirza Mehdi Ashtiani states:

The unity in the cause refers to the singularity of the entity in all its aspects and emanations, resulting from the multitude of its relations. This added multiplicity is pure and free from the essence that precedes and follows it, and generally from all forms of multiplicity. This characteristic is exclusive to God. The unity in the effect means that the effect possesses a unity derived from its cause, even though it might exhibit multiplicity in other aspects. In other words, what is one based on its own truth and existence is indeed one, even if it might appear multiple in meaning or by attribution. Emanation (şudūr) here refers to immediate emanation, not mediated emanation. This is because mediated emanations from a true unity are matters that bear no difference among themselves. The purpose of the

rule is not that more than one unit cannot emanate at a given time, but rather that more than one thing will not come into being from a single, unified entity (Ashtiani, 1993, p. 451).

He believes that prominent philosophers attribute the application of this rule to true unity and absolute simplicity in all respects. The purpose of establishing the aforementioned rule is to bear witness to and indicate the unity and multiplicity of causality and its effects, as well as their diversity or lack thereof. This indication is limited only to cases where the unity of the cause exists. Otherwise, based on this rule, the emanation of multiplicity from singular causes and simple natures cannot be overlooked, nor can its reason be accepted as an affirmative proof.

Therefore, when this rule is to be expanded to include the rule of absolute unity and the broader rule, it must be said that from one thing, in terms of its singularity and dignity, no more than one thing can emanate. Considering that unity is not limited to a true unit for the aforementioned statement to hold true—because every multiplicity ultimately leads back to a unity, and anything with multiple aspects eventually leads to a single aspect that doesn't disrupt the others—it's not necessary to restrict the Rule of the One to true or simple unity. However, given that the main intent of great philosophers and sages in establishing this rule was to explain the nature of the cosmic order and the entire universe, as well as God's attributes in sacred verses and His manifestations to His grand essence and merciful being, most of them have specifically applied this rule to the true unity that is unique to God (ibid.: 77, pp. 55-61).

Based on this, Ashtiani believes that the unity in the cause refers to true unity and absolute simplicity. And the unity in the effect refers to external unity and a simplicity that is not composed of multiple orientations; like the First Intellect, which, in mental analysis,

has various aspects, but externally it is simple and unified, and the multiplicity of aspects does not disrupt the unity of its characteristics.

The emanation (şudūr) also refers to immediate and natural emanation. Therefore, this rule can be stated as: "From a single unit in all aspects, in a single position, naturally, meaning no more than one thing emanates without mediation in its stability" (ibid., 71).

Allameh Tabataba'i also believed that the "One" refers to a simple emanation with no internal composition in its essence. Therefore, a unitary cause is a simple entity, considered a cause by its simple essence, and a unitary effect is also a simple entity, considered an effect by its simple essence. Here, then, unity stands in contrast to multiplicity, which has diverse components and points to no single order (Tabataba'i, 1994, pp. 165-166)..

3-1. Explaining the Opposing Viewpoint to the Rule of the One

Some Imamiyyah and Ash'ari Theologians

Based on the explanation of the Rule of the One provided by Peripatetic philosophy, many theologians have come to believe that the true One, which is the ultimate cause, is only the cause for a single numerical effect. This is because the Peripatetics considered the ten intellects and nine celestial spheres as effects, either directly or indirectly, of the true One. (Avicenna, 1384: Vol. 3, p. 823)

Even though the Peripatetics' goal in limiting the intellects to ten was to validate the nine celestial spheres, and now, based on modern physics and astronomy, Ptolemaic astronomy's nine spheres are nothing more than a myth, the foundation of the Rule of the One wasn't built solely on this premise such that its collapse would bring the rule down with it.

Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, in his commentary on *Al-Isharat*, clarifies that Avicenna believed the true One necessitates only one numerically singular entity, namely, the First Intellect. (Avicenna, 1383: Vol. 2, p. 684). Although their intention for the First Intellect was an existent that possesses the actuality of all things—as Plotinus states in the *Enneads*, "Indeed, in the First Intellect are all things" (Plotinus, 1413: p. 98)—and the indirect emanation of all existents ultimately terminates in the true, real One which is the Cause of Causes, nevertheless, this explicit affirmation of the numerical unity of the effect has led theologians to assume that if the One on the side of the cause refers to the Necessary Existent (Wājib al-Wujūd), we would face two problems:

- 1- Limiting the power of the Necessary Existent (Wājib al-Wujūd). This is because it would imply that the Necessary Existent is only capable of creating a single entity. (Allamah Hilli, 1425: p. 396; Fakhr al-Razi, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 335)
- 2- Believing that the Necessary Existent is a necessitated agent (fā'il mūjab), meaning it is not free. This is because a free agent typically has numerous actions and effects, not just a single one. (Allamah Hilli, 1425: p. 172)

These criticisms are based on the premise that the effect is a numerically singular unit. However, according to the exposition of Transcendent Philosophy (Hikmat-e Muta'aliyah), the effect is not numerically singular; rather, it is one by true, real, and shadowy unity (wahdat-e haqqah-ye haqiqiyyah-ye zilliyyah). It bears a shadowy homogeneity (Senkhīyyat zillīyyah) with the One on the side of the cause. This perspective not only does not limit God's power and choice, but instead posits that the first emanation is a unity in multiplicity, and all things are but reflections of that true One.

The Ash'arites have raised another objection: that the One on the side of the cause is not truly one and simple in all respects either. They argue that it possesses multiple real attributes that are additional to its essence (*za'id bar dhat*). Consequently, they believe this rule (the Rule of the One) applies only to a necessitated agent, not to a free and active one.

Furthermore, from the Ash'arite perspective, it is permissible to attribute multiple effects to a single, simple cause. This is because all contingent beings are attributed to God Almighty, even though God is transcendent beyond composition. Philosophers, however, have generally prohibited attributing multiple effects to a truly simple and universally singular cause, except through a multiplicity of instruments, conditions, or recipients. They maintain that only a single effect can be attributed to a truly simple and universally singular entity. Since the Ash'arites affirm real attributes for God, they argue that God is not truly simple and singular in all respects. Therefore, they conclude that God Almighty does not fall under the purview of this rule. (Al-Ijī, 1425: Vol. 4, p. 123; Vol. 7, pp. 188, 201, 207; Vol. 8, pp. 57, 61)

As previously alluded to in this article, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, based on the multiplicity of divine names, also considers God Almighty to be outside the scope of this rule, thus aligning with the Ash'arites on this matter. (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: Vol. 4, p. 231)

Some thinkers, in addition to considering the effect as a numerically singular unit, contend that when we introspect, we frequently observe the direct emanation of multiplicity from our own singular soul. For instance, the soul becomes pleased, enraged, joyful, or sorrowful. Or, in the brain's workshop—the soul's most magnificent activity center—it conceives, affirms, judges the impossibility of the conjunction of opposites and contradictories, transcends time and

space, perceives existent things as non-existent, and embodies non-existent things as existent. Consequently, the soul's unity and essence are never disrupted by emanating such diverse and contradictory multiplicities.

These thinkers have therefore rejected the Rule of the One due to the perceived necessity of believing in homogeneity (Senkhīyyat), by which they mean identity in essence, nature, or attributes and characteristics. They argue that believing in the identity and similarity of God's essence, nature, and even attributes and characteristics with those of creation is tantamount to denying God. This is because the entire being, essence, and attributes of creatures are contingent, needy, dependent, limited, and subject to motion and rest, whereas God transcends all these imperfections and needs. Hence, the Rule of the One has no real-world instance or application. Furthermore, based on this understanding, an absolute simple cannot be realized in the objective world. (Allamah Mohammad Taqi Jafari, 1376: Vol. 26, p. 210)

Despite these arguments, none of the great philosophers have ever intended such a meaning for homogeneity. They, in fact, agree with these thinkers in rejecting the aforementioned meaning. Instead, their understanding of homogeneity is the one previously explained in the section on the premises of the Rule of the One.

3-2. The School of Tafkik (Separation)

The School of Segregation, which aims to purify religious knowledge from philosophical and mystical ideas, has also opposed this rule, following the path of some Imami and Ash'ari theologians. They deem the Rule of the One as fundamentally Greek in origin, using this as a tool to dismiss it from the realm of

thought. Like those groups, they believe this rule is one hundred percent contrary to preserving unlimited divine power and prophetic/Qur'anic monotheism. They also argue it contradicts the concept of the Necessary Existent being a free agent (fā'il mukhtār). (Mohammad Reza Hakimi, 1388: p. 142; Sayyid Ja'far Sayyidan, n.d., pp. 19-20; Mirza Jawad Tehrani, 1374: p. 230)

3.3. Salafism

The Salafis and Wahhabis have also vehemently attacked this rule. The spiritual father of Wahhabism, Ahmad ibn Abd al-Halim al-Harrani al-Dimashqi, known as Ibn Taymiyyah, believed that philosophers say "the Lord is one, and from the one, only one emanates." He argued that their intention behind the Lord's unity is that He has no affirmative attributes whatsoever, and multiple meanings are inconceivable in Him. This is because multiple meanings would lead to composition. Therefore, according to their view, God cannot be both an agent and a recipient, as the aspect of agency is different from the aspect of receptivity, and this implies a multiplicity of attributes, which in turn necessitates composition.

Despite this, Ibn Taymiyyah notes, philosophers still claim that God is the Intellector and the Intellected, Intellect itself; the Lover and the Beloved, Love itself; the Delighted and the Delighting, Delight itself; and so forth, encompassing various multiple meanings. They assert that each of these attributes is identical to the others, and an attribute is identical to its possessor; thus, knowledge is power, which is will, and knowledge is the Knower, who is the Powerful. However, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that this "One" that philosophers claim exists, exists only in minds and has no external reality. Therefore, he concludes, the principle upon which they build—"from the one, only one emanates"—is a corrupt principle. (Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d., Vol. 5, p. 292).

Results, Analysis, and Discussion

Based on the aforementioned interpretations, the role of a correct elucidation of the rule's premises becomes clearer in properly understanding the rule itself.

All divine philosophers consider the "One" on the side of the cause to be the "True One" and "Pure Simple," from which only a single entity emanates. However, Peripatetics identify the "One" on the side of the effect as the "First Intellect," which is numerically singular. Illuminationists see it as a "Single Abstract Light." Gnostics and Transcendent Philosophers (Muta'allihīn) regard it as "Expanded Existence" or "Expanded Grace" which possesses hierarchical degrees. They consider the First Intellect to be the initial determination of Expanded Existence and the first imprint on the page of Expanded Grace.

According to the Peripatetic and Illuminationist views, the emanation of the First Intellect from the True One is direct and essential (*bil-dhāt*), while the emanation of other intellects and all other contingents from the One is indirect and accidental (*bil-ʿaraḍ*). However, according to the Gnostics and Transcendent Philosophers, the True, Real One has only one emanation, which is direct and essential, and it is not numerically singular. All other existents are merely imprints, shadows, and determinations of this first emanation. Indirect emanation occurs within the determinations of the first emanation. In other words, the first emanation from the True, Real One is an Expanded Existence that encompasses all contingents and pervades all creation. The realization of various longitudinal and latitudinal levels occurs within this first emanation, which is indeed Expanded Existence, and the first and most noble level of Expanded Existence is the First Intellect.

The correct elucidation of the Rule of the One, which also removes the criticisms of negating divine free will and limiting God's power, is the one provided by Transcendent Philosophy. This elucidation states that from the One with True, Real, and Original Unity, nothing but a single entity emanates. In other words, from a single cause that is simple in all respects, with no compositional aspect in its essence, only a single, simple effect emanates. That single effect is Expanded Existence or Expanded Grace. All existents, with their astonishing multiplicity in longitudinal and latitudinal orders and according to hierarchical degrees, are but the imprints and levels of Expanded Grace.

*The reflection of Your face, when it fell into the cup's mirror,
The gnostic, from the wine's glow, fell into raw craving.*

*The beauty of Your face, with one glimpse it cast into the
mirror, All these images fell into the mirror of illusions.*

*All these reflections of wine and opposing images that
appeared, Are but a single gleam from the face of the cup-bearer that
fell into the cup.*

The final point is that, based on the principles of both modern and traditional logic, any valid inferential structure can be transformed into a conditional compound that possesses logical truth. (Zia Mouahhed, 1386: p. 10; Allamah Hilli, 1385: p. 79)

Therefore, the Rule of the One, which is a valid inferential structure, can be transformed into a conditional compound with logical truth, creating a true exemplary structure. We can state: "If an entity is a true One, then nothing but a single entity emanates from that true One." In this context, we consider the true One (cause) to be the essence of God Almighty, who is identical with His names and attributes, and the single effect to be the Expanded Grace that flows through all existents and levels of being.

References

- Ashtiyani, M. (1993). "Ta'līqah bar Sharḥ Manẓūmah-yi Ḥikmat-i Sabzavari" (Commentary on Sabzavari's Manzumah of Wisdom). Edited by Abd al-Javad Falturi and Mehdi Mohaghegh. Tehran: Tehran University. [In Persian]
- Ashtiyani, M. (1998). "Asas al-Tawḥīd" (The Foundation of Monotheism). Edited by Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani. Tehran: Amir Kabir. [In Persian]
- Ashtiyani, S. J. (2001). "Sharḥ Ḥāl va Ārā-yi Falsafī-yi Mullā Ṣadrā" (Biography and Philosophical Views of Mulla Sadra). Qom: Bustan-e Ketab. [In Persian]
- Avicenna & N. T. (1996). "Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt" (Commentary on Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat). Qom: Nashr al-Balaghah. [In Arabic]
- Avicenna & N. T. (2004). "Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt" (Commentary on Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat). Edited by Ayatollah Hasan Hasanzadeh Amoli. Qom: Bustan-e Ketab. [In Arabic]
- Avicenna, H. b. A. (2006). "Al-Ilāhīyāt min Kitāb al-Shifā" (Theology from the Book of Healing). Edited by Ayatollah Hasan Hasanzadeh Amoli. Qom: Bustan-e Ketab. [In Arabic]
- Bahmanyar. (1996). "Al-Taḥṣīl" (The Attainment). Edited by Shahid Morteza Motahhari. Tehran: Tehran University. [In Arabic]
- Damad, M. M. B. (1988). "Al-Qabasāt" (The Illuminations). Edited by Dr. Mehdi Mohaghegh, Dr. Seyyed Ali Mousavi Behbahani, Professor Izutsu, and Dr. Ibrahim Dibaji. Tehran: Tehran University. [In Persian]
- Ebrahimi Dinani, Gh. (1986). "Qawā'id Kullī Falsafī dar Falsafah-yi Islāmī" (General Philosophical Rules in Islamic Philosophy). Tehran: Institute of Cultural Studies and Research. [In Persian]

- Fakhoury, H. & Khalil, G. (2007). "Tārīkh-i Falsafah dar Jahān-i Islāmī" (History of Philosophy in the Islamic World). Translated by Abd al-Mohammad Ayati. Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi. [In Persian]
- Farabi, A. (1984). "Al-Fārābī fī Ḥudūdihi wa Rusūmihi" (Al-Farabi in his Definitions and Drawings). Edited by Dr. Ja'far Al Yasin. Beirut: Alam al-Kutub. [In Arabic]
- Fayyaz Lahiji, A. (2004). "Shawāriq al-Ilhām fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-Kalām" (The Dawns of Inspiration in the Commentary on Tajrid al-Kalam). Edited by Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani, Sheikh Akbar Asad Alizadeh. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Imam al-Sadiq (Peace be upon him).
- Ha'eri Yazdi, M. (1982). "Heraf-e Hastī" (Pyramid of Existence). Tehran: Institute of Cultural Studies and Research. [In Persian]
- Hakimi, M. R. (2009). "Ilāhīyāt-i Ilāhī va Ilāhīyāt-i Bashārī, Naẓarhā" (Divine Theology and Human Theology, Views). Qom: Dalil Ma. [In Persian]
- Hasanzadeh Amoli, H. (2003). "Waḥdat az Dīdgāh-i Ārif va Ḥakīm" (Unity from the Perspective of the Mystic and the Philosopher). Qom: Tashayyu'. [In Persian]
- Hasanzadeh Amoli, H. (2007). "Hezār-o Yek Kalameh" (A Thousand and One Words). Qom: Bustan-e Ketab. [In Persian]
- Hilli, H. b. Y. b. M. (1933). "Kashf al-Fawā'id fī Sharḥ Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id" (Unveiling the Benefits in the Commentary on the Rules of Beliefs). Edited by Sheikh Reza Tehrani, calligraphed by Zain al-Abidin ibn Ahmad Razavi Qomi. Tehran: [n.p.], lithograph. [In Arabic]
- Hilli, H. b. Y. b. M. (2004). "Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I'tiqād" (Unveiling the Desired in the Commentary on Tajrid al-I'tiqad). Edited by Ayatollah Hasan Hasanzadeh Amoli. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami. [In Persian]
- Ibn Arabi, M. (n.d.). "Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah" (The Meccan Revelations). Beirut: Dar Sader. [In Arabic]

- Ibn Rushd. (1998). "Tafsīr Mā Ba'd al-Ṭabī'ah" (Commentary on Metaphysics). Tehran: Hikmat. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Taymiyyah. (n.d.). "Majmū' Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyyah" (Collected Fatwas of Ibn Taymiyyah). n.p., n.d. [In Arabic]
- Ja'fari, M. T. (1997). "Tarjomeh va Tafsīr Nahj al-Balāghah" (Translation and Interpretation of Nahj al-Balaghah). Tehran: Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Islami. [In Persian]
- Javadi Amoli, A. (2003). "Raḥīq Makhtūm, Sharḥ Hikmat Muta'āliyah" (Sealed Nectar, Commentary on Transcendent Philosophy). Edited by Hamid Parsania. Qom: Isra Publishing Center. [In Persian]
- Jurjani, M. S. Sh & A. I. (2004). "Sharḥ al-Mawāqif" (Commentary on Al-Mawaqif). Edited by Badreddin Na'sani. Offset Qom: Al-Sharif al-Razi. [In Arabic]
- Plotinus. (1992). "Atheologia" (Theology/Enneads). Edited by Abd al-Rahman Badawi. Qom: Bidar. [In Arabic]
- Qunawi, S. (n.d.). "Risālat al-Nuṣūṣ" (Treatise on Texts). [In Arabic]
- Razi, F. (1986 CE). "Al-Arba'īn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn" (The Forty in the Principles of Religion). Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyya. [In Arabic]
- Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Baruch Spinoza, Blaise Pascal, Upanishads, Dhammapada, Surangama Sutra, and Bhagavad Gita. (1983). "Falsafah-yi Naẓarī" (Theoretical Philosophy), Vol. 1. Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi. [In Persian]
- Seyyedani, S. J. (n.d.). "Juzvāh-yi Silsilah-yi Dars-hā-yi Naqd va Barrasī Qawā'id Falsafī, Qā'idah al-Wāḥid" (Course Notes on the Critique and Review of Philosophical Rules, The Rule of the One). Qom: Madrasah-yi Ayatollah al-Uzma Wahed Khorasani, [In Persian]
- Shahrzuri, Sh. (2004). "Rasā'il al-Shajarah al-Ilāhīyah fī 'Ulūm al-Ḥaqā'iq al-Rabbānīyah" (Treatises of the Divine Tree in the Sciences of Divine Realities). Edited by Najafqoli Habibi. Tehran: Institute of Wisdom and Philosophy of Iran. [In Arabic]

- Shirazi, S (Muhammad ibn Ibrahim). (2004). "Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-'Aqlīyah al-Arba'ah" (The Transcendent Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys). Edited by Allamah Hasanzadeh Amoli. Tehran: Sazman-e Chap va Entesharat. [In Arabic]
- Shirazi, S (Muhammad ibn Ibrahim). (1981 CE). "Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-'Aqlīyah al-Arba'ah" (The Transcendent Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys). Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi. [In Arabic]
- Suhrawardi, Sh. (1995). "Majmū'ah-yi Muṣannafāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq" (Collected Works of Shaykh al-Ishraq). Edited by Henri Corbin, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Najafqoli Habibi. Tehran: Institute for Cultural Studies and Research. [In Persian]
- Tabataba'i, S. M. H. (1993). "Nihāyah al-Ḥikmah" (The End of Wisdom). Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami. [In Arabic]
- Taftazani, S. (1988). "Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid" (Commentary on Al-Maqasid). Edited by Dr. Abd al-Rahman Omira. Offset Qom: Al-Sharif al-Razi. [In Arabic]
- Tehrani, J. (1995). "Mizan al-Maṭālib" (Balance of Demands). Qom: Dar Rah-e Haqq. [In Persian]



Examining the Nature and Definition of Imamate in the Views of Khajeh Nasir and Ibn Arabi

Vahide Akrami¹

Received: 2025/03/17 Accepted: 2025/04/22

Abstract

A fundamental step in researching the intersection of Islamic mysticism (Irfan) and theology (Kalam), and in bridging these two disciplines regarding the concept of Imamate, is to ascertain if a shared understanding of Imamate's essence exists between them. Only if there's a common conceptualization of Imamate can we effectively explore its various aspects across both fields. The central question of this research is whether the core concept and characteristics of Shi'a Imamate are present within Ibn Arabi's mystical framework. It's important to clarify that this study does not aim to examine the specific linguistic term "Imamate" in mysticism; rather, it seeks to identify the meaning and reality of Imamate, even if it is not explicitly expressed through that particular word in mystical discourse. This article, using an analytical-comparative approach, examines how Khajeh Nasir considers a Perfect Definition (hadd tamm) that it includes the qualifier "by inherent right" (bi'l-aşālah). He posits that a prerequisite for this definition is divine

1. PhD student, Department of Philosophy and Mysticism, Bent Al-Hoda Higher Education Complex, Qom, Iran.

Email: v.akrami@iran.ir

*Akrami, V. (2025). Examining the Nature and Definition of Imamate in the Views of Khajeh Nasir and Ibn Arabi. *Theosophia Islamica*, 3(6), pp 57-84.

<https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71396.1058>

appointment. Therefore, this can be considered the core characteristic of the Shi'a definition of Imamate. While Ibn Arabi's terminology differs from that of Shi'a theology (kalam), the qualifier "by inherent right" (*bi'l-aṣālah*) can be found in his writings with the same Shi'a meaning. Furthermore, he acknowledges individuals "appointed by God" after the Prophet, which serves as another expression of this very qualifier "by inherent right" (*bi'l-aṣālah*).

Keywords

Nature of Imamate, Khajeh Nasir, Ibn Arabi, By Inherent Right (*bi'l-aṣālah*), Divinely Appointed.

Introduction

The term Imamate (امامت) holds both a literal and a technical meaning within Shi'a thought. The words "Imam" (امام) and "Imamate" originate from the root "Ummam" (امم). Its primary and initial meaning is "intention" or "purpose" (al-Azhari, n.d., Vol. 15, p. 455; Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, Vol. 12, p. 22). Beyond mere intention, it also signifies "turning one's attention towards a specific goal" (Zabidi, n.d., Vol. 16, p. 26; Isfahani, 1416 AH, p. 87). Regarding the literal meaning of Imam, it has been defined as: «إنسانا كأن يقتدى بقوله أو فعله، أو كتاباً، أو غير ذلك محققاً» ("A person whose words or actions are followed, or a book, or anything else, whether they are in the right or in the wrong") (Isfahani, 1416 AH, p. 87). An Imam is defined as a human being whose words, actions, writings, or any other matter are followed, regardless of whether that individual is on the path of truth or falsehood. *Majma' al-Bahrain*, in its interpretation of the term "Imam" in verse 124 of verse Al-Baqarah, states: «يأتكم بك الناس» (Turayhi, 1362, Vol. 6, p. 10). It states: "People follow you and take [teachings or information] from you".

The technical meaning of Imamate in theology, beyond its conceptual definition, encompasses specific characteristics. This differs significantly from how the concept of Imamate is understood by Sunni scholars compared to its technical meaning in Shi'a discourse. This divergence in understanding has a profound impact on their respective theological and jurisprudential discussions.

Ibn Arabi, a renowned mystic, significantly influenced later Sufi thinkers. His religious affiliation is not definitively clear; some consider him Ash'ari, while others believe he was Shi'a. However, it can be confidently stated that he was influential among subsequent Shi'a mystics. In mystical thought, terms such as Imam, Wali (guardian), caliph (Khalifa), Qutb, and Perfect Human (*Insan Kamil*)

are used. Ibn Arabi assigns various and technical meanings to each of these, which in some instances, only share a linguistic commonality with the Shi'a perspective. In other cases, however, they do align with the Shi'a concept of Imamate in certain respects. Therefore, an examination of the meaning and concept of these terms in Ibn Arabi's view, and articulating their points of convergence and divergence with the Shi'a perspective, will help lay a principled foundation for research into Imamate studies within mysticism.

Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi is another renowned theologian, not far removed in time from Ibn Arabi. Furthermore, Khajeh Nasir was an authority in various sciences, including theology (kalam), philosophy, and mysticism (irfan). He possessed a thorough understanding and mastery of Shi'a theology. Through his critiques of theological works from other sects, he aimed to refine beliefs, establish an unassailable rational theology, and respond to existing doubts and ambiguities. His familiarity with mysticism (Irfan) was also significant, to the extent that he authored the book *Awsaf al-Ashraf* (Descriptions of the Noble) on the subject. Therefore, it can be asserted that he was well-acquainted with mystical discussions and their terminology in his time.

Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi is a prominent scholarly authority in Shi'a thought regarding the issue of Imamate. His works are characterized by their precision and conciseness, making it easy to identify the key points and essential features of the Shi'a concept of Imamate. This allows his work to serve as a benchmark for critically assessing similar concepts. Furthermore, the concept of Imamate proposed by Khajeh Tusi differs from earlier interpretations, such as those from the Baghdad school during the Imams' presence, as well as later interpretations from the Isfahan school. While these differences aren't drastic, they are significant. Therefore, Ibn Arabi's mystical terminology will be evaluated against the views of Khajeh Nasir.

in the Shi'a view, Imamate is considered one of the Principles of Religion (Usul al-Din). Unlike other Islamic sects, Shi'ites have chosen five such principles for their religion, and Imamate is one of them. This principle causes the main distinction and difference between Shi'ism and all other Islamic sects. This is because other Islamic sects consider Imamate to be among the Branches of Religion (Furu' al-Din), relating to practical rulings and secondary matters. (Taftazani, 1409 AH, Vol. 5, p. 232).

By clarifying the indicators of Imamate in Khajeh Nasir's view and conducting a thorough case study and complete survey of related terms in mystical thought, we can readily determine the presence or absence of the Shi'a concept of Imamate within mysticism. This will also pave the way for comparative research in mysticism and theology concerning Imamate studies. This is crucial because, assuming a conceptual commonality in terminology, we can then proceed to discuss Imamate. If it's proven that Ibn Arabi accepts the characteristics of the Imam as defined in Shi'a terminology and employs them in his expressions and vocabulary, then a discussion about identifying the specific instance of the Imam and his attributes becomes possible.

Various works have been written in this field. Most research is one-dimensional, and mysticism (Irfan) has not been explored comparatively with theological (Kalam) perspectives. While some studies have focused on the concept of Wilayah (guardianship) in mysticism¹, However, it has not been compared with Shi'a Imamate. Among the comparative works written is the thesis, "A Comparison of Walayah (Guardianship) in Mysticism and Shi'a Theology (Kalam)

1 **Kamali Baniani, Mohammad Reza and others.** (2007). "An Examination of the Mystical Theory of Wilayah from the Perspective of Several Mystics." *Journal of Religions and Mysticism*.

(with an Emphasis on Ibn Arabi's *Fusus al-Hikam* and the Works of Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi)"This work discusses both theological ¹. and mystical *Guardianship*; however, it does not delve into the topic precisely, and Ibn Arabi's works are examined through the lens of Shi'a commentators, at times with justifications. Additionally, that discussion only covers *walayah* (guardianship), and other synonymous terms haven't been examined. In contrast, this article reviews all of Ibn Arabi's books without focusing on any specific term from his works. Furthermore, Ibn Arabi's own viewpoint is presented, not that of his commentators, who are often Shi'a and accept the theory of Imamate. Also, in a scientific-promotional article titled, "The Comparative Position of the Theory of Imamate in Theological Approaches and an Examination of Philosophical and Mystical Foundations," the mystical foundations of this issue have been explored.

In this article, to understand Ibn Arabi's views, we will refer to his original texts and not examine the perspectives of his commentators. This approach allows for a precise exploration of the concept of Imamate. Furthermore, we aim to identify the characteristics of the concept of Imamate from Khajeh's (Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's) viewpoint within Ibn Arabi's works, and we will not independently address Ibn Arabi's specific terms such as *wali* (guardian), caliph (*khalifa*), and others.

Imamate from Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's Perspective

After discussing Monotheism (Tawhid), Divine Justice (Adl), and Prophethood (Nubuwwah), Shi'a theologians address the issue of Imamate. Therefore, it can be said that Imamate is contingent upon these preceding principles (Tusi, 1405 AH, p. 425). However, Modarres

1 Mohammad Ali Rezaei, supervisor Baqer Fakhar, M.A., Al-Mustafa International University, Isfahan Branch, 2015.

Razavi, in his comprehensive research on the works of Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, attributes this treatise to him (Modarres Razavi, 1370, p. 545). *Mu'jam Tabaqat al-Mutakallimin* also considers it a work by Khajeh Nasir (The Scientific Committee at Imam Sadiq Institute, undated, Vol. 2, p. 414). Although the points Khajeh Nasir discusses in this treatise are scattered throughout his other works, its logical structure and use of logical terminology make it valuable for examining the definition, essence, characteristics, and requirements of Imamate.

Definitions are generally categorized into two main types: perfect definition (*hadd*) and descriptive definition (*rasm*) (Helli, 1371, p. 221). Consequently, various forms of definition are considered. Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, in addition to presenting different definitions, believes that one can also define Imamate by explaining its "why" (causation) and "how" (quality) (Tusi, 1405 AH, p. 426). While he doesn't define Imamate in some of his works, such as *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* (*The Purification of Theology*), he defines it in three different ways in other works, which warrant examination.

The first definition of Imamate is as follows: «الإمامة رئاسة عامة دينية، مشتملة على ترغيب عموم الناس في حفظ مصالحهم الدينية والدنيوية، وزجرهم دينية» "Imamate is a general religious leadership, encompassing the encouragement of all people to preserve their religious and worldly interests, and deterring them from what harms them accordingly." (Tusi, 1413 AH, p. 83). In this definition, in addition to the general religious leadership that's stated in most books, the characteristic of encouraging people to preserve their religious and worldly interests is also articulated.

The second definition by Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi is: «رئيس قاهر، آمر بالمعروف، ناه عن المنكر، مبين لما خفي على الأمة من غوامض الشرع، منفذ لأحكامه؛ ليكونوا إلى الصلاح أقرب و من الفساد أبعد، و يأمنوا من وقوع الفتن» "A conquering leader (or one who enforces his authority), who enjoins

what is good and forbids what is evil, clarifies what is obscure in the Sharia (Islamic law) for the community, and implements its rulings, so that they may be closer to righteousness and further from corruption, and be secure from the occurrence of discord.") (Fazel Meqdad, 1420 AH, p. 156). Fazel Meqdad considers "leader to be the proximate genus and the rest of the definition as the differentia, each part of which prevents other things from entering the definition (Fazel Meqdad, 1420 AH, p. 156). In these two definitions, in addition to the genus and differentia, there's a greater focus on the purpose (غاية) of Imamate.

The third definition that Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi provides, and which aligns more closely with the definitions from Sharif Morteza (Tusi, 1405 AH, Vol. 2, p. 264) and Himsi (1412 AH, Vol. 2, p. 235), is as follows: «هو الانسان الذي له الرئاسة العامة في الدين و الدنيا بالأصالة في دار التكليف» ("He is the human being who possesses general leadership in religious and worldly affairs, by inherent right (or by divine appointment), in the abode of obligation" (Tusi, 1405 AH, p. 426). He considers this definition to be more comprehensive ("the most perfect") than the others. One of the reasons for its comprehensiveness is that more causes are mentioned within the definition. This is because a Perfect Definition (*hadd*) must include all causes (equal and distinct), and the four causes, either individually or collectively, can be expressed as the differentia (*fasl*) (Tusi, 1361, p. 434). Given this, it can be stated that general leadership (رئاسه عامه) is the genus. The phrases "in religious and worldly affairs" (في الدين و الدنيا) act as the differentia based on the formal cause. "By inherent right" (bi al-asalah) serves as the differentia based on the efficient cause. And "in the abode of obligation" (في دار التكليف) functions as the differentia based on the material cause. In this specific definition, the differentia based on the final cause (purpose) has not been explicitly stated. However, considering Khajeh Nasir's second definition, the differentia based on the final cause can also be derived.

In cases where an object shares some essential commonalities and essential distinctions, a Perfect Definition (hadd) is used. This is because a *Perfect Definition* expresses both the common essential attributes (the genus) and the distinguishing essential attributes (the differentia) (Helli, 1371, p. 221). However, it's important to note that definition by *Perfect Definition* applies to species, whether true or relative, because a differentia exists in these instances.

Based on these three points, we can conclude that Imamate is a relative species (*naw' izafī*), not a true species (*naw' haqīqī*). These three points are:

1. Imamate is agreed upon by all Islamic sects.
2. In logic, the four causes of an object can serve as the origin of its differentia (Tusi, 1361, p. 434).
3. From the perspective of theologians, the disagreements among Islamic sects stem from differing beliefs on whether God is obligated to appoint an Imam or if the responsibility lies with the people, and if it is obligatory for God, in what manner. (Tusi, 1413 AH, p. 83) In essence, it can be said that this disagreement lies in the efficient cause of Imamate.

Given that various sects differ on the agent or cause that brings the Imam into existence, it can be argued that this disagreement, in a way, extends to the very definition and true essence of Imamate. Consequently, we can conclude that Imamate is a relative species, not a true species. The consensus among all Muslims lies in its essential attributes (genus and differentia based on the formal, material, and final causes), while their disagreement is centered on a single aspect: the differentia based on the efficient cause. Due to the fact that many definitions only mention the genus and differentia based on the formal cause (Taftazani, 1409 AH, Vol. 5, p.

234; Iji, 1325 AH, Vol. 8, p. 345), we can say that the subject of discussion regarding Imamate is consistent. All theologians have been aware of these differing viewpoints concerning the efficient cause, but only some have incorporated this distinction into the definition, which is why they included the qualifier "by inherent right" (bi al-asalah). In fact, it is this very qualifier that changes the definition of Imam from that of a relative species (naw' izafi) to a true species (naw' haqiqi). All definitions share common ground in the differentia based on the formal, material, and final causes. The origin of the disagreement between the Shi'a and Sunni viewpoints lies in their acceptance or rejection of this qualifier. Therefore, this article will focus on it.

The Meaning of " by inherent right " in Theology (Kalam)

The term " by inherent right " (بالأصلالة), as a theological concept, was perhaps first used by Sayyid Morteza in his definition of Imamate, where he contrasted it with " by deputyship " (Bi al-Niyabah) (Sharif Morteza, 1405 AH, Vol. 2, 264). Its primary meaning is that the individual is originally an Imam in their own right, not merely a successor or representative of another. Various viewpoints have offered different interpretations of its meaning, which we will now examine.

" by inherent right " (بالأصلالة) is used to distinguish and exclude the leadership of deputies and governors appointed by the Imam (Bahrani, 1406 AH, p. 174; Fazel Meqdad, 1405 AH, p. 326). In this explanation, the qualifier " by inherent right " is contrasted with the Imam's deputies. In reality, this isn't a precise explanation of the qualifier itself; it merely states its opposition to " by deputyship " (Bi al-Niyabah).

This qualifier signifies general leadership and is synonymous with it, serving to distinguish the position of Imamate from other subordinate roles like judgeship and provincial governance (A Group of Writers, 1381, p. 51). Upon reviewing this perspective, it must be noted that Khajeh Nasir's definition includes both "general leadership" and "by inherent right" (بالأصالة). If these two phrases held the same meaning, one would be redundant and superfluous in the definition, which contradicts his logical principles. For this reason, this interpretation is not acceptable.

It's possible to omit this qualifier and substitute it with "by deputyship from the Prophet." (Helli, 1409 AH, Vol. 1, p. 45) Some even consider the Imam to be acting by deputyship from the Prophet, believing that only Prophets possess "by inherent right" (بالأصالة). (Majlisi, 1404 AH, Vol. 2, p. 290).

In evaluating this perspective, it should be noted that some early Shi'a scholars, despite acknowledging that the infallible Imams are the successors and deputies of the Prophet, still consider the Imam to possess authority "by inherent right" (بالأصالة). In response to this viewpoint, they state: «ذلك لانهم عليهم السلام و إن كانوا نوابه، إلا أنه عليه الصلاة» «That is because, even though they are his deputies, he is not in the abode of obligation (or accountability), so the definition is not invalidated by that.» (Himsi, 1412 AH, Vol. 2, p. 236). Even though, in one sense, the Imam is a deputy, the definition of Imam remains correct because the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his family) is no longer alive in this world of obligation. He reconciles the qualifier "by inherent right" (bi al-asalah) in the definition with the Imam's deputyship from the Messenger, believing that this characteristic of the Imam doesn't necessitate considering him solely as acting "by deputyship" (Bi al-Niyabah).

In this definition, "by inherent right" (بالأصالة) means that God originally chose him. In contrast, when people choose a general leader for themselves, it's called "by deputyship" (Bi al-Niyabah). Consequently, one of the characteristics of an Imam is being divinely selected, and this qualifier has an entailment or conditional relationship with divine appointment. Several reasons can be presented in support of this view, including:

A: According to Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, "by inherent right" (bi al-asalah) can be considered the differentia based on the efficient cause. The well-known differentia ("in religious and worldly affairs" - فى الدين والدنيا), which is agreed upon by all, is based on the formal cause. Consequently, this qualifier refers to the agent who determines the Imam. Based on an exhaustive disjunction, the agent determining the Imam is either God, the individual themselves, or the people. The second possibility (the individual themselves) is false, because anyone, even without the necessary qualifications, could claim to be the Imam. The third condition (the people) is also invalid according to Sayyid Morteza's definition. Therefore, the desired conclusion (being divinely chosen) is established. With this analysis, it can be said that this qualifier indicates divine appointment.

B: The primary and original meaning of this is that the Imam is an Imam by virtue of himself, and not appointed by anyone else. Analyzing this point raises the question: Does the Imam possess the quality that makes him an Imam inherently as part of his human essence, or is it an accidental attribute? If it were inherent (essential), then the

Imam's essence would be the same as other humans; all are rational animals. Consequently, all humans would have to be Imams. Due to this problematic implication, the first possibility is false. If Imamate is due to an accidental attribute, it must have a cause, and someone must create this attribute in him, as every accidental attribute has a cause. This cause is either the essence of the thing itself, God, or something else. The possibility of the essence itself is false for two reasons: First, a thing cannot give what it lacks, and second, all humans would then have to be Imams. If the second possibility (God as the cause) is accepted, the desired conclusion (divine appointment) is established.

For the "something else" category in the third possibility, two scenarios are conceivable: either infallible Prophets or fallible, non-infallible individuals (the common people). If the fallible individuals were to be the cause of granting Imamate, they would lack the very thing (Imamate) they are supposedly bestowing, and thus, they cannot grant it. In the case of infallible Prophets, it must be said that their actions are not based on human desires but rather on divine revelation. ¹«وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ. إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ» ("Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed.") (Najm, 3-4) In reality, even in this scenario, it is God who bestows Imamate upon an individual and appoints him. This appointment and the individual's inherent right (*bi al-asalah*) to Imamate are declared through the Prophet (Himsi, 1412 AH, Vol. 2, p. 296).

1 "Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed."

Consequently, with this analysis, the term *bi al-asalah* implicitly indicates divine appointment. Perhaps it is because of this analysis and implicit indication that Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi states after his definition: «إذ لا مانع للمصطلح أن يضع ألفاظا بإزاء ما يريد إلا أنه ينبغي أن يكون مطردا في» ("Indeed, there is nothing to prevent a scholar (or coiner of terms) from assigning terms to whatever they intend, except that it is incumbent upon them that these terms be consistently applied in the contexts where the intended meaning is used.") (Tusi, 1405 AH, p. 426).

C: Himsi, a Shi'a theologian who predates Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, explains "by inherent right" (*bi al-asalah*) and its difference from general leadership, stating: «بيانه أنه لو نصّ الله تعالى على شخص بالقضاء مثلا او جباية الصدقات بالأصالة لا أن يجعله نائبا عن غيره في ذلك لما كان إماما» ("Its explanation is that if Allah Almighty had explicitly designated a person for, for example, **judiciary** or **collecting zakat (charity)** *originally* – not as a *deputy* for someone else in these matters – that person would **not** be considered an **Imam**.") (Himsi, 1412 AH, Vol. 2, p. 236). To support the idea that one could have a judge "by inherent right" (*bi al-asalah*), he uses the phrase "God's explicit appointment" (نص الله). It seems for him, the concepts of being original (أصل) and divinely appointed (منصوص) are intertwined and accepted as a fundamental premise.

D: After providing the aforementioned definition in his *Risalat al-Imamah* (Treatise on Imamate), Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi states: «الامام الذي حدّدناه إذا كان منصوبا ممكّنا» ("The Imam whom we have defined, if he is divinely appointed (منصوبا) and empowered (ممكّنا)...") (Tusi, 1405 AH,

p. 426). Regarding the meaning of ممکن, it has been explained as being established (Tarihi, 1362, Vol. 6, p. 317) and gaining power and authority (Mostafavi, 1368, Vol. 11, p. 150). Given that if Imamate merely entailed the characteristic of general leadership, then a leader is only truly a leader when they possess power and dominance; someone without power is not addressed as a leader. In that case, either the condition "if he is divinely appointed (إذا كان منصوباً)" would be superfluous, or the meaning of "leader" would be different. Both scenarios—a meaningless condition or a change in meaning without supporting evidence—are unlikely for Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. Furthermore, Sunni Muslims accept the Imam as a general leader in both religious and worldly affairs, yet they do not accept this condition and consider it outside the definition. Therefore, it must be said that this condition pertains to the qualifier "by inherent right (bi al-asalah)." Perhaps this is why he uses the phrase "whom we have defined (حددناه)." This condition belongs to *this* definition, and the difference between this definition and others lies in the phrase "by inherent right." Hence, divine appointment can be understood as "by inherent right."

E: Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi believes that the explicit designation (*nass*) and proclamation of an Imam don't mean God appoints someone as a leader; rather, they serve to make him known to the people (Tusi, 1363, p. 115). From another perspective, the "by inherent right" (*bi al-asalah*) aspect is unknown to people; it's a characteristic they can't normally discern. Therefore, God must announce it to them. In fact, explicit designation (*nass*) is the means by

which people become aware that an individual is an Imam by inherent right. Thus, there's an entailing relationship between being divinely appointed and this qualifier.

Considering the aforementioned reasons, it can be concluded that the qualifier "by inherent right (bi al-asalah)" in the definition implicitly or conditionally indicates divine appointment. Consequently, an individual who believes in an Imam "by inherent right" or in the existence of a divinely appointed individual aligns with the Shi'a definition of Imamate and can be considered Shi'a. In essence, including this qualifier in the definition implicitly highlights the point of divergence between Shi'a and Sunni interpretations, and this difference in a single defining element leads to disagreements in specific instances or manifestations of Imamate.

Characteristics of Imamate Being " By Inherent Right " (Bi al-Asalah)

Given Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's perspective and the nature of " By Inherent Right "(Bi al-Asalah) as a differentia, its distinguishing features from other viewpoints can be expressed as follows:

The selection of the Imam is not the responsibility of the common people (mukallafin).

The Imam possesses characteristics that only God is aware of, and for this reason, the selection of the Imam is God's responsibility.

The Shi'a theory of Imamate is distinguished from other sects that consider its selection the responsibility of the common people.

When the determination of the Imam is not the responsibility of the common people, it is not considered an act or deed of the common people. Hence, it will not be among jurisprudential matters or practical rulings.

Just as the appointment and selection of Prophets are God's responsibility and are discussed under the principles of religion (Usul al-Din), Imamate, being God's selection, is also addressed within the principles of religion. However, it should be noted that prophethood and Imamate differ in their logical genus, and general leadership is not discussed in the definition of prophethood. Therefore, they will be two distinct and different things.

It could perhaps be argued that, given this qualifier expressed by Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, the definition of Imamate is a true (perfect) definition. In this definition, the essential attributes of the Imam as they exist externally are articulated. This means that in proving the external existence of the Imam, the concepts of divine appointment (manṣūṣ) and obligatoriness upon God (wājib ‘alayhi Allāh) are introduced. Analyzing these two conditions leads us to the conclusion that the Imam must be infallible (ma'sum) (Tusi, 1405 AH, p. 427). Therefore, a characteristic is stated as a differentia in the definition that, in some way, refers to divine designation and the necessity of his selection by God.

Ibn Arabi's Perspective

Ibn Arabi lived slightly before Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, during the Abbasid rule. Numerous terms like wali (guardian), Imam (leader), caliph (khalifa), and qutb are found in Ibn Arabi's works, and in many instances, he assigns them specific characteristics. Therefore, to grasp the overall concept, we can't just pick one term and discuss it. Instead, we're looking for a concept in his writings that Shi'a scholars use in their definition of Imamate. If we can establish that a shared concept exists, then that can serve as the starting point for interdisciplinary discussion, allowing us to explore subsequent steps based on that commonality.

The most crucial point in describing Imamate from Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's perspective is the differentia "by inherent right (bi al-asalah)." This differentia is the hallmark of Shi'a Imamate's identity. This qualifier distinguishes the Shi'a definition and viewpoint from that of the Sunni Muslims, to the extent that none of the scholars from various Sunni sects accept it; only Shi'a scholars use it. As discussed, it implicitly refers to divine appointment. Therefore, we must examine instances where Ibn Arabi believes an individual is divinely appointed.

A: Use of the Term by inherent right "Bi al-Asalah"

Upon examining Ibn Arabi's works, we find that this qualifier, " by inherent right " (Bi al-Asalah), is indeed used in his expressions. When discussing the *Qutb*, he states: "Among them [may God be pleased with them] are the Poles, and they are those who encompass spiritual states (*ahwal*) and stations (*maqamat*) by inherent right or by deputyship" (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 6). In this statement, he believes that some Poles, who combine spiritual states and stations, are sometimes chosen by God and sometimes by others. He uses the term by inherent right ("Bi al-Asalah") and also mentions " by deputyship " (Bi al-Niyabah) alongside it. The juxtaposition of these two terms echoes Sayyid Morteza's view, who considers Imamate to be "by inherent right, not by deputyship" (Sharif Morteza, 1405 AH, Vol. 2, p. 264). Notably, the term " by inherent right " holds no place in Sunni theological discourse regarding the Imam or ruler; it's exclusively used by the Shi'a.

Given that Ibn Arabi accepts the concept of a "Qutb by inherent right and believes that some Poles are divinely appointed, it can be argued that, based on this text, people and those bound by religious duties (*mukallafin*) have no role in appointing the Qutb, at

least in certain instances. These instances share common ground with the Shi'a understanding of Imamate. One might object that "by inherent right" in Ibn Arabi's expression is not the same as the theological term used by Shi'a scholars. To address this, one would need to examine the meanings of "originality" (*asalah*) and "deputyship" (*niyabah*) in his works and then make a judgment accordingly.

The Meaning of "Asalah" (Originality) and "Niyabah" (Deputyship) in Ibn Arabi's View

Ibn Arabi uses the term "by inherent right" (*bi al-asalah*) in another context. Regarding "the Remnant of God" (*Baqiyat Allah*), he states:

إنما سماه بقية لأنه بالأصالة خلق لك ما في الأرض جميعاً فكنت مطلق التصريف في ذلك تأخذ ما تريد و تترك ما تريد ثم في ثاني حال حجر عليك بعض ما كان أطلق فيه تصرفك و أبقى لك من ذلك ما شاء أن يبقيه لك فذلك بقية الله و إنما جعلها خيراً لك لأنه علم من بعض عباده أن نفوسهم تعمي عن هذه البقية بما يعطيهم الأصل فيتصرفون بحكم الأصل فقال لهم البقية. (ابن عربي، بي تا، ج ٤، ص ١١٤)

"He (God) only named it (the remnant) as such because originally (*bi al-asalah*) He created for you all that is on Earth, so you had absolute disposal over it, taking what you wished and leaving what you wished. Then, in a second stage, He restricted some of what was permitted for your disposal and left for you what He willed to leave. That is *Baqiyat Allah* (the Remnant of God). He only made it good for you because He knew that some of His servants' souls would be blinded to this remnant by what the origin (the unrestricted initial state) gave them, causing them to act by the rule of the origin. So He said to them, 'The Remnant.'" (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 4, p. 114)

He considers the creation of the world for humankind to be "by inherent right" (*bi al-asalah*). Therefore, humans are free to act in the world as they wish. However, God established "the Remnant of God"

(Baqiyat Allah) for humankind because He knew that some servants, due to the "original" (unrestricted) state God granted them, would fail to perceive this "the Remnant of God." Thus, they must manage affairs according to the very principle that is "the Remnant of God." Ultimately, he places this "remnant" alongside the creation of the world for humans, considering both to be fundamental principles.

the Remnant of God (Baqiyat Allah) is by God's decree, and God has established him by inherent right (bi al-asalah).

For humans to manage affairs, they must act according to the decree of the Remnant of God, and he holds sovereignty over the people.

Some humans lack the ability to perceive this divine blessing and this fundamental principle, remaining blind to it.

The fact that the Remnant of God is chosen by God and that all people must obey him indicates that "by inherent right" in Ibn Arabi's discourse carries the same theological meaning as understood by the Shi'a.

Ibn Arabi also uses the qualifier "by deputyship" (Bi al-Niyabah) in two senses. Its general meaning is that sometimes God and humans can become deputies for each other. Humans become God's vicegerents on Earth, and God, in some instances, becomes the deputy for humans (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 671). The Perfect Human (Insan al-Kamil) becomes God's vicegerent on Earth and acts as the deputy of the Divine Truth in all actions. Their disposition over various matters is due to this deputyship, whereas other beings do not become God's deputies (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 3, pp. 280-286). This meaning, however, cannot be considered the same as the established theological meaning. The other meaning of "by deputyship" is precisely what Sayyid Morteza intended in his theological discourse, and we'll delve into that in detail.

Special Meaning of Deputyship (Niyabah)

Ibn Arabi explains the special meaning of "by deputyship" (Bi al-Niyabah) in one of his statements. He says: An Imam and Caliph is either manifest, meaning he takes control of affairs with the sword and overwhelming power, or he is hidden and, for some expediency, does not accept apparent power. In this case, he has a deputy who assumes power. This caliph can rule with justice or with tyranny and oppression (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 137). An Imam "by deputyship" (Bi al-Niyabah) is a caliph who rules on behalf of the Imam "by inherent right". He believes that the selection of the Imam is God's responsibility, and if an Imam does not assume governance, he himself chooses a caliph for the people. The caliph and Imam are not chosen by the people. However, he also states that the "Ahl al-Hall wa al-'Aqd" (people of loosening and binding, i.e., those who appoint and depose rulers) are among the factors that compel the Imam and Caliph to accept apparent rule (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 138). In reality, this council does not determine the Imam; rather, it compels him to accept apparent power and governance, having no true role in determining the Imam.

In summary, this perspective suggests that an Imam "by inherent right" (bi al-asalah) and divinely appointed sometimes accepts apparent rule and sometimes does not. In the latter case, the Imam remains inwardly (Bāṭinī) and selects a deputy for outward governance. In essence, whether the Imam governs or not doesn't contradict their "by inherent right" status; rather, it impacts whether their leadership is manifest (outward) or hidden (inward).

B: Successors Chosen by God

Given that Ibn Arabi's view on the Perfect Human, Caliph, Qutb, and Imam is not precisely identical to the Shi'a perspective—sharing

common applications in some instances and differing in others—the examples used should not be the terms themselves. Instead, it must be demonstrated that Ibn Arabi, like the Shi'a, believes in God's appointment after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family). In reality, unlike other Sunni theologians who believe that the selection of a successor after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) is the people's responsibility and that God has not appointed anyone on Earth after him, Ibn Arabi believes in divine selection and appointment. The Shi'a concept of Imamate can thus be found in his expressions.

Upon examining Ibn Arabi's statements, instances explicitly mentioning God's appointment after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) can be found. Among them is the following:

Ibn Arabi believes that God chooses and places other individuals on Earth besides prophets. He states, "The Pole appointed by the Divine Truth has precedence in ruling over those whose Imamate is known inwardly among people" (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 138).

From this statement, two points can be inferred: First, there exists an individual who is appointed by God. The phrase "appointed by the Divine Truth" (المنصوب من جهة الحق) is essentially another expression for Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's term "by inherent right".

In Ibn Arabi's terminology, the Qutb (Pole) refers to the heirs of divine messengers and prophets (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 4, p. 760). Therefore, we can conclude that he believes in divine appointment after the Great Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), though he expresses it using a term other than "Imam."

Another point derived from his statement is the precedence in

ruling. In Ibn Arabi's view, the individual divinely appointed has superiority over others, and his decree is binding over all other judgments of his time. Given that Ibn Arabi previously divided the Qutb into those "by inherent right" and "by deputyship" (*Bi al-Niyabah*) (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 6), we can infer that the divinely appointed Qutb is another expression for the same concept of "by inherent right." This Qutb holds precedence over the Qutb "by deputyship" and any Qutb who is the inward Imam of the people; these individuals will be subordinate to him.

2-Ibn Arabi distinguishes between a "Caliph from God" (*Khalifah 'an Allah*) and a "Caliph from the Messenger" (*Khalifah 'an al-Rasul*). In his view, the Caliphate has different ranks. After the Prophet of God, some become his Caliphs, while others are Caliphs of God. Outwardly, both issue the same rulings; however, the Caliph of the Messenger rules based on *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and traditions received from the Prophet, whereas the Caliph of God receives the same ruling directly from God (Ibn Arabi, 1370 AH, p. 163). Based on this, after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), there are individuals who receive rulings directly from God, even if these rulings do not outwardly differ from the established Islamic legal rulings. He concludes by stating, "He (God) did not explicitly appoint anyone as His Caliph, nor did He designate anyone" (Ibn Arabi, 1370 AH, p. 163). It should be noted that Ibn Arabi's true intent here is that the Shi'a Imams and true Caliphs are not "Caliphs from the Messenger." If the Imams were appointed by the Prophet and were his Caliphs, then the qualifier "by inherent right" (*bi al-asalah*) would not be valid, and they would instead be "by deputyship from the Prophet" (*niyabah 'an al-Nabi*), thus falling outside the definition of an Imam who possesses inherent authority.

If there is an explicit designation (*nass*) for the Imam, it points

to divine appointment and being divinely chosen, not to the Prophet of Islam appointing a successor or caliph for himself. This is why Ibn Arabi explicitly states that the Prophet did not choose a caliph for himself, as he knew that God had already chosen a caliph after him, and that person would be a caliph "by inherent right" (bi al-asalah). In reality, the status of the Imams is that of God's vicegerents (Khalifatullah); they don't attain the position of caliphate through imitation or independent reasoning from the Prophet's texts. They are directly chosen by God and receive rulings from Him.

Addressing the Misconception of Wujudiyya's Influence on the Appointed Imam

A common misconception arises from Ibn Arabi's doctrine of Unity of Existence (vahdat al-vujud), where no reality exists apart from God, and all beings are merely manifestations and aspects of Him (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 183). Given this perspective, and interpretations that attribute Ash'ari determinism to him, it's sometimes concluded that his terms and phrases indicating the appointment and selection of an Imam are merely a consequence of this worldview. In essence, according to Ibn Arabi, nothing exists but God. Therefore, if he uses phrases like "He places them" (يَجْعَلُهُمْ) or "the appointed one" (الْمَنْصُوب), one should not infer that this aligns with the Shi'a viewpoint. Instead, it's argued that in Unity of Existence (Vahdat al-Vujud), only God performs any action, and the reason he doesn't grant people a role in choosing the caliph is due to the dominance of the Unity of Existence (Vahdat al-vujud) theory in his perspective.

In response to this misconception, it's important to note two things. First, Ibn Arabi does not accept determinism (jabr) in the sense of the Ash'aris (Ibn Arabi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 624); in some instances, he upholds free will. Second, while phrases like "He places them" (يَجْعَلُهُمْ) might align

with the concept of *Unity of Existence* (*vahdat al-vujud*), the term "the appointed one" (المنصوب) explicitly states divine appointment and the exclusion of popular choice.

A third response to this misconception, based on Ibn Arabi's own statements, is that he believed that during his time, the caliphs were successors to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), not successors to God (Ibn Arabi, 1370 AH, p. 162). Furthermore, he believed that after the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), there was an individual who would accept the "Caliphate from God" (خلافه عن الله) directly from God (Ibn Arabi, 1370 AH, p. 163), and that Islamic governance was not *solely* administered by the people's choice. Based on this, it must be said that in Ibn Arabi's view, God did choose a Caliph after the Prophet. However, the question of "Who is this divinely chosen Caliph?" is a separate issue concerning the identification of the specific individual, which is beyond the scope of this article, as it focuses only on the concept of Imamate.

Given Ibn Arabi's classification, it's evident that while he sometimes acknowledges popular choice, he also firmly believes in divine selection. This suggests that the concept of unity of existence (*Vahdat al-vujud*) plays a very minor role, if any, in this theological view. Instead, Ibn Arabi's perspective seems rooted in the realities of society and the tangible world. Therefore, considering the distinction between a "Caliph from God" and a "Caliph from the Messenger," terms like "He places them" (يجعلهم) can be interpreted as referring to the Caliph of God and His divine selection and appointment.

Conclusion

Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi offers various definitions of Imamate, some of which align with other existing definitions. However, there's a particular definition that primarily highlights the distinction of

Imamate in the Shi'a perspective compared to other Islamic sects. This definition includes three characteristics based on the four causes. Two of these characteristics are consistent with other definitions, and in some cases, with Sunni definitions. The third characteristic, however, is the qualifier "by inherent right" (bi al-asalah). As discussed with the provided reasons, this refers to the efficient cause, which Sunni Muslims do not accept or even use. The implication of this qualifier is that the Imam must be divinely appointed. Given that this definition is specific to the Shi'a and Sunni scholars have not articulated this qualifier, it serves as the criterion for defining Imamate in this article.

Ibn Arabi's terminology on this topic is varied, using different terms that sometimes align with Shi'a Imamate and at other times diverge. Given that the qualifier "by inherent right" (bi al-asalah) or divine appointment of the Imam is specific to the Shi'a perspective, we explored its usage in Ibn Arabi's works. By examining its meaning, we can see that in certain instances, he uses this qualifier with the same specific theological meaning as the Shi'a. He also adheres to its implication of divine appointment, believing that there is an individual "appointed by God by inherent right." Since this article doesn't delve into specific examples of the Imam but focuses solely on the concept of Imamate, we can conclude that Ibn Arabi accepts the core characteristic of the Shi'a concept of Imamate. In various contexts, he differentiates it from an Imam who acts "by deputyship." While he might not use the exact term "Imam" in the Shi'a-specific sense, he nonetheless believes in its conceptual characteristics and accepts that God continues to appoint individuals after the Prophet.

References

- Quran Al-Karim.
- Al-Azhari, M. b. A. (n.d.). *Tahzib al-Lughah*. Bi Ja: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi. [In Arabic]
- Afandi Isfahani, A. (1989). *Ta'liqah al-Amal al-Amil*. Qom: Maktabat Ayatollah Marashi Najafi. [In Arabic]
- Al-Lajnah al-Ilmiyah fi Mu'assasat al-Imam al-Sadiq.(n.d.). *Mu'jam Tabaqat al-Mutakallimin*. Under the supervision of Muhammad Taqi Subhani. [In Arabic]
- Bahrani, b. M. (1986). *Qawa'id al-Maram fi Ilm al-Kalam* (2nd ed.). Edited by Sayyid Ahmad Husayni. Qom: Maktabat Ayatollah al-Marashi al-Najafi. [In Arabic]
- Fadil, M. b. A. (1985). *Irshad al-Talibin ila Nahj al-Mustarshidin*. Edited by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i. Qom: Intisharat Kitabkhanah Ayatollah Marashi (RA). [In Arabic]
- Fadil, M. b. A. (1998). *Al-Anwar al-Jalaliyah fi Sharh al-Fusul al-Nasiriyah*. Edited by Ali Haji Abadi and Abbas Jalali Nia. Mashhad: Majma' al-Buhuth al-Islamiyah. [In Arabic]
- Helli, H. b.Y. (1992). *Jawhar al-Nadid* (5th ed., corrected by Mohsen Bidarfar). Qom: Intisharat Bidar. [In Arabic]
- Helli, H. b.Y. (1988). *Al-Fayn* (2nd ed.). Qom: Hijrat. [In Arabic]
- Himsi, S. (1991). *Al-Munqiz min al-Taqlid*. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Arabi, M. (1991). *Fusus al-Hikam* (2nd ed.). Bi Ja: Intisharat al-Zahra (s). [In Arabic]
- Ibn Arabi, M. (n.d.). *Al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyah*. Beirut: Dar Sader. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Manzur, M. b. M. (1993). *Lisan al-Arab* (3rd ed.). Beirut: Dar Sader. [In Arabic]
- Iji, M. S. S. (1946). *Sharh al-Mawaqif*. Edited by Badr al-Din Na'sani. Qom: Al-Sharif al-Radi. [In Arabic]

- Isfahani, R. (1995). *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran*. Beirut: Dar al-Samiyah. [In Arabic]
- Jam'i az Nevisandegan (Group of Authors). (2002). *Imamat Pazhuhi (Barrasiye Didgah-ha-ye Imamiyeh, Mu'tazilah va Ashā'ira)*. Under the supervision of Yazdi Motlaq. Mashhad: Daneshgah Olum Islami Razavi. [In Arabic]
- Majlisi.(1983). *Mir'at al-'Uqul* (2nd ed.). Edited by Sayyid Hashim Rasooli. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyah. [In Arabic]
- Modarres Razavi, M. T.(1991). *Ahwal va Asar Khajeh Nasir*. Bi Ja: Chap Asatir. [In Arabic]
- Mostafavi, H.(1989). *Al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Quran al-Karim*. Vol. 11. Tehran: Vezarat Farhang va Ershad Islami. [In Arabic]
- Sharif Murtada, A. b. (1984). *Rasa'il*. Edited by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i. Qom: Dar al-Quran al-Karim. [In Arabic]
- Taftazani, S. (1988). *Sharh al-Maqasid*. Edited and commented by Dr. Abd al-Rahman Umayrah. Qom: Al-Sharif al-Radi. [In Arabic]
- Tarihi, F. (1983). *Majma' al-Bahrayn wa Matla' al-Nayyirayn*. Edited by Ahmad al-Husayni. Tehran: Mortazavi. [In Arabic]
- Tusi, M. b. M. (1982). *Asas al-Iqtibas* (3rd ed.). Tehran: University of Tehran. [In Arabic]
- Tusi, M. b. M. (1984). *Tasavvurat ya Rawdat al-Taslim*. Corrected by Ivanov. Tehran: Nashr Jami. [In Arabic]
- Tusi, M. b. M. (1984). *Rasa'il* (2nd ed.). Beirut: Dar al-Adwa'. [In Arabic]
- Tusi, M. b. M. (1992). *Qawa'id al-Aqa'id*. Edited by Ali Hasan Khazim. Lebanon: Dar al-Gharbah. [In Arabic]
- Zubaydi, M. (n.d.). *Taj al-Arus min Jawahir al-Qamus*. Edited by Majmu'ah min al-Muhaqqiqin. Bi Ja: Dar al-Hidayah. [In Arabic]



An Analysis and Study of Ta'zieh from the Perspective of the Philosophy of Theatre

Ali Aghaeipour¹

Received: 2025/04/18 Accepted: 2025/05/24

Abstract

Ta'zieh is a national and religious performance that has, in a way, transformed into a ritual in our culture. This performance is inherently rich in elements that demand contemplation regarding their dramatic weight and significance. Ta'zieh is a fully theatrical scene; that is, the staging of a Ta'zieh possesses dramatic characteristics that can be examined from the perspective of the philosophy of theatre, which generally addresses the concepts of performance and staging. Therefore, this article seeks to discuss Ta'zieh from a philosophical perspective, analyzing its different facets and its similarities to and differences from what we commonly call theatre or drama. We aim to analyze Ta'zieh within a new framework, revealing its capacities in light of new theoretical discussions on theatre. In other words, in this article, we are looking for the intersection point of Ta'zieh and the philosophy of theatre, discussions that have largely been neglected in our research

1. PhD in Philosophy, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, Tabriz, Iran.
Email: Ali.aghaeipour@gmail.com

*Aghaeipour, A. (2023). An Analysis and Study of Ta'zieh from the Perspective of the Philosophy of Theatre. *Theosophia Islamica*, 3(6), pp 85-105
<https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71905.1078>

literature, all without reducing either domain—Ta'zieh or modern drama—to the other.

Keywords

Ta'zieh, Theatre, Philosophy of Theatre, Drama, Stage, Narration

Introduction

Generally, the philosophy of theatre and philosophical discussions surrounding it are not very well-known in Iran. This becomes even more apparent when we consider the vast number of studies conducted on, for instance, the philosophy of art, the philosophy of cinema, and literary criticism. The philosophy of theatre encompasses discussions centered on the nature of drama, the characteristics of theatrical performance, the presence of actors on stage, and theatre's capacity to present concepts that have always been a concern for philosophers. From this perspective, Ta'zieh can serve as an excellent case study in this field. Consequently, philosophical and theoretical discussions on this topic can offer a broader picture of the Ta'zieh phenomenon.

We primarily view Ta'zieh as a ritualistic and religious ceremony, often overlooking its semantic, dramatic, and semiotic aspects. Our intention is to examine and analyze Ta'zieh as an independent and significant performing art from the perspective of theatre studies. In this paper, we will first delve into the concept of Ta'zieh, highlighting aspects that aren't immediately apparent or captivating to a casual observer. Then, we will explore the philosophical and theoretical dimensions of the art of theatre in general, discussing the differences and similarities between Ta'zieh and theatre. As we will see, by following this path, Ta'zieh will encompass a broader scope, seemingly revealing its capacities and potentials more than ever before. This will be made possible through a comparison of Ta'zieh and drama (theatre).

Ta'zieh and Its Dimensions

Contrary to popular belief, the subject matter of a Ta'zieh performance is not solely limited to the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and the events of Ashura. In Ta'zieh, we witness a chain of themes and

topics that seem to trace a specific historical and dramatic path for the audience, ultimately culminating in the Day of Ashura. According to researchers in this field, Ta'zieh encompasses several main themes, each interconnected. These themes include: Gabriel descending to inform the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) of the martyrdom of his grandsons, Imam Hassan (PBUH) and Imam Hussein (PBUH); the secret invitation from the people of Kufa to Imam Hussein (PBUH) to assume the caliphate, after which the Imam's household will encounter Yazid's army at an intersection – this meeting point being the Plains of Karbala. In this desert, everyone abandons the Imam (PBUH), leaving only 72 of his companions, who are also martyred. Another theme is the defense of the Imam (PBUH) by a character named Ilchi Farang (the European Envoy), a non-Muslim, in Yazid's court, which leads to his death. There is also Mukhtar Thaqafi's revenge, four years after the Ashura event, against those who played a role in it. The final theme concerns the Imamate of Imam Hussein's (PBUH) son and the story of his life and hardships (Shahla, 2020, p. 11).

Besides these events, a noteworthy point is how deeply semiotic components and elements are woven into the dramatic fabric of Ta'zieh. For instance, some researchers believe that during a Ta'zieh performance, the peak of *Shabih-khani* (the reenactment) isn't the physical death of Imam Hussein (PBUH), but rather the moment he's dressed in his shroud. Thus, Ta'zieh and *Shabih-khani*, more than focusing on character transformation and development, are concerned with symbolic visual signs (Taqian, 2002, pp. 53-54). All these elements elevate Ta'zieh beyond a simple, unsophisticated performance merely intended to connect with less-educated segments of society. Despite its seemingly simple and obvious exterior, Ta'zieh possesses a rich set of codes and signs, allowing for diverse interpretations. These interpretations, in turn, deepen and make our understanding of Ta'zieh

more serious.

Some of the semiotic signs in Ta'zieh that possess expressive qualities and drive the dramatic structure forward include:

- A) Paralinguistic signs as opposed to referential language. An example of this is the chest-beating of the spectators mirroring that of the *shabih-khans* (performers). b) Symbolic signs: The juxtaposition of green and red colors to re-create good and evil, or an action like scattering straw on one's head, which is a sign of profound grief. c) Formulaic and clichéd signs: Such as Shimr (a character) putting his finger to his lips as a sign of astonishment and bewilderment. d) Indexical and clichéd signs: Like a handkerchief used for weeping on stage, or a goblet or waterskin signifying thirst and lack of water (Shahla, 2020, p. 10).

The presence of a sacred aura, devotional themes, and religious teachings in the performances of Ta'zieh actors, and their deep roots in daily life, generate responsive actions in the *shabih-khans* (performers). This causes audiences to react to opposing or supporting *shabih-khans* long after the performance. It's interesting to note that actors must constantly detach themselves from their roles and remind themselves of the role-playing aspect. This rootedness in people's lives and beliefs, and their internal integration with external issues and aspects—especially those related to the principles of theatrical execution—transforms Ta'zieh into a distinct and unique stage. In essence, in this type of performance, the spectators are actors themselves, or at least they are an integral part of the performance process and actively participate in the play (Shahla, 2020, p. 122).

Another characteristic of Ta'zieh is the complete harmony between the text embedded in the dramatic compositions and the

actors' actions. This means that the demeanor, method, and behavior of the *Ta'zieh-khan* (performer) align with what is being expressed in the text. For example, when a performer wants to convey a message to the other person, they use hand gestures and facial expressions to impart the concept more effectively (Shahla, 2020, p. 36). The primary language of Ta'zieh is typically poetry and poetic expression, which is adapted from eulogies. Poetry also has a greater impact on the audience, engaging their emotions and feelings more profoundly than ordinary speech (Shahla, 2020, p. 36). It's also plausible that the rhythmic and fluid pace of a Ta'zieh performance is connected to its poetic language. If we view Ta'zieh as a coherent and integrated whole, affirming this point is not far-fetched.

Naturally, the text of Ta'zieh has become more professional and dramatic over time. Writers in this field gradually composed literary and professional texts for Ta'zieh drama, strengthening certain parts of the drama by borrowing from classical poets. However, even in its more dramatic and professional state, the language of these texts remained the language of the people, devoid of excessive artistic embellishments, such that ordinary people fully understood the play, and the text often left a lasting impression on them. During performances, characters acted very naturally, and spectators felt every injury and death with their whole being, as if it were happening to them at that very moment (Floor, 2017, p. 169).

Dialogue is inherently the dialectic of theatre itself—that is, the continuous conflict and tension between good and evil. Ghotboddin Sadeghi, a theatre instructor and researcher, describes one of the functions of dialogue as follows:

"In drama, humans reveal their inner world and transform it into a dramatic presence. And because psychology and characterization are the ultimate goals in Ta'zieh, the necessity of a narrator's

presence is evident in every respect—to explain different times, describe various locations, and justify the status of individuals and the issues between them. Therefore, the narrator exists in various forms throughout the religious plays of the East. The narrator is simultaneously inside and outside. They speak both as their character type and occasionally address the audience as a narrator" (Sadeghi, 1993, p. 24).

Moreover, it's crucial to remember that, from a technical standpoint, performing Ta'zieh requires precise and accurate direction. This means the actors' movements, their positioning, and the manner of delivering dialogue must be determined with specific delicacy according to the demands of each scene. Sometimes, to advance a point and convey a concept, the *shabih-khan* (performer) must resort to poetry and eulogizing, while at other times, they simply need to transmit the intended meaning to the audience through behavior and movements.

A General Look at Theatre from a Philosophical Perspective

When we consider a very broad concept of theatre, any space can become a stage. Typically, when the term "theatrical" or "dramatic" is used in a negative sense, it conjures notions of artificiality and pretense. However, within theoretical studies, there's a concept called theatricality (the theatrical aspect/theatric-ness/being-theatre). This concept explores what transforms an event or phenomenon into theatre, or what characteristics theatricality possesses (Sauter, 2017, p. 20). The concept of theatricality isn't necessarily limited to theatre as a specific performing art; it can carry a broader implication.

For theatricality to exist, the simultaneous presence of both performer and spectator is essential. However, this is a necessary but not sufficient condition. The actions of the performer, and reciprocally

the reactions of the spectator, only emerge within the flow of a theatrical event. It is this "eventness" of theatre as a whole—the interaction between performer and spectator—that makes theatricality possible (Sauter, 2017, p. 37). The principle of interaction plays a significant and vital role in shaping the theatrical event, or theatricality itself. As long as this action and reaction, this dynamism, isn't established, we cannot speak of something as theatre or elevate it to the state of "being-theatre." Therefore, it is entirely possible to have a rich experience of a theatrical event without necessarily understanding its referential system; in other words, one can grasp the performative aspect of a play regardless of understanding all its details and references.

One aspect of this broad concept is its metaphorical side, according to which theatre is considered a metaphor for social behavior. That is, theatre, as a phenomenon that is a form of display of life and social interactions (Sauter, 2017, p. 21), serves as a stage or platform that enables the reciprocal behaviors and actions of individuals.

Indeed, appearing on stage is, in itself, an action and a deed, even if the actor does nothing in particular. Although the actor seemingly performs no specific act, the act of exhibiting themselves is still ongoing (Sauter, 2017, p. 25). Some theorists refer to these as exhibitory actions, meaning the fundamental part of an actor's manifestation on stage. Such actions aren't solely related to the actor's physical characteristics but also encompass their mental and emotional states, both upon initial entrance and throughout the performance. An actor present on stage might feel calm and confident, or they might experience anxiety and stage fright. Even if the actor attempts to conceal these distracting emotions from the audience, they will undoubtedly influence their behaviors and movements (Sauter, 2017, p. 25).

An emotional process normally begins with a stimulus and ultimately transforms into an appropriate conscious feeling or action. During a theatre performance, multiple chain reactions of this kind can be observed. The most common emotions present in theatre include pleasure, empathy, understanding, and identification (Sauter, 2017, p. 31). However, we must differentiate between everyday life and acting. It's important to note that in performing arts, both the spectator and the actor are aware of this distinction. The expressive elements on stage are nothing but artistic means of expression and are understood as such by the audience (Sauter, 2017, p. 34).

Theatre, by blending visual, auditory, olfactory, and even tactile stimuli, cannot be understood solely from an external perspective. Because in theatre we see, hear, smell, or feel ourselves in relation to the events unfolding on stage, we participate in the experience of perception rather than simply registering a form of awareness of something objectively connected to our subjectivity. Therefore, that experience or reception cannot be fully grasped unless it is reciprocally understood in an objective relationship with our subjectivity (Walker, 2018, p. 53). Given this fundamental interaction, it can be said that theatre, with its ability to place us within a perhaps imaginary story and beyond the confines of a stage, has a unique capacity to push us back and forth between two perspectives: the subjective and the objective (Walker, 2018, p. 53).

Some scholars assert that the concept of the theatre stage and theatricality can be generalized to encompass the entire world and its history. Consequently, grand philosophical teachings like Hegel's dialectic or Platonic dialogues transform into platforms for thought. For example, what Bert, a theatre researcher and theorist, inherited from Hegel is an understanding of history as a drama-driven process. Hegel's philosophy of history begins by emphasizing that world

history seems to unfold in a theatre, and by contemplating the history of the spirit in various forms, the theatrical performance concludes. Thus, world history aligns with theatre, and the different stages and scenes of world history are, in fact, changes in theatrical scenes and characters (Puchner, 2018, p. 70).

Generally, theatre is not obligated to reproduce reality on stage; rather, it should achieve a reality unique to itself. That is, theatre is not necessarily an imitator of reality and can establish a world with its own logic and structure. Of course, this can also be true for the entire spectrum of art. In the world of performance and on stage, movements, behaviors, and actions all progress in a direction beyond their literal objective realization. In this situation—which clearly includes Ta'zieh performances—it seems a truth is intended that emerges from the synthesis of stage actions, without necessarily being identical to these actions themselves.

The Relationship Between Ta'zieh and Theatre (Drama)

A. Distinctions

If we wish to view Ta'zieh as a "performance" and differentiate it from "theatre" as an art form that developed in the West, one crucial point to consider is that performance has a deeper and broader connection with rituals, and given its inherent and essential ties, it is also linked to myth. According to some theatre and performing arts critics, the most significant difference between "performance" and "theatre" lies in their ultimate goal. Performance is executed with the intention of the human being dissolving into the totality of existence and reaching the truth of being. In this process, there's practically no distinction or separation between the performance and the spectator. Both engage in the performance to achieve a singular goal: to lose oneself and dissolve into the absolute essence of existence. This is similar to Ta'zieh, where both the performers and the audience come to the

performance arena with the aim of gaining spiritual reward and perhaps with the intention of worship. In this type of performance, instead of any form of individualism, the focus is on dissolving into the collective unconscious and joining the spiritual essence of the ritual (Amjad, 1999, p. 13).

In contrast, theatre is more worldly and human-centered. In theatre, the performer, with a specific intention and goal, strives to convey a meaning, atmosphere, mood, or message to the audience. This audience, in turn, comes to the theatre as if in the position of a critic or analyst, with the purpose of watching, enjoying, becoming aware of a subject, or connecting with a human artistic work.

"Performance returns all subtle differences in individuals, the temporal and spatial subjects of each story, and the tools and apparatus of each staging towards a whole, an origin, a primal form of the unity of all world components, and an archetypal image of the poles of good and evil in the universe. Theatre, on the contrary, moves towards defining, differentiating, and giving distinct identity to each part of the seemingly undefinable and inexpressible totality of existence" (Amjad, 1999, p. 14).

Generally, this philosophical distinction can be said to stem from the ontology or metaphysics underlying each of these phenomena. One, by divine grace and for the performance of a spiritual ritual, seemingly invokes the celestial realm onto the stage, placing humanity before the mystery of existence. The other, in contrast, showcases human relationships that primarily have an earthly and mundane foundation.

A long time passed from the modern era, a period that emphasized detailed approaches and the principles of empirical science over holism, until Western theatre shifted its focus from

myths, gods, and demigods to human beings and their tangible, concrete characteristics, reflecting these aspects in various works. In contrast to ritualistic performance, which aims to connect humans with God and the mystery of existence, Western theatre strives for humans to secure a stable and reliable position for themselves within the world (Shahla, 2020, p. 125).

The truth that a Western individual, especially in the modern sense of the word, seeks usually has an objective, practical, and attainable direction. This individual establishes principles through observation and analysis, and organizes their life according to them. The central focus of all these endeavors is human imagination and its position within this very life, and these are what give identity and meaning to the world (Shahla, 2020, p. 128). From Bahram Beyzaie's perspective, the goal in both Western and Eastern forms of performance is to manifest truth on stage. The difference lies in how they do this: Western performance narrates the details of human life and position, while Eastern performance embodies the universe, of which humanity is a part (Beyzaie, 2009, p. 4).

In Eastern performances (especially Ta'zieh here), the characters representing good and evil are clear from the very beginning of the story. The audience either quickly grasps this or is even aware of it beforehand. In these performances, the ultimate triumph of good is also known. However, if a conflict between good and evil, or truth and falsehood, occurs, it's due to the inherent structure of the drama and performance itself, which requires a beginning, conflict, climax, and resolution—not because of audience surprise or ignorance of the story. The heroes of this type of performance (Ta'zieh) achieve transcendence and salvation through their battle with evil forces. For this reason, Ta'zieh, in its most authentic form, signifies the dominance of good and truth, even if it comes at the cost of the heroes' martyrdom (Beyzaie, 2009, pp. 5-6).

In traditional and ancient ritualistic performances, like Ta'zieh, people experienced a devotional and spiritual connection while watching the work. One could even argue that their reactions to the performance manifested this spiritual relationship. Consequently, these types of performances rarely aimed for character development in the modern sense. In modern drama, characters possess independence and individuality. All of them, or at least the pivotal and central characters, have depth and enjoy psychological and internal coherence, and the flow of the drama progresses based on a deep and meticulous analysis.

According to some researchers in theatre studies, the reason for this is that the structure of traditional ritualistic performances (such as Ta'zieh) isn't based on the internal motivations of human individuals. Instead, its foundation relies on moral, spiritual, and devotional teachings. Traditional and ritualistic theatre achieved this through meticulous attention to all aspects of performance: language, plot, characterization, stage props, costumes, and the overall staging process. Creating a cohesive whole built on a moral and spiritual foundation was part of the dominant culture of that era (Nelhaus, 2018, p. 100).

The inherent conflict in Ta'zieh, unlike modern Western drama which is based on a relatively objective logic, is entirely subjective. Dialogue and conversation in Ta'zieh do not function like those in modern Western drama to establish connections between characters and their inner worlds. In addition to the symbols, mysteries, and conventions that delineate the two opposing factions in Ta'zieh, an irreconcilable relationship exists between them. Here, no contact or exchange suggesting the possibility of compromise or rapprochement can be imagined (Sadeghi, 1993, p. 24). This means that while the possibility of dialogue between the two sides of a conflict is one of the

conventional prerequisites for creating drama, this seemingly obvious possibility has no place in Ta'zieh.

B. Similarities and Points of Convergence

One of the defining characteristics of an aesthetic experience is its immediacy—that is, its capacity for direct and unmediated communication that transcends language (Dogan, 2017, p. 60). The phrase "beyond language," which defines the aesthetic experience, is particularly crucial for our discussion when it pertains to the experience of art. If we pay close attention to the Ta'zieh performance process, it becomes clearly evident that a significant part of its impact occurs precisely outside the framework of language. That is, the relationships and interactions that constitute a Ta'zieh performance are not entirely realized through speech and language-based expression. This crucial aspect is connected to the audience's cultural and belief background, and there's no need to rely on language to establish a connection or influence the audience. Instead, creating an atmosphere where the spectator feels immediate and direct engagement is sufficient. In short, it's as if this immediacy somehow also guarantees the authenticity of the work.

Bahram Beyzaie, as one of Iran's most prominent artists in the field of Ta'zieh and national and ritualistic performances, says the following about this performing art:

"What is fascinating for me in Ta'zieh is the very ancient magic present within it. A magic that, in the best Ta'ziehs, relates to the primal fears and anxieties of humanity, and this, in my opinion, is the essence that exists in all good performances worldwide, whether ancient or contemporary" (Ghoukasian, 1992, p. 152).

Given this definition, Ta'zieh is viewed not only as a national and ritualistic performance enacted within a specific cultural sphere

but also as a drama possessing a character similar to the world's best plays. From a philosophical and psychological standpoint, it connects us to existential concerns. During a Ta'zieh performance and the actions arising from it, individuals confront their deep existential fears and anxieties. This is a universal characteristic that can be extended to the entirety of human culture and thought. From this perspective, we can also refer to the approach of some 20th-century philosophers towards performance. Philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus considered the medium of theatre, and art in general, a suitable framework for expressing their ideas. The emphasis on existential concerns is also evident in the work of these philosophers, whether they were theists and believers, like Gabriel Marcel, or considered atheists, like Camus, Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. This description further highlights the universal characteristic mentioned earlier. It means that addressing humanity's existential concerns through theatre, Ta'zieh, or performance in general, doesn't necessarily have a strong dependency on the specific cultural and belief system of each of these thinkers. Each can approach these common existential issues in accordance with their own philosophies.

As expected, narration in Ta'zieh also possesses dramatic elements, sometimes even resembling structures found in modern drama. For instance, in some Ta'zieh performances, the *shahadat-khan* (martyrdom reciter), while lamenting and chest-beating, invites the audience to join in the chest-beating. Gradually, the performance transcends its scripted stage directions, and all present begin to participate in the chest-beating as one unified group (Shahla, 2020, p. 35). This aspect brings Ta'zieh closer to Brechtian theatre, specifically when the spectator is directly involved in the performance and becomes aware of its theatricality. In these situations, a form of distanciation occurs; the audience suddenly realizes that the scene

before them is merely a performance, and this creates a conscious distance between them and the act.

Brechtian distanciation is a theatrical school that directors worldwide often utilize depending on their work. Distanciation means the separation of the actor from the role they are playing. An actor or Ta'zieh *shabih-khan* (performer)—for example, the actor playing Shimr—at the end of the performance, detaches from the role and personally, as a believing and faithful audience member, weeps and mourns for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH). This is a clear example of distanciation. Brecht, by emphasizing the audience's intellect, gradually developed his idea on the theatrical stage in an objective manner: the actor's non-emotional action and interpretation through memory, which is the quotational actor, without pretending that the actor and director are unaware of what is happening on stage. Brecht later termed all of these as distanciation, or alienation (Shahla, 2020, p. 138). In Brechtian theatre, the actor, by deliberately creating alienation from the role, moves the audience away from conventional and ordinary emotions and calls them to awareness, judgment, and cognition. From this perspective, both Ta'zieh and Brechtian distanciation share similarities within the framework of theatre (Shahla, 2020, p. 139).

Brechtian theatre, also known as epic theatre, aims to strip the stage performance of emotion and sentiment. For this reason, an old and familiar story is often preferred over a new one in epic theatre. Brecht considered the question of whether the events shown in epic theatre should not be familiar in advance. If theatre is a place for showcasing pre-known events, then historical events are likely the most suitable. The narrative expansion of this type of theatre, which occurs through acting styles, announcements, and intertitles, has no other goal than to ward off emotionalism and excitement (Benjamin, 2016,

p. 54). This is why familiar narratives are considered more enticing for Brechtian theatre. For example, one of Brecht's most significant plays concerns the life of Galileo, a story whose historical renown leaves no room for debate or doubt.

Brecht's narrative theater incorporates a narrator within the play, uses descriptive texts outside of dialogue, and provides a summary of each scene's events at the beginning of an act. This is all done with the aim of stimulating the audience's critical thinking and inviting them to confront and react to what is presented on stage (Shahla, 2020, p. 137). In evaluating narrative theater, one could suggest that Brecht, by presenting it, sought to achieve a form of Eastern ritualistic or religious performance, or even a type of Ta'zieh narration. Therefore, narrative theater is something akin to Ta'zieh-khani, or at least indirectly influenced by it (Shahla, 2020, p. 138).

In some theatrical analyses, the theorists' primary unit of analysis is action. In this context, the fundamental unit of action is the human body, which proceeds with intentional or purposeful movement. These analyses are essentially based on the human agent, human means, human action, and human intention. This is precisely what we expect from a methodology derived from theatre and performance; theatre is an art form dependent on live human performers (Puchner, 2018, p. 73). In such analyses, the footprint of Ta'zieh can also be observed. The actions in Ta'zieh rely entirely on human performers, each moving on stage with a specific intention and purpose. That is, the form of body movement, especially in a coherent and unified manner with a predetermined destination, is in Ta'zieh performances itself expressive of an impactful and important concept. This ranges from concepts indicating the cruelty and ruthlessness of negative characters to those drawing the audience's attention towards spiritual, sublime, and sacrificial moments. Here, by way of

comparison, we can point to a thought-provoking idea regarding the concept of the body in modern art. According to Linda Nochlin's interpretation, in modern artworks, the body is often depicted as fragmented or dismembered. This signifies a rather mournful emphasis on the loss of wholeness and unity in the ancient world. This feeling of absence and lack of totality, resulting from a departure from the unified framework of old, manifests itself in the imagery of bodies whose reflection and embodiment in modern art are no longer integrated, seamless, or connected. This point becomes so significant that fragmented pieces or bodies are considered a metaphor for the modern world (Nochlin, 2020, p. 34).

Another point regarding the various aspects of the convergence between theatre and Ta'zieh is that theatrical performance occurs as a particular collective activity and formation within an overarching dynamic framework. This means theatre acts as a social agent with its own unique, multi-layered ontology, and indeed, its ontology parallels the ontology of society itself. The theatrical level of this specific ontology encompasses the spatial relationships and arrangements that govern the interactions between performers and audience members. Its dramatic level is the story that performers represent and narrate—that is, the embodied actions and interactions of characters by the performers. At the textual level, a form of performance instruction is established, meaning a framework that can be a written play or an idea that is developed. This symmetry between theatrical performance and society transforms theatre into a social ontological image, a kind of institution for social communication and introspection (Nelhaus, 2018, p. 95). This implies that theatre, while leaning towards and emphasizing individuality, depicts a form of togetherness or community that fosters numerous and diverse interactions. In essence, by performing social introspection, theatre also functions as a model for social agency. The

art of Ta'zieh is no exception to this; in fact, this concept applies even more strongly to Ta'zieh. From ancient times, Ta'zieh has been a performance deeply embedded in people's lives and cultural norms. Every year, with the arrival of specific days—namely, the month of Muharram—Ta'zieh gathers individuals around a central point: the Ta'zieh stage. This communal gathering has created a kind of institution for forming social relationships and has served as a prominent catalyst for collective actions among people. All of these points validate the social agency of Ta'zieh throughout Iranian culture.

Conclusion

In this article, our aim was to discuss Ta'zieh as a performance that lends itself to serious analysis within the framework of theatre philosophy, drama studies, and performing arts discussions. This meant identifying the characteristics of Ta'zieh as a credible dramatic structure to reveal and, to some extent, examine its points of intersection with theoretical and philosophical discussions about drama. Our initial endeavor was to present aspects of Ta'zieh that might seem novel or original—points that, when we ordinarily view the phenomenon of Ta'zieh, might remain hidden from us. Next, we briefly explored the philosophy of theatre and discussions related to drama and theatrical performance. This allowed us to delve into philosophical concepts while moving closer to our objective: establishing a theoretical framework for discussing Ta'zieh. Finally, we examined the differences and similarities between theatre (as an originally Western performing art) and Ta'zieh (as an Eastern national and religious performance). By outlining these themes, we aimed to demonstrate that Ta'zieh should be regarded as a serious performing art, not merely a repetitive and superficial ritual. It contains a rich set of fundamental concepts and components. Naturally, viewing Ta'zieh from this perspective can also pave the way for future research.

References

- Amjad, H. (1999). *Theatre of the Thirteenth Century*. (1st ed.). Tehran: Nila Publishing. [In Persian]
- Benjamin, W. (2016). *Understanding Brecht*. (Nima Assipour et al., Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Bidgol Publishing. [In Persian]
- Beyzaie, B. (2009). *Theatre Notebooks (Notebook Nine)*. Tehran: Nila Publishing. [In Persian]
- Dougan, P. (2017). "The Immediacy of Theatre: Notes on Performance with Žižek." In *From the Perspective of Theatricality*. (Mohsen Maleki, Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Ban Publishing. [In Persian]
- Floor, W. (2017). *The History of Theater in Iran*. (Amir Najafi, Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Afraz Publishing. [In Persian]
- Ghoukasian, Z. (1992). *Conversation with Bahram Beyzaie*. (1st ed.). Tehran: Agah Publishing. [In Persian]
- Nelhaus, T. (2018). "Critical Realism and Performance Strategies." In *Staging Philosophy*. (Nariman Afshari, Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Bidgol Publishing. [In Persian]
- Nochlin, L. (2020). *The Fragmented Body*. (Majid Akhgar, Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Bidgol Publishing. [In Persian]
- Puchner, M. (2018). "Kont Brecht: Theatre, Philosophy, and the Limits of Performance." In *Staging Philosophy*. (Nariman Afshari, Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Bidgol Publishing. [In Persian]
- Sadeghi, Gh. (1993). "Dialogue in Ta'zieh from a Dramaturgical Perspective." *Art Quarterly*, No. 24. [In Persian]
- Sauter, W. (2017). "Responding to Actions: Concepts of Theatricality." In *From the Perspective of Theatricality*. (Mohammad Sepahi, Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Ban Publishing. [In Persian]
- Shahla, Sh. (2020). *The Concept of Ta'zieh from Bahram Beyzaie's View*. (1st ed.). Tehran: Rowshangaran & Women Studies Publishing. [In Persian]

- Taghian, L. (2002). "Ta'zieh: A Traditional, Philosophical, Mystical, and Religious Ritual." *In Art Monthly Book*, Nos. 53 & 54. [In Persian]
- Walker, J. A. (2018). "*The Intersection of the Text/Performance Divide and the Analytic/Continental Divide*." In *Staging Philosophy*. (Nariman Afshari, Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Bidgol Publishing. [In Persian]



Critical Analysis of the Concepts of Determinism and Delegation (Jabr and Tafwiz) with an Emphasis on the Supplications of Sahifah Sajjadiyyah

Mustafa Mokhtari¹

Received: 2025/04/18 Accepted: 2025/05/21

Abstract

The issue of determinism (jabr) and free will (ikhtiyar), and humanity's role in creating its actions, is one of the oldest theological questions. When confronting it, three distinct theological approaches have emerged: determinism (jabr), delegation (Tafwiz), and an affair between two affairs (amr bayn al-amrayn). Following their religious leaders, Imamiyyah theologians have adopted the third approach. To prove and explain it, they've used numerous rational and transmitted proofs, while also critically analyzing the other two viewpoints. Although various books and articles have been written on the critical examination of the concepts of determinism (jabr) and delegation (Tafwiz), what distinguishes this research is its critical analysis of these ideas through an analytical study of the Sahifah Sajjadiyyah's supplications. This approach, in itself, offers innovation in the field of theological discussions. Ultimately, this research concludes that free will (ikhtiyar) and choice are crucial human

1. PhD student, Islamic Philosophy, Baqir al-Uloom University (peace be upon him).
Email: mokhtare.m14@gmail.com

*Mokhtari, M. (2023). Critical Analysis of the Concepts of Determinism and Delegation (Jabr and Tafwiz) with an Emphasis on the Supplications of Sahifah Sajjadiyyah. *Theosophia Islamica*, 3(6), pp 106-128.
<https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71916.1079>

characteristics that exist *within* the scope of God's will and power. By utilizing these, humans are considered the direct agents of their actions. This study employs a descriptive-analytical method, with data collected and examined through library and documentary resources.

Keywords

Divine Decree and Destiny, Determinism, Delegation, Free Will, Sahifah Sajjadiyyah

1- Introduction

The question of determinism (jabr) and free will (ikhtiyar) is a venerable theological issue that has been a subject of discussion since the first century Hijri. This debate originated from analyzing God's active attributes, such as justice and power, and their relationship to human actions. The core of this dispute lies specifically in actions that originate from a human being as a thinking and choosing agent. Therefore, actions arising from the human body as a natural or vegetative entity are not part of this discussion (Javadi Amoli, 2001, p. 68). In other words, is the realization of all matters in the universe uniform, with the Essence of God being their sole cause? Or is there a difference in how universal beings and cosmic affairs come into existence compared to how human actions are realized? To put it another way, is the Lord the only influential cause in the cosmic order, or do human will and free choice also play a role in this chain of causes? Are we facing a fixed and unchanging system, or is there also a variable system that can be altered, allowing for human free will in their actions?

In this regard, three main theories have been put forth in Islamic theological tradition. The Ash'arites believe that humans have no power over their own actions; rather, power belongs solely to Almighty God, who creates everything, including human deeds. Conversely, a group of the Mu'tazila considers humans to possess complete free will and choice in their actions, denying divine power in this specific regard (Al-Muhassal, 1411 AH, p. 455). This group is known as the Qadariyyah because they deny divine power. The Imamiyyah (Imami Shia) and a segment of the Mu'tazila divide human actions into two categories: Voluntary actions: These are actions where human choice is one of the contributing factors, alongside God's will and power. Involuntary actions: These are actions where human

choice plays no role in their realization (Helli, 1418 AH, p. 34). This dispute led Imami theologians to establish and clarify their moderate stance through both rational and transmitted proofs, while also refuting the opposing viewpoints¹.

In the traditional (naqli) approach, the predominant method for addressing the issue of divine decree and destiny has been to draw upon the Quran and related narrations. Less frequently have scholars utilized devotional sources. The Sahifah Sajjadiyyah, considered the most authoritative devotional-hadithic source after the Quran and Nahj al-Balaghah, comprises the supplications of Imam Sajjad (AS). Given the political and social conditions of his time, this collection served as an optimal means for disseminating Islamic teachings. The language of supplication and prayer is not one of argumentation, reasoning, or debate. Rather, it is a dialogue between a servant and their Creator, in which the servant, while requesting needs, presents their beliefs to the divine presence. For this reason, the discourse of supplication differs from that of the Quran or books of narrations. In the latter, religious truths or rulings are often presented directly and explicitly to the audience. However, the language of supplication is a realm of intimate communion and expressing needs to God, where religious teachings are sometimes conveyed indirectly, either before the main request or implicitly within the prayer itself. Consequently, extracting the truths embedded in supplications necessarily requires greater precision and attention. Among the teachings of the Sahifah Sajjadiyyah, discussions of divine decree and destiny and the topic of human action in relation to God's will are present. However, these have been less frequently examined as independent research topics. Therefore, this article aims to critique the ideas of determinism (jabr) and delegation

1. For further study, refer to: Helli, 1413 AH, p. 87 and Lahiji, 1383, p. 326.

(Tafwiz) by taking the Sahifah Sajjadiyyah's supplications as a foundational source—a rich wellspring of religious knowledge—to investigate a sub-issue of divine decree and destiny: the manner in which human actions are created. This article, in turn, offers a new style of research for scholars in the field of theology. It highlights the potential of devotional texts, especially the Sahifah Sajjadiyyah, to serve as a primary source for investigation. Since this issue is typically discussed in theological texts under the broader topic of divine decree and destiny, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of divine decree and destiny and its categories for a more precise explanation of the problem at hand.

2- Meaning and Categories of Divine decree and destiny

The terms " Divine decree " (قضا) and " destiny " (قدر) have been used with various meanings in Arabic lexicography.

" Divine decree " refers to concepts such as: Creating, Announcing, Judging or ruling, Making a matter definitive (Azahari, 1421 AH, Vol. 9, p. 170; Ibn Faris, 1404 AH, Vol. 5, p. 99). " destiny " is used to denote the ultimate limit or boundary of a thing, encompassing its measure, quantity, and other specific characteristics (Ibn Faris, 1404 AH, Vol. 5, p. 62).

In Islamic theology (ilm al-kalam), the terms " Divine decree " and " destiny " are used in three distinct senses.¹- In terms of Divine Knowledge: Here, " Divine decree " and " destiny " refer to the manifestation and disclosure of all things in God's eternal knowledge (Tusi, 1407 AH, p. 200). In this context: Divine decree signifies God's general and simple knowledge of the realities of existence, which is identical with the very essence of the Necessary Being (God). destiny denotes God's detailed knowledge of the specifics of those realities (Tusi, 1407 AH, p. 200; Lahiji, 1383 SH, p. 320). The verses: وَ قَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ ("And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Scripture")

(Al-Isra: 4) and «فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَّرْنَاهَا مِنْ الْغَابِرِينَ» ("So We saved him and his family, except his wife; We destined her to be among those who remained behind") (An-Naml: 57) refer to this meaning [of Divine decree and destiny as divine knowledge and decree]. 2-In terms of Obligatory Rulings: This usage of " Divine decree " is limited to obligatory acts (wājibāt) and forbidden acts (muḥarramāt) (Tusi, 1407 AH, p. 200). The verses: «وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ» ("And your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship except Him") (Al-Isra: 23) and «إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ» ("Indeed, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ") (Yunus: 93) are among the verses that signify this meaning (Tabatabai, 1417 AH, Vol. 13, p. 73). 3- In terms of the Creation of Things and God's Active Agency in Relation to Them: This refers to God's act of creating and His direct involvement as the agent (Tusi, 1407 AH, p. 200; Lahiji, 1383 SH, p. 320). The noble verse: «وَلَا شَيْءٌ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ» ("And there is not a thing but that with Us are its treasures, and We do not send it down except by a known measure.") (Al-Hijr: 21) is, in essence, an articulation of this type of Divine decree and destiny (Lahiji, 1383 SH, p. 320).¹

From early on, the point of contention among Muslim theologians has been the explanation of Divine decree and destiny in the latter sense, specifically concerning how human actions are created. The core question is: Does a human being possess will and power to perform an action, or not? In response to this question, three perspectives have emerged: Determinism (Jabr), Delegation (Tafwiz), and An affair between two affairs (Amr bayn al-Amrayn).

1. Supplications 6 (verses 5-7), 16 (verses 6 and 10), 47 (verses 12 and 17), and 7 (verse 2) are among the passages that signify this meaning [of Qada and Qadar as the creation of things and God's active agency].

3- Examining the Issue by Analyzing the Supplications of Sahifa Sajjadiyya

To gain a deeper understanding of the issue of Divine Decree and its relationship with human will, one can look to supplications as a rich source of doctrinal teachings. Among these, the Sahifa Sajjadiyya, with its profound themes and precise analyses of the relationship between the servant and God, offers a unique capacity for intellectual contemplation on this matter.

3-1- Humanity and the Crossroads of Truth and Falsehood

The necessity of believing in religious obligations and ultimate felicity or wretchedness in the afterlife dictates that humans should pursue the path of happiness solely by following God's will and avoiding His wrath. Every individual in this earthly life finds themselves facing decisions, some of which align with God's will and some that contradict it. In essence, they find themselves in a battleground of truth and falsehood, where ultimately they must choose one side. In supplication 9, paragraphs 3 and 4, while addressing this point, there's a plea to God to guide the human soul in decision-making and not abandon it to its own devices, so that it may safely navigate the crossroads of truth and falsehood. This is because, "if God were to leave the soul to its own devices, it would choose falsehood and command evil." Therefore, when appealing to the Lord, we ask Him: "When we decide between two things, one of which pleases You and the other angers You, then incline us towards that which pleases You and weaken our strength concerning that which angers You, and at that moment, do not leave our souls to their own control." (Fayz al-Islam, 1376, p. 143). This passage indicates that in the decision-making phase for performing an action, a human is neither

passive nor coerced, nor solely determined by the will of the Lord. Instead, they possess willpower, yet their will is not independent of God's will. On the contrary, they ask God not to abandon them to their own soul, as they would then choose nothing but falsehood. They request God to guide them in their decisions towards what pleases the Lord. This is also evident from the analysis of the word "hamm" (هَمَّ), which originates from "humam" (هَمَم), meaning "decision" (Fayyumi, 1414 AH, p. 641). This point clarifies that if determinism (jabr) were accepted, and human will were considered ineffective, then the phrase (هَمَمْنَا بِهِمَّيْنِ) would either be metaphorical or redundant. This is because decision-making only has meaning where there is a right to choose and free will. Therefore, in summary, three key points can be inferred from the analysis of these two passages: 1-The human soul possesses free will and the right to choose. 2- If the soul is left free and unrestrained in its choices, it will incline towards falsehood and evil. 3-The servant's free will is not independent of the Lord's will. Rather, to achieve felicity, if one aligns their will with the Lord's will, God, out of His general mercy, will incline them towards the path of truth. Therefore, it is not the case that human affairs are entirely delegated to them and that God plays no role in choices and the process of their realization. Hence, human free will and Divine providence are two causes for choosing the path of the Lord's pleasure.

In supplication 16, paragraphs 23 and 24, a similar point is expressed: "When I stand between Your call and the call of Satan, I follow his call... and in this situation, I am certain that the ultimate outcome of Your call is towards Paradise, and the consequence of Satan's call is towards Hell" (Ansarian, 1388, p. 65). The concept of an invitation to Paradise or Hell only makes sense if the servant has the right to choose and accept the invitation. According to the idea of

determinism, if a human follows Satan's call, they are compelled to do so and must go to Hell. However, accepting this notion is, firstly, contrary to conscience and, secondly, contrary to Divine justice. From this passage, it is understood that the right to choose rests with the human being. It is they who, knowing the ultimate outcome of God's invitation and Satan's invitation, choose to follow one of the two. Of course, they ask God to assist them in accepting His invitation.

3-2- The Existence of Factors for Obedience or Disobedience to God

As discussed, one type of Divine Decree is the legislative Divine Decree. This means that, based on His wisdom and knowledge of true benefits and harms, God Almighty has established rulings for humanity. He has made obedience or disobedience to these rulings the cause of human felicity or wretchedness. However, alongside these religious rulings and commands, God has also set forth the causes of felicity and wretchedness. In supplication 47, paragraph 67, some of the factors leading to felicity and guidance are mentioned as follows: "O God, I am Your servant, whom You blessed before creation and after coming into existence; so You placed him among those You guided to Your religion, and You granted him success in fulfilling Your right, and You preserved him with the rope of Your mercy and kindness, and You admitted him into Your party, and You guided him to befriend Your friends and to be hostile towards Your enemies." In this passage, "blessing", "guidance towards religion", "Divine grace", "continuation of God's mercy and kindness", "guidance towards friends", and "recognition of enemies" are enumerated among the blessings and factors leading to felicity. Similarly, in the same supplication, paragraph 68 refers to some of the factors leading to wretchedness: "His disobedience was not out of enmity towards You or rebellion against You, but rather his desires invited him to

something You forbade and warned against, and Your enemy and his enemy assisted him in this matter, so he embarked on sin despite knowing Your warning..." (Ansarian, 1388, p. 202). In this passage, "desires and whims of the self" and the "common enemy of humanity and God" (Satan) are introduced as factors of disobedience. Additionally, in supplication 16, paragraph 14¹, "ignorance" is identified as a cause of rebellion and disobedience. However, it's important to understand that the "ignorance" referred to in this passage is not "lack of knowledge." If it were, the repentance of those who commit a sin knowingly and then repent would not be accepted, based on the verse: « إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ » "Indeed, the acceptance of repentance by Allah is only for those who do evil in ignorance" (Quran 4:17). This is while most exegetes have understood "ignorance" (جهل) in the noble verse to mean "lack of reflection on the outcome of an action," or in other words, "heedlessness of the outcome of an action." In this passage, too, the intention behind "ignorance" is "heedlessness of the outcome of an action," which afflicts the sinner and leads to the commission of sin (Madani Shirazi, 1435 AH, Vol. 3, p. 122). Furthermore, in paragraph 27 of supplication 16, we read: "I am more reckless in committing falsehood, and heedless when obeying You, and my awareness and vigilance are less in the face of Your warnings. With this, how can I count my faults and recall my sins?" (Ayati, 1375, p. 107). In this passage, qualities such as "recklessness," "heedlessness," and "lack of attention to the Lord's warnings" are counted among the causes of disobedience to God's commands.

What pertains to our main issue is that the mention of factors for obedience in contrast to factors for disobedience to Divine commands indicates that the arena of action for humans is such that, on one hand, factors of obedience invite them towards submission and

¹ "I am the one who disobeyed You through his ignorance."

compliance, and on the other hand, factors of wretchedness drive them towards disobedience. If Divine Decree were absolute and beyond human power and will, how should the purpose of these factors be justified? If humans were without will and free choice in this arena, firstly, truth and falsehood would be meaningless concerning them. Secondly, the establishment of these factors would be futile and without purpose. This is while the opposite of futility is wisdom. A wise act is one that is not devoid of a reasonable end and purpose, and moreover, it is accompanied by the choice of what is best and most preferable (Motahari, 1381, Vol. 1, p. 46). If only factors of wretchedness existed, humans would have no escape from disobeying God in their actions, and this would support the idea of determinism. However, in contrast to these factors of disobedience, factors of felicity have also been mentioned as part of creation and Divine will. When both are considered together, it points to the reality that humans are constantly exposed to the choice and option of determining their path to felicity or wretchedness. This point is also alluded to in narrations, stating that Divine Decree in the actions of servants consists of "commanding obedience, forbidding disobedience, enabling the performance of good deeds, abandoning sin, assisting in drawing closer to the Lord, warning, promising, creating desire for performing deeds, and instilling fear to abandon disobedience"¹ (Ibn Shu'ba Harrani, 1363, p. 467). The existence of commands and prohibitions, promises and warnings,

1. الْأَمْرُ بِالطَّاعَةِ وَالنَّهْيُ عَنِ الْمَعْصِيَةِ وَالتَّمْكِينُ مِنْ فِعْلِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَتَرْكِ السَّيِّئَةِ وَالْمُعُونَةُ عَلَى الْقُرْبَةِ إِلَيْهِ وَالْجَدُّ لَانْ لِمَنْ غَضَاءُ وَالْوَعْدُ وَالْوَعْدُ وَالتَّرْغِيبُ وَالتَّوْهِيبُ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ قَضَاءُ اللَّهِ فِي أَعْمَالِنَا وَقَدْرُهُ لِأَعْمَالِنَا.

"Commanding obedience, forbidding disobedience, enabling the performance of good deeds and abandoning evil, assisting in drawing closer to Him, abandoning one who disobeys Him, promising and warning, encouraging and deterring; all of that is God's decree in our actions and His destiny for our deeds."

and encouragement and deterrence, all depend on humans having free will and the ability to choose between obedience and disobedience.

This is why if a person disregards the factors of obedience, they will go astray and succumb to disobeying God. In the first paragraph of supplication 49, we read: "O my God, You guided me, but I turned to frivolity and heedlessness; You advised me, but I hardened my heart; You bestowed good blessings upon me, but I disobeyed; then You made known to me what You had forbidden, and I recognized it and sought forgiveness, and You forgave my sin; then I returned to sin once more, and You overlooked it" (Ayati, 1375, p. 352). Guidance, admonition, and good blessings are among the factors of felicity. The existence of these factors contradicts wisdom if a servant is compelled towards deviation and sin. On one hand, God Almighty guides His servant and calls them to the path of truth, yet on the other hand, the servant is compelled by the very same God to move on the path of falsehood. These two are incompatible. Therefore, guidance is from Him, while deviation and the commission of sin are due to the servant's poor choice.

3-3- Acknowledging Actions and Attributing Them to Oneself

Supplication Twelve in Sahifa Sajjadiyya is titled "Confession of Sins and Request for Repentance." The word "T'tiraf" (اعتراف), meaning "confession" or "acknowledgment," has various meanings, one of which is "acknowledging against oneself" (Madani Shirazi, 1435, Vol. 7, p. 382). "Confession of sin" only makes sense when the doer has, with independent will and choice, performed an action that should not have been done. If they regret their action, they make this confession a prelude to attracting God's mercy, asking Him to grant them the grace

of repentance and return from sin, and to include them in His forgiveness.

In several passages of Supplication Twelve, there's an acknowledgment of sin and regret. In paragraph 6, we read: "O my God, does my confession of the evil of what I have done benefit me with You? And does acknowledging before Your presence the ugliness of what I have committed free me from Your punishment?" (Fayz al-Islam, 1376, p. 96). Acknowledging the badness of deeds and the ugliness of actions, and attributing them to oneself, indicates the human's role and their agency in performing the act. If actions were to emanate directly from God without any intermediary, firstly, attributing sin to oneself would be an error. Secondly, there would be no need for the servant to confess for something in which they were compelled, to then make that confession a means of deliverance from punishment.

"If You punish me, it is my desert; I am an oppressor, a corruptor, a sinner, a defaulter, negligent, and oblivious of my own well-being." (Ayati, 1996, p. 365) Oppression, excess, sin, shortcoming, negligence, and heedlessness are blameworthy attributes that the Imam (peace be upon him) attributes to himself, and for this reason, he considers God's punishment to be a result of his own actions. Similarly, in Supplication 47, verses 76 to 78, the use of the first-person pronoun points to the main cause of the undesirable actions: «أَنَا الْمُسِيءُ الْمُعْتَرِفُ الْخَاطِئُ الْعَاثِرُ. أَنَا الَّذِي أَقْدَمَ عَلَيْكَ مُجْتَرِئًا. أَنَا الَّذِي عَصَاكَ مُتَعَمِّدًا؛

"I am the evildoer, the confessor (to evildoing), the sinner, the one who stumbles; I am the one who dared to act (in sin) against You; I am the one who intentionally disobeyed and defied You." (Feyz al-Islam, 1997, p. 344) Similarly, in Supplication 52, verse 7, destruction is attributed to the agent's own actions, stating: "My own deeds

destroyed me."¹ These passages, in addition to negating the idea of determinism and proving the involvement of human will, also indicate that humans are not independent in their actions and that the execution of deeds is not entirely delegated to them. In other words, their agency is not absolute; rather, God's will is also involved. This is because they seek help and guidance from God, asking Him to assist them both in the stage of choosing and deciding and in the stage of acting².

3-4 The Position of the Will of God

In the framework of determinism, the relationship between the creation of human actions and God's will is direct and unmediated. Just as the cosmic order and the natural world are directly subject to God's will—"His command, *إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ*"—when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, 'Be,' and it is" (Ya-Sin: 82)—this will is also direct, unmediated, and by God's decree in the system of human actions. Fakhr al-Razi explains this point by stating: "If the creation of the servants' actions were not by God's decree and preference, He would not be the owner of those actions. This contradicts the consensus of Muslims, who believe that God is the owner of both His servants and their actions; therefore, He is also the Creator of their actions" (Razi, 1420 AH, Vol. 1, p. 208).

In critique of this idea, it must be stated that accepting human will in the creation of actions does not contradict God's being the

1. *عَمَلِي أَهْلَكَنِي*.

"My deeds have destroyed me."

2. *وَإِذَا هَمَمْنَا بِهَمٍّ يَرْضِيكَ أَحَدُهُمَا عَنَّا، وَ يُسْخِطُكَ الْآخَرُ عَلَيْنَا، فَمِلْ بِنَا إِلَى مَا يَرْضِيكَ عَنَّا، وَ أَوْهِنْ قُوَّتَنَا عَمَّا يُسْخِطُكَ عَلَيْنَا. (٣/٩)*

"And when we intend to do two things, one of which pleases You and the other displeases You, incline us towards that which pleases You and weaken our strength from that which displeases You." (9/3)

ultimate Willer in all matters of existence. According to Imami theologians, the universe operates under a system of vertical wills, where God's will is on one side and human will is on the other. All wills operate in alignment with God's overarching will. (Sobhani, 2000, Vol. 1, p. 261).

Based on this vertical system, just as accepting determinism is incorrect, so too is succumbing to the idea of delegation (Tafwiz). Considering humans to be independent would mean excluding God from the realm of sovereignty and divine decree over the world (Helli, 1413 AH, p. 584) and disregarding God's will in the domain of human actions. Some narrations describe the idea of delegation as follows: "The Qadariyya are the Magians of this nation; they are those who wished to describe God with the attribute of justice while simultaneously removing Him from the attributes of sovereignty and power. The verse: «يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُونَ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ ذُوقُوا مَسَّ سَقَرَ. إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ» (he Day they are dragged into the Fire on their faces: 'Taste the touch of Saqar (Hell).') Indeed, We created all things with a divine decree)' (Qamar: 48-49) was revealed concerning them" (Sadūq, 1398 AH, p. 382). This designation stems from the fact that this group considered humans the creators of voluntary actions, while God was seen as the creator of other things. In this sense, they were akin to the Magians (Qawm-e Majus), who believed in a god of good and a god of evil. (Qomi, 1415 AH, Vol. 2, p. 181) In support of this claim, numerous passages in the Sahifa Sajjadiyya's supplications refer to the place of God's will and also to other causes for the realization of an action, reminding us that humans are not the sole cause of their own affairs.

In Supplication 37, verse 13, we read: «وَلَمْ تَحْمِلْهُ عَلَى الْمُنَاقَشَاتِ»

" means to make something a¹ فِي الْأَلَاتِ الَّتِي تَسَبَّبَ بِاشْتِعْمَالِهَا إِلَى مَغْفِرَتِكَ»¹ means to achieve a goal. The term "alat" (آلات) refers to all the outward and inward faculties of the human soul through which one undertakes actions. (Madani Shirazi, 1435 AH, Vol. 5, p. 257). This supplication suggests that, contrary to the deterministic view which denies the system of cause and effect and considers the divine essence to be the sole cause in the affairs of the world, there are other causes and means that, subordinate to God's will, play a role in the realization of actions. Humans, through their own will and the utilization of these means, bring an action to completion.

Although some passages might initially appear to support a deterministic view—for instance, Supplication 47, verse 15, states: "You are the one who willed, so whatever You willed became certain and definite..."—other passages, such as Supplication 16, verse 14, steer the reader away from this incorrect perception. There, it states: "I am the one whose back has been burdened by transgressions, whose life has been destroyed by sins, and who has disobeyed You due to ignorance." Attributing actions like error, sin, and disobedience to oneself indicates that the agent's own will drives these actions. This is because attributing an action without the agent's will would be an unrealistic correlation. Furthermore, in Supplication 47, verses 78 and 79, the role of the agent's will in the realization of an action is explicitly stated: "I intentionally disobeyed You; I hid myself from Your servants during sin, but I openly rose in opposition to You." This attribution, however, doesn't mean that the creation of actions rests solely on human will. As stated earlier, human will operates in alignment with God's will, and humans are the direct agents of their

1. "You did not make him strict concerning the tools and instruments (outward and inward faculties and what belongs to the human body) whose use You made a means to reach Your forgiveness." (Feyz al-Islam, 1997, p. 248)

actions. Therefore, in various supplications, requests are made to God to incline the human heart towards obedience and submission—to the very path He has set for the devout. In other words, the action is attributed to its direct agent, but God Almighty is the originator of the action (Helli, 1413 AH, p. 586).

In Supplication 9, verse 6, after expressing the inherent human weakness present since creation, assistance is sought from God for guidance and success in fulfilling obligations and abandoning forbidden acts: "Help us by Your grace, and guide us to Your straight path, and blind the eyes of our hearts from whatever is contrary to Your love, and let no part of our bodies fall into disobedience and defiance of You; grant us success that we may not even conceive of what You have forbidden, nor approach sins, and that we may achieve Your pleasure." (Feyz al-Islam, 1997, p. 87). Continuing, Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him), with profound insight, even considers the smallest actions of individuals, expressing God's causality in the most minute details and choices of His servants: "Place the secrets of our hearts, the movements of our limbs, the hidden glances of our eyes, and the words of our tongues in what earns Your reward, so that no good deed by which we deserve Your recompense escapes us, and no evil deed by which we incur Your punishment remains for us." (Feyz al-Islam, 1997, p. 87).

Performing good deeds is due to God's divine grace, and committing evil is due to His abandonment. Both good and evil were known to God in eternity, without His knowledge being the cause of the servant's actions. God Almighty issued commands, prohibitions, promises, and warnings, establishing them as motivations for His servants so that they would will good deeds and refrain from evil. This is divine grace, for grace is the preparation of the means for willing and choosing good actions (Lahiji, 1383, p. 328). Therefore, Divine Will is

directed towards preparing the means for human inclination towards love and away from disobedience. It is then the individual's free will and choice to utilize this divine grace and obey God's command. Consequently, God's foreknowledge (Divine decree and destiny), while certain, is not the sole and complete cause for the realization of human actions. Rather, other factors such as warnings, rewards and punishments, Heaven and Hell, and other divine promises play a causal role in enabling human beings to choose the correct path.

3-5 The Impossibility of *Taklif* (Divine Obligation) and its Implications

Humans are inherently imperfect beings, yet they possess an innate capacity for perfection. For this reason, religious obligations (*takalif shari'ah*) have been instituted to compensate for this imperfection and to facilitate their spiritual development. Divine obligations aim to achieve spiritual perfections, the effects of which include the moderation of carnal desires, liberation from sensual passions, and freedom from the shackles of both internal and external adversaries. Therefore, to impose an obligation (*taklif*) on someone who, firstly, lacks the capacity for perfection and, secondly, has no power or choice to perform or abstain from an action—being merely an executor of God's will—would be imposing an impossible task (*taklif bi ma la yutaq*). This type of obligation is inherently repugnant and would not be issued by rational beings, let alone by God, who is absolutely wise (Helli, 1418 AH, p. 42). The Holy Quran also states that the measure of divine obligation (*taklif*) is commensurate with human capacity and ability: "وُسْعَهَا إِلَّا أَنْفُسًا اللَّهُ يُكَلِّفُ لَا" ("Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity.") (Al-Baqarah: 286). This verse indicates that the capacity of individuals is considered when divine obligations are set, and no command or prohibition beyond the normal human capacity is demanded. Moreover, the wisdom behind imposing

obligations is to test individuals. God, who enjoins these obligations upon humanity, also provides the means and context for such trials (Javadi Amoli, 1388 AH, Vol. 7, p. 646). This allows individuals to attain degrees of perfection if they fulfill these obligations correctly, or to be deprived of such perfections if they disobey. This can only happen if the individual is granted the right to choose and exercise their will. Supplication 1, verse 21, explicitly refers to these two points: "Then He commanded us to test our obedience, and He forbade us to test our gratitude."

Concepts such as reward and punishment, Heaven and Hell, and promises and warnings, which are articulated to give glad tidings and to admonish individuals, truly find their meaning alongside the concept of divine obligation (taklif). These are also among the necessities of Divine decree and destiny. If the origin of actions were solely attributed to God's will, these concepts would be rendered futile and meaningless. Yet, many verses in the Holy Quran explicitly mention these concepts. Similarly, numerous passages in the Sahifa Sajjadiyya refer to them. Some examples include: "O You who has promised good recompense through His benevolence..." (12/10), "Make Your forgiveness easy for us out of Your grace, and grant us refuge from Your torment through Your overlooking of our faults. Indeed, we have no strength against Your justice." (10/2), "We seek refuge in You from... deprivation of reward and entering into punishment." (8/9), "You named supplication and calling upon You an act of worship and abandoning it arrogance, and You threatened entry into Hell with disgrace and humiliation for abandoning supplication" (45/15). This passage refers to the verse: "إِنَّ الَّذِينَ «أَدْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ، إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ" (Ghafir/60), which translates to: "Call upon Me; I will respond to you. Indeed, those who disdain My worship will enter Hell in humiliation." If God's agency in relation to human actions were direct and unmediated, then concepts like

reward, punishment, and promises related to them would have no influence on an individual's actions, rendering God Almighty's words meaningless. However, since the inclusion of promises and warnings by the Wise Lord within His legislative decree is necessary to motivate individuals to perform good deeds and abandon sin, these factors serve as intermediate causes for the realization of actions. The direct cause, therefore, remains the individual's free will (Lahiji, 1383, p. 329).

3-6 Responsibility

Another consequence of the deterministic viewpoint is the abandonment of responsibilities that fall upon humanity in life. If individuals consider themselves to have no influence over their actions, they would feel absolved of various moral, social, political, and familial responsibilities, and would therefore make no effort or strive for them. This stands in contrast to the inherent human feeling of responsibility, which is why people strive to meet their own and their family's needs. In reality, there's a fundamental conflict between determinism and responsibility, as responsibility is directly linked to freedom and choice. A free and autonomous being can be held accountable, meaning one can ask them, "Why did you do that?" (Motahari, 1381 AH, Vol. 15, p. 193). For this reason, in Supplication 20, verse 3, Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) asks God to "employ the hours of his life in matters about which he will be questioned on the Day of Judgment." The fact that a servant is responsible for these matters implies the necessity of freedom.

Conclusion

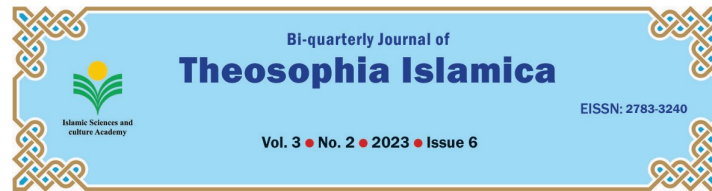
The discussion of Divine decree and destiny and the manner in which human actions are created is one of the oldest theological issues. Facing this question, three main perspectives have emerged:

determinism (Jabr), delegation (Tafwiz), and the an affair between two affairs (Amr Bayn Amrayn). Imami theologians, employing both rational and textual approaches, have chosen the third perspective and critiqued the other two. Based on some narrations, Divine decree and destiny is divided into two types: definite (hatmi) and indefinite (ghayr hatmi). In definite decree, no will other than God's has any influence. However, in indefinite decree, which pertains to human actions, alongside God's will, human will and choice are also effective and serve as one of the determining factors of an action. An analytical examination of passages from the Sahifa Sajjadiyya's supplications indicates that humans possess free will in creating their own actions. Not only do they have the ability to choose the type of action, but they can also seek God's help to align His will with theirs, guiding them toward the best choices and decisions. Furthermore, they can ask for divine assistance in the realm of action and execution, enabling their faculties and strengths to realize what God has commanded and forbidden. Therefore, the relationship of human will to God's will is not metaphorical but a real relationship, operating "in alignment with" God's will. For this reason, the ideologies of determinism (Jabr) and delegation (Tafwiz) have fallen into the pitfalls of extremism and negligence in this matter.

References

- * Holy Quran. Sahifa Sajjadiyya.
- Ansarian, H. (2009). *Tarjume Sahifa Sajjadiyya*. Qom: Dar al-'Irfan. [In Arabic]
- Ayati, A. M. (1996). *Tarjume Sahifa Sajjadiyya* (2nd ed.). Tehran: Soroush. [In Persian]
- Azhari, M. b. A. (2000). *Tahzib al-Lughah*. Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi. [In Arabic]
- Fakhr al-Razi, M. b. U. (1990). *Al-Muhassal*. (1st ed.). Cairo: Maktabat Dar al-Turath. [In Arabic]
- Fayyumi, A. b. M. (1993). *Al-Misbah al-Munir fi Gharib al-Sharh al-Kabir* (2nd ed.). Qom: Mu'assasah Dar al-Hijrah.
- Feyz al-Islam, A. N. (1997). *Tarjume Sahifa Sajjadiyya*. Tehran: Nashr Faqih. [In Arabic]
- Helli, H. b. Y. (1992). *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-I'tiqad* (4th ed.). Qom: Nashr Islami. [In Arabic]
- Helli, H. b. Y. (1997). *Istiqsa' al-Nazar fi al-Qada' wa al-Qadar*. Mashhad: Dar al-Inba' al-Ghayb. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Faris, A. (1983). *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah*. Qom: Maktab al-I'lam al-Islami. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Shu'ba Harrani, H. b. A. (1984). *Tuhf al-Uqul 'an Al al-Rasul*. Qom: Jami'a Mudarrisin. [In Arabic]
- Javadi Amoli, A. & Shafieyan, M. H. (2001). *Ali ibn Musa al-Reza va al-Falsafa al-Ilahiyyah* (2nd ed.). Qom: Isra Publications. [In Arabic]
- Javadi Amoli, A. (2009). *Tafsir Tasnim* (Vol. 4). Qom: Isra Publications. [In Arabic]
- Lahiji, F. (2004). Gowhar Morad. Tehran: Nashr Sayeh. [In Arabic]
- Madani Shirazi, S. A . b. A. (2013). *Riyad al-Salikin fi Sharh Sahifa Sayyid al-Sajidin*. (Vols. 3, 5, 7). Qom: Daftar Intisharat Islami. [In Arabic]

- Motahari, M. (2002). *Majmu'a Asar* (Vols. 1, 15). Qom: Sadra.[In Persian]
- Qadi Sa'id Qomi. (1994). *Sharh Tawhid Saduq*. Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. [In Persian]
- Razi, F. (1999). *Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb* (3rd ed.). Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi. [In Arabic]
- Saduq, M. b. A. (1977). *Al-Tawhid*. Qom: Mu'assasah Nashr Islami. [In Arabic]
- Subhani, J. (2000). *Buhuth fi al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (Vol. 1). Qom: Mu'assasah Imam Sadiq (AS). [In Arabic]
- Tabatabai, M. H. (1996). *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Quran* (Vol. 13). Qom: Nashr Islami. [In Arabic]
- Tusi, N. (1986). *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*. Qom: Daftar Tablighat Islami. [In Arabic]



Virtue-Oriented Ethics in the Thought of Plato and Mulla Sadra

Fahimeh Ahmadi Gazazi¹ Isa Mousazadeh²

Received: 2025/04/02 Accepted: 2025/05/22

Abstract

Moral virtue is a concept that has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy and refers to characteristics or habits considered good and ethical behaviors. Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle extensively discussed moral virtue. Aristotle defines virtue as a "golden mean" between two vices; for example, courage is the middle ground between recklessness and cowardice. Plato considers the soul to be composed of three parts: rational, spirited(or irascible), and appetitive. He believes that only the rational part is simple and immortal, while the other two parts are added when the soul attaches to the body, making them material and perishable. Mulla Sadra, on the other hand, views the soul as possessing faculties, which are the soul's degrees and stations. Due to its inherent simplicity, the soul encompasses all of these faculties.

1.M.A. in Islamic Philosophy and Kalam, University of Qom, Qom, Iran
(Corresponding Author).

Email: fahimeh.ahmadi84@gmail.com

2. Official Researcher, Research Institute of Islamic Culture and Sciences, Qom, Iran.

Email: mousazadeh@isca.ac.ir

*Ahmadi Kazazi, F. & Mousazadeh, I. (2023). Virtue-Oriented Ethics in the
Thought of Plato and Mulla Sadra. *Theosophia Islamica*, 3(6), pp 129-151.

<https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.724046.1081>

Both Plato and Mulla Sadra consider the principal virtues of the soul to be the four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance (self-control), and justice. This article employs a descriptive-comparative method to examine and contrast the viewpoints of Plato and Mulla Sadra regarding virtue and moral dispositions, and their role in human happiness. It demonstrates that both philosophers, firstly, view the soul as having parts or faculties and enumerate wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice as the soul's main virtues. Secondly, it shows that Mulla Sadra's ideas concerning the soul and ethics are influenced by Plato's views.

Keywords

Plato, Mulla Sadra, Ethics, Virtue.

Introduction

Moral virtue is a concept rooted in ancient Greek philosophy, referring to characteristics or habits considered good and ethical behaviors. Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle extensively discussed moral virtue. Aristotle defines virtue as a "golden mean" between two vices—for example, courage is the middle ground between recklessness and cowardice. This concept spread through ancient Rome and then during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, being adopted by Christian thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. Moral virtues primarily include qualities like justice, courage, temperance, generosity, honesty, and kindness. Moral virtues are regarded as a guide for right conduct and for achieving a good life (eudaimonia).

A comparative study of the works of Plato and Mulla Sadra reveals that Mulla Sadra, throughout his writings, defended many of Plato's philosophical stances, referring to him as a divine sage and the leader of philosophers. He considered himself a reviver of Platonic thought. Based on this, it's worth examining whether, despite these similarities in their views, Mulla Sadra's theories on ethics, including the definition and types of virtues and moral dispositions, are truly innovative or many of them are rooted in Plato's ideas. The present research aims to find an appropriate answer by analyzing and comparing the ethical theories of Mulla Sadra and Plato.

1. Virtue-Oriented Ethics

Virtue ethics is a normative theory that, unlike utilitarianism and deontology, emphasizes virtues and moral character rather than the outcomes of actions or moral duties and rules (Khazaei, 2010, p. 11). Ethics based on virtue primarily deals with individuals, and this focus isn't limited to judging people but also extends to guiding their conduct.

While the guiding principle in action-based ethics is to "do what is right," the defining principle in virtue-based ethics is simply to "be a good person." Since virtue-based ethics, unlike a general theory of virtue, seeks to provide a form of moral guidance, it addresses virtues that are acquired and whose designation as "moral" is justified (Holmes, 2006, pp. 78-79).

Virtue ethics possesses distinct characteristics that set it apart from other theories. Each of these features will be explained in the following sections.

1.1. Characteristics of Virtue Ethics

1.1.1. Teleological Nature

Virtue ethics is a type of teleological normative theory. According to this theory, all beings, including humans, have an ultimate goal or end toward which they are moving. They organize all their actions to achieve this end, which Aristotle refers to as "the good" (Khazaei, 2001, p. 50). In this theory, happiness (or flourishing) is the ultimate goal of human behavior, and virtues are the only way to achieve it.

1.1.2. The Importance of the Moral Exemplar

In virtue ethics, the primary focus is on cultivating exalted individuals who possess the ability to discern and act according to moral precepts. However, because not all individuals can reach this level of transcendence, virtue ethics identifies and recommends moral exemplars to guide them. It suggests that ordinary people should follow these moral role models before achieving the pinnacle of wisdom. These moral exemplars and role models have thoroughly cultivated their inner dispositions, and their actions stem from their intrinsic virtues (Khazaei, 2010, pp. 44-46). In essence, the presence of moral exemplars in society helps us achieve a moral life.

1.1.3. Emphasis on Being Over Action

Virtue ethics is a theory about moral values that emphasizes being rather than Action. Instead of asking "what action should I take?", it asks "how should I be?" and "how should I live?". This theory sees the primary goal of ethics as human flourishing. Specifically, through the definition of *disposition* (*khulq*) as an innate psychic quality, it becomes agent-centered and virtue-focused. It determines the rightness or wrongness, and goodness or badness, of actions based on the agent's good or bad character.

1.1.4. The Role of Intention and Motivation

In virtue ethics, the motivation for a moral act to originate from a human being is neither the concept of duty nor the pursuit of greater benefit. Instead, it is the achievement of the ultimate good, which is happiness (or flourishing).

1.1.5. Intrinsic Value of Virtue

Although the presence of virtue is essential and necessary for achieving happiness in virtue-oriented ethics, this doesn't mean that actions and virtues lack intrinsic value, or that only the ultimate goal of happiness matters, with virtue merely serving as a tool to reach it. On the contrary, in this theory, virtues possess intrinsic value and are praiseworthy in themselves. This contrasts with utilitarian and deontological perspectives, where virtues are often viewed and defined as means to gain greater benefit or achieve happiness—understood as pleasure and the avoidance of pain (Khazaei, 2010, p. 44).

2. Virtue from the Perspective of Plato and Mulla Sadra

Ethical propositions consistently describe the goodness or badness of actions and deeds. Ethics, aiming for a sublime goal, states that what must be observed in human actions are precisely good qualities and virtues. The question that arises here is: What is virtue?

2.1. Defining Virtue

Plato doesn't offer a single, precise definition of virtue in his works. However, by studying his writings, we can generally conclude that, considering its functional role and ultimate purpose, he views virtue as a psychic disposition that enables a person to be good and live well (Khazaei, 2010, p. 71). More broadly, Plato states that the virtue of any object is what enables that object to perform its specific function well. For instance, according to Plato, the virtue of the eye is sight. If the cornea, lens, and retina of the eye don't function properly, a person's vision weakens or they can't see anything at all. These parts must work in harmony to adjust light; if they fail to perform their function well, a person can't see (Holmes, 2006, p. 81).

From Plato's perspective, to live a good (virtuous) life or to be good, we need to gain knowledge of the Form of the Good. Emphasizing the role of knowledge in acquiring virtues, Plato considers knowledge a ray of light that emerges through light itself (Pinkas, 2003, p. 26). In fact, the knowledge that leads to acquiring virtues comes into existence through the Form of the Good. Therefore, Plato believes that the closer we get to the Form of the Good and the more knowledge we gain of it, the more virtuously we can act. In *The Republic* (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, pp. 1047-1054, section 507 onwards), he argues that it's genuinely impossible to gain knowledge of any particular and limited good unless we have knowledge of Goodness itself—that is, of the Forms, which are the source of the goodness of all limited and

particular goods. In essence, knowledge of the Form of the Good empowers us to judge the goodness of anything without error. Therefore, if someone has truly recognized the nature of the Good, it's impossible for them to fail to recognize and distinguish good and virtuous actions. In fact, anyone who chooses and undertakes a good action definitely possesses knowledge and understanding of what the true Good is.

Like his teacher Socrates, Plato believed that knowledge is virtue, but he didn't consider knowledge the *sole* condition for becoming virtuous. Socrates held that no one knowingly and willingly commits evil. If someone chooses evil or wrongdoing, they do so under the assumption that it is good (Copleston, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 253). This means that if a person performs a good act, it's because they have knowledge and understanding of its goodness and rightness. If they commit a bad act, it's because they don't know that the act is bad or evil; at the moment of performing it, they perceive it as good. Otherwise, they would not do it at all. There's no doubt that all humans desire goodness and well-being for themselves, as it's the ultimate goal of existence and universally sought after. It's also certain that every action an individual performs is for their own happiness, joy, and success. Therefore, if they act badly, it's because they haven't recognized the bad as bad, but have mistaken it for good. In fact, it's impossible for a person to know and recognize a good act but fail to perform it. The reason for not performing good acts, as well as for performing bad and evil acts, is ignorance and lack of knowledge. Consequently, Socrates considered virtue to be *only* knowledge—specifically, knowledge of the Form of the Good, not just any knowledge. So, from Socrates' perspective, to perform a virtuous act, we must act according to the dictates of reason.

Based on this, Socrates believed the origin of action lies solely

in rational deliberations. That is, he thought a rational person, if their reason dictates an action is good, will certainly perform it. Conversely, if they deem an action bad, they will never do it. Plato also held this belief. However, because he posited the existence of three faculties or parts of the soul, he included emotions, desires, and appetites—which are causes of voluntary human actions—as factors in performing deeds, in addition to rational deliberations. This means that reason might dictate an action is good, but appetite might desire the opposite, and the person might then follow the command of their appetites. Therefore, it's possible for someone whose reason has identified an action as good to act contrary to it because their appetites prevented them from performing that good action.

In reality, for Plato, virtue isn't merely a state of mind where a person constantly contemplates the truth of what they should do. Beyond that, acquiring virtue requires that emotions and appetites also be properly controlled under the command of reason (Khazaei, 2010, p. 73).

Given this, it's clear that a virtuous person isn't just a rational one; this individual must also control their other faculties under the guidance of reason.

In Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, concepts such as virtue, good, and goodness are all explained in a metaphysical way. Mulla Sadra believes that nothing exists apart from existence itself, and he links the reality of all concepts and things to either existence or non-existence. He posits that every existential attribute, simply by being an existential attribute, is considered a perfection, regardless of whether it's labeled a virtue or a vice in common understanding or religious law. However, in his view, some of these existential attributes lead to the decay of certain specific perfections in pure and noble souls, while others enhance their nobility and value. Essentially, the attributes that elevate the perfection and nobility of the soul when it possesses them

are the psychic virtues, and vices are their opposite attributes (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 116). According to Mulla Sadra, every virtue is a disposition (*khulq*). This means it's a type of quality that has become deeply ingrained and stable within the soul, " a settled disposition " (malakeh). Consequently, a person performs actions consistent with that virtue easily, without conscious thought or deliberation. He defines *khulq* as a disposition (malakeh) by which the soul performs actions easily and without deliberation. *a disposition(khulq)* is not merely the power to act, because power is equally related to opposites (e.g., the power to write or not write). Nor is *a disposition(khulq)* the action itself, as *a disposition(khulq)* is a state of the soul. Possessing this state allows a person to perform actions without deliberation, much like someone who writes but doesn't consciously focus on each individual letter as they write (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 114).

Given that every virtue is a good *disposition (khulq)* and, according to Mulla Sadra, every *khulq* is a settled disposition (malakeh) for the soul, the genus of virtue is identified as " a settled disposition." Now that the genus of virtue is clear, its differentia must be stated to complete the definition. According to Mulla Sadra, the virtue that results from each of a person's existential faculties is the moderation of the psychic faculties or the observance of the middle ground and mean in their actions. In this regard, he states: "And it is to be in the middle between conflicting dispositions; justice is achieved through moderation between opposing dispositions" (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, p. 127). Indeed, he considers good *disposition* to be a middle ground between excess and deficiency in qualities (Shirazi, 1981, p. 192). Therefore, for every virtue, there is a definite limit; exceeding this limit, whether through excess or deficiency, leads to vice. So, virtues act as the mean, and vices as the extremes. The opposition between excess and deficiency is a form of essential contradiction (taddad bi'l-dhat). A contradictory opposition also exists between the mean and

each of the extremes (excess and deficiency). The reason for this accidental contradiction is that essential contradiction exists between virtue and vice itself, because virtue is associated with the mean, and vice with excess and deficiency. Through them, an accidental contradiction arises between the mean and the two extremes. Based on this, it can be said that an accidental contradiction exists between courage and cowardice (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 3, p. 203; Akbari et al., 2007, pp. 191-192).

The question that now arises is: What is the criterion for determining virtue as the mean? From Mulla Sadra's perspective, human perfection lies in their incorporeal (transcendent) aspect, and their happiness (sa'adah) is achieved by strengthening this aspect. Therefore, the freer a person can operate from their bodily faculties and not be bound by them, the closer they will be to happiness and perfection. This freedom from bodily faculties is achieved by attaining the mean. Since these faculties impede complete transcendence, and a person cannot achieve full liberation from them as long as they are in this world, striving to maintain these faculties at the mean is considered a form of liberation from them. In this state, they serve the human being and cannot dominate them or hinder their progress towards perfection and happiness (Mesbah, 2007, p. 123). Therefore, acquiring virtues allows a person to draw closer to their perfection, and any indulgence in excess or deficiency prevents them from achieving their full potential.

2.2. Types of Virtue

Many philosophers, including Plato and Mulla Sadra, name four virtues as the principal and foundational virtues, from which other virtues derive. These virtues are wisdom, courage, temperance (self-control), and justice.

2.2.1. The Virtue of Wisdom

According to Plato, wisdom is the virtue of the rational part of the soul. When reason effectively carries out its specific function as the master of the other parts, it demonstrates its proper virtue, which is wisdom.

In *The Republic* (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 956, section 442), he states that an individual's wisdom comes from that small part of the soul which holds the reins of governance, and only this part of the soul knows what is beneficial or harmful for each of the other parts, as well as for the entire soul. Therefore, Plato believes that if reason governs and masters the other parts of the soul, effectively performing its duty, the virtue of wisdom is attained.

Mulla Sadra also believes that the virtue of wisdom arises when the rational faculty is in a state of moderation. For him, this faculty is in moderation when the soul can discern the truth and falsehood of statements, their benefit or harm, and the beauty or ugliness of actions, as well as the correctness or incorrectness of beliefs (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 421).

The excess of the rational faculty, which is blameworthy, is called cunning (jarbazah). This occurs when a person strives to acquire any kind of knowledge, even if it's knowledge of dance, music, magic, or, in general, misleading sciences. In short, a person must bring this faculty to a state of moderation to attain the virtue of wisdom and understand that they cannot learn every single branch of knowledge. The deficiency of this faculty is foolishness (balaahat), meaning a person doesn't pursue knowledge at all, believing only action is necessary. Such individuals fail to grasp that action without knowledge has no true value (Ardabili, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 357-358).

According to Mulla Sadra, when the soul transcends excess

and deficiency and achieves moderation, the virtue of wisdom is attained. This wisdom is considered the source of all good and the pinnacle of the soul's virtues (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, p. 89). It is at this point that a person can discern which knowledge is beneficial for them to acquire. Of course, once this faculty within a person reaches equilibrium and they desire a particular branch of knowledge, understanding that they must learn it, then the more they learn, the better. Excess in theoretical wisdom is desirable; in this state, the truths of things are discussed as they exist in reality, to the extent of human power and ability. Thus, the subject of theoretical wisdom is objects existing outside the mind, and its benefit and ultimate goal are to attain perfections in this world, and salvation and felicity in the afterlife. In the Quran, God says: "And whoever is given wisdom has certainly been given much good" (Al-Baqarah, 2:269). A narration from Imam Ali (peace be upon him) states: "The pinnacle of virtues is knowledge" (Rey Shahri, 2000, Vol. 3, p. 1258). Therefore, we can say that theoretical wisdom is the result and fruit of practical wisdom, which is one of the four cardinal virtues of the soul. This is because once an individual gains the ability to discern which knowledge is superior and nobler, and which knowledge they should acquire, the more they learn and study, the better and more excellent they become. Indeed, theoretical wisdom has no limit of moderation. Practical wisdom is not the same as moral wisdom (*hikmah khuluqi*), which is a type of virtue. The wisdom that is considered a virtue is a psychic disposition, in which excess and deficiency are vices. However, practical wisdom, which is one of the two branches of philosophy (the other being theoretical philosophy), refers to a person's knowledge of moral dispositions, their number and definitions, and an understanding of how to acquire good character traits and eliminate blameworthy ones. It also includes knowledge of household management and civic

governance (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 116). Therefore, based on these explanations, moral wisdom itself *is* the disposition, where excess and deficiency lead to vice. But practical wisdom, which is the counterpart to theoretical wisdom, is the knowledge about dispositions.

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, with the acquisition of wisdom and the moderation of the rational faculty, other types of virtues also emerge, falling under the genus of wisdom. These include good judgment, quick understanding, mental clarity, and ease of learning (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, p. 78).

2.2.2. Courage

According to Plato, courage is the virtue of the spirited part of the soul. Courage is the opposite of cowardice. It's important to note that cowardice is different from fear. Fear is a temporary state of the soul that comes and goes; it's not a permanent condition. Cowardice, however, is a settled disposition in the soul that doesn't disappear. Furthermore, cowardice may have an unknown cause, meaning the person might not even know what they are afraid of, whereas fear is not like this; it never has an unknown cause. If such a person is asked what they are afraid of, they can answer and identify the object of their fear.

Plato believes that when the spirited or volitional part of the soul carries out its duties within the boundaries set by reason, the virtue of courage is achieved. In his view, the function of the spirited part is to be a friend and assistant to the rational part (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 964, section 441). He holds that a person is called courageous if, whether in joy or in suffering, they steadfastly uphold the concept that reason has given them about what is dangerous and what is not. This means they fear what reason considers dangerous and do not fear what reason considers harmless. Essentially, through the sovereignty of reason,

they maintain equilibrium in pleasure and pain (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 964, section 442). In his dialogue *Laches* (Plato, 2003, p. 37), Plato notes that some people are fearless out of ignorance, like children and foolish individuals. In his opinion, these individuals cannot be called courageous, because he believes a distinction must be made between courage and recklessness. True courage, he asserts, must be accompanied by wisdom. Thus, for Plato, courage that is not coupled with wisdom is called recklessness and is not a virtue.

Based on these explanations, it becomes clear that someone is called courageous when their spirited part is under the command and support of their rational part. Such a person avoids what the rational part deems harmful and dangerous for the soul and body, and performs what the rational part considers beneficial for them.

According to Mulla Sadra, the virtue of courage arises from the moderation of the spirited (or irascible) faculty. This faculty is in moderation when its preservation and execution are in accordance with the dictates of wisdom and religious law (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 99, p. 90). This means the spirited faculty must be under the command of reason, performing what reason orders and avoiding what it forbids. If a person's spirited faculty is in moderation, they will express anger appropriately and at the right time, and this anger will be in line with wisdom and religious law. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) states: «الشجاعة نصره حاضرة و فضيلة ظاهرة؛ "Courage is an immediate victory and a manifest virtue" (Rey Shahri, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 2676).

The excess of this faculty is called recklessness, and its deficiency is called cowardice (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, p. 90; Shirazi, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 284). According to Mulla Sadra, from the virtue of courage, which is the mean of the spirited faculty, qualities such as a warm temperament, manliness, bravery, patience, steadfastness, suppressing anger, forgiving the sins of the deprived, dignity, grandeur, and

composure emerge. From the excess of courage, which is the vice of recklessness and audacity, qualities like heedlessness, boasting, ambition, cunning, arrogance, and vanity result. From its deficiency, qualities such as laziness, humiliation, baseness, lack of zeal, and failure to protect one's honor are derived (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 422).

A truly courageous person is someone whose actions and deeds are in accordance with the dictates of reason and are not motivated by worldly factors such as status, position, or wealth. Sometimes, reason dictates caution; in such cases, retreat does not contradict courage (Naraqi, 1998, p. 57). Therefore, someone who engages in dangerous acts, like a person who single-handedly attacks an army, unafraid of striking, being struck, or being killed, and does so for the sake of prestige, wealth, or fear, is not considered courageous.

2.2.3. Temperance (Self-Control)

According to Plato, temperance is the virtue of the appetitive part of the soul. When appetite performs its functions and duties appropriately and is under the governance of reason, the virtue of temperance is attained by the soul (Lavin, 2005, p. 84).

Temperance, or chastity, means that we neither suppress our instincts nor give them such free rein and excessive attention that it leads to unbridled indulgence. The goal is to prevent the appetitive part from commanding the other two parts (rational and spirited) and ruling the soul, instead allowing the rational part to govern. We should satisfy our desires according to the dictates of reason. In other words, if a person wills and decides to attend to bodily needs only to the extent necessary, they then acquire the quality of moderation and temperance.

In *The Republic* (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 965, section 442), Plato states

that a temperate person is one whose ruling part of the soul (reason) and subordinate parts agree that reason should hold the reins of governance. This means the other parts are not in conflict with the rational part. In essence, the two lower parts (appetitive and spirited) surrender their authority to reason to determine what should be done, submitting to its command. When the rational part gives these two parts an order, they carry it out. Therefore, when a person gains mastery over their desires and satisfies them under the command of reason, they never become enslaved by pleasure; instead, they move towards a well-ordered life.

According to Mulla Sadra, if the appetitive faculty reaches a state of moderation, the virtue of chastity or temperance is attained. This occurs when the actions of this faculty are guided by the dictates of reason and religious law (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 421). In other words, the appetitive faculty, in its pursuit of bodily pleasures, must obey reason in terms of quantity and quality, and refrain from what reason forbids, thereby freeing itself from the bondage of carnal desires (Mojtabavi, 2000, Vol. 1, p. 21). If a person's appetitive faculty is balanced, they can discern what to desire, when, in what quantity, and how.

The excess of this faculty is called gluttony or greed (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 116; Shirazi, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 284). This means becoming engrossed in bodily pleasures without considering what is best according to religious law and the dictates of reason. Its deficiency is referred to as inertia or dullness (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 116), meaning suppressing the appetitive faculty to such an extent that one abandons or fails to perform what is essential for bodily preservation or the continuation of the species. Chastity is the source of many good things for humanity. A narration from Imam Ali (peace be upon him) states: "Chastity is the head of all good" (Rey Shahri, 2000, Vol. 8, p. 3822).

According to Mulla Sadra, the virtue of chastity gives rise to

qualities such as modesty, patience, courage, piety, moderation of greed, and helpfulness. Its excess leads to avarice, impudence, shamelessness, hypocrisy, immodesty, flattery, injustice, and gloating. Its deficiency, conversely, results in impatience, weakness, envy, despair, lack of generosity, and belittling the needy (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 422).

Mulla Sadra believes that the purpose of appetite is neither merely the survival of the individual through eating, nor solely the continuation of the species through pleasure-seeking. Therefore, it is necessary to utilize it only to the required extent and according to the dictates of reason and religious law (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 428). Thus, a chaste person is one who, despite having healthy faculties, knowing the qualities of pleasures, and having the means and tools available for enjoyment without external hindrance, acts in accordance with reason and religious law in pursuing worldly pleasures.

2.2.4. Justice

When Plato discusses justice, he first addresses social justice and then, by comparison and based on it, introduces individual justice. He explains that if our eyesight isn't sufficient to read small letters shown to us from a distance, and by chance, the same letters are written in larger, bolder script on a bigger tablet, we would undoubtedly read the larger letters first and then compare them to the smaller ones. Therefore, we can better understand the nature of justice within an individual when we first examine it where we can find it on a larger scale. For this reason, it's better to try to understand the emergence of justice and injustice in the soul by understanding their emergence in society (Gomperz, 1996, Vol. 2, p. 1006).

To explain this further, Plato believes that just as the soul has three parts—the rational, spirited, and appetitive—society also has

three classes: the rulers, the guardians, and the workers. In his view, justice is established in society when each of these three classes effectively performs its specific function. Indeed, for Plato, justice necessitates proportion and balance. If everyone attends to their own tasks and refrains from interfering in the affairs of others, justice is achieved (Kern Feibleman, 1996, p. 74). Therefore, based on Plato's definition of individual justice in terms of social justice, it can be said that, in his view, justice is established within a person and among the three parts of the soul when each part effectively and excellently carries out its assigned duty and role.

Now, the question that arises here is: What does Plato consider to be the function of each part of the soul? In his view, the function of the rational and wise part of the soul is to undertake the governance and leadership over the other desires and parts of the soul, which is its rightful position (Rahmani, 2010, p. 528). This is because this part of the soul, through contemplation, constantly strives to ensure the happiness of the entire soul. Indeed, if the governance of the soul is entrusted to the rational part, that soul becomes happy. Thus, it can be said that the rational part is worthy of ruling the soul. The function of the spirited part of the soul, or the irascible part, is to be a friend and assistant to the rational part (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 964, section 441). It should help and assist the rational part in gaining control over the appetitive part of the soul, which is the largest and most insatiable part. It should prevent the appetitive part from indulging in sensual pleasures to such an extent that it daily increases its power, forgetting its specific function—which is to satisfy desires under the supervision of reason—and instead attempts to bring the other two parts under its command and rule over them. Therefore, if these two parts of the soul—the rational part and the spirited part—harmonize with each other, they can overcome the appetitive part of the soul. This is

because commanding is not suitable for the appetitive part, and if the reins of the soul fall into its hands, it will lead the soul to ruin. So, if the spirited part of the soul executes every command given to it by the rational part and remains obedient to the rational part, the human soul and body will remain safe from harm.

Based on these points, Plato concludes that a just individual is someone who doesn't allow one part of their soul to interfere with the function of another. Instead, they always strive to ensure that each of the soul's three parts performs its specific work and duty well (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 967, section 443). Indeed, such an individual must be self-controlled, establish inner order, and harmonize the three parts of their soul. In performing any action entrusted to them, they must not allow this internal order to be disrupted or compromised. In all circumstances, they consider an action just only if it doesn't disturb their inner order. Thus, such a person possesses the disposition of justice. Therefore, according to Plato, justice emerges when a natural relationship of governance prevails between the ruling and subordinate parts of the soul (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 968, section 444). Conversely, if someone cannot create harmony among the parts of their soul, injustice will prevail within them. This is because, in addition to failing to perform their specific duties, the parts of their soul interfere with the functions and affairs of other parts, which leads to injustice within the individual.

According to Mulla Sadra, from the combination of the three faculties and the integration of their moderate states, another faculty emerges whose mean is called justice. The excess of this faculty is tyranny, and its deficiency is being subjected to tyranny (Shirazi, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 284). This faculty keeps the three primary faculties under the command of reason and religious law. He believes that just as

moderation in the body's temperament, meaning health and well-being, is achieved when all diseases are eliminated, moderation in the soul and heart is realized when spiritual ailments, meaning ugly and blameworthy moral traits, are removed (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 419). Therefore, Mulla Sadra holds that justice is established in the soul when the other faculties of the soul are in balance. It can be said that justice results from the summation of the virtues of wisdom, courage, and temperance.

Conclusion

1. Both Plato and Mulla Sadra propose that the soul is comprised of distinct faculties, and the harmonious functioning of each leads to the development of specific virtues. For Plato, the soul has three parts: rational, spirited, and appetitive. When the rational part functions well, it yields the virtue of wisdom. The proper functioning of the spirited part results in courage. And when the appetitive part performs its role correctly, the virtue of temperance (self-control) is achieved. When all three parts work in harmony, the virtue of justice emerges. Similarly, Mulla Sadra posits that the soul has three faculties: intellective, irascible, and appetitive. When the intellective faculty is in balance, it produces the virtue of wisdom. The balance of the irascible faculty leads to courage. And the moderation of the appetitive faculty results in temperance (self-control). When all three faculties are in balance, the virtue of justice is attained.
2. In the discussion of the types of virtues, despite some differences, notable similarities emerge, suggesting Mulla

Sadra's influence from Plato in this area. Regarding the virtue of courage, both philosophers agree that this virtue arises from the soul when the irascible (spirited) faculty is under the command of reason. This means the soul avoids whatever reason prohibits and acts upon whatever reason commands. Furthermore, in the context of temperance (self-control), both Plato and Mulla Sadra hold that this virtue is attained by the soul when the appetitive faculty controls its desires under the guidance of reason.

3. Regarding virtue ethics, it can be definitively stated that Mulla Sadra was influenced by Plato, with the distinction that Mulla Sadra also incorporated the influence of Islamic law (Shari'ah) into his theories. We can say that the general principle concerning Mulla Sadra's and Plato's theories on the soul (nafs) is that in some areas, Mulla Sadra was clearly influenced by and benefited from Plato's theories, such as in ethical discussions. In other instances, while similarities exist between Mulla Sadra's discussions and Plato's theories, it cannot be definitively said that he was influenced by Plato's viewpoint; rather, these similarities might stem from the inherent implications of Mulla Sadra's own theories and discourse, such as the simplicity of the soul, the immateriality of the soul (tajarrud), and the substantiality of the soul. However, in some discussions, there is no affinity between the two viewpoints at all, such as in the discussion of the faculties of the soul. Furthermore, Mulla Sadra, based on his religious tradition, sometimes approached his inquiries from a religious perspective, and thus the role of Shari'ah in the formulation of his theories cannot be overlooked.

References

- Akbari, R. & Manafi'an, S. M. & Hosseini Sarai, M. & Lancelle, P. (Ali). & Shokrani, Y. & Kayedkhordeh, R. & Ansarian, Z. (2007). *Mulla Sadra as Narrated by Us* (1st ed.). Tehran: Islamic Propaganda Organization. [In Persian]
- Ardabili, A. (2002). *Taqrirat-e Imam Khomeini* (Vol. 3, 1st ed.). Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works.[In Persian]
- Copleston, F. (1996). *A History of Philosophy* (Trans.: Seyyed Jalal al-Din Mojtavavi, Vol. 1, 3rd ed.). Tehran: Soroush Publications. [In Persian]
- Gomperz, T. (1996). *Greek Thinkers* (Trans.: Mohammad Hasan Lotfi, Vol. 2, 1st ed.). Tehran: Khwarazmi Publications. [In Persian]
- Holmes, R. L. (2006). *Basic Moral Philosophy* (Trans.: Masoud Alinia, 1st ed.). Tehran: Qoqnoos Publications. [In Persian]
- Kern Feibleman, J. (1996). *An Introduction to Western Philosophy* (Trans.: Mohammad Baqaei (Makan), 1st ed.). Tehran: Hekmat Publications. [In Persian]
- Khazaei, Z. (2001). Virtue-Oriented Ethics. *Nameh-ye Mofid*, (1), pp. 41-64. [In Persian]
- Khazaei, Z. (2010). *Virtue Ethics* (1st ed.). Tehran: Hekmat Publications. [In Persian]
- Lavin, T.Z. (2005). *From Socrates to Sartre* (Trans.: Parviz Babaei, 1st ed.). Tehran: Negah Publications. [In Arabic]
- Mesbah, M. (2007). *Philosophy of Ethics* (14th ed.). Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute. [In Persian]
- Mohammadi Rey Shahri, M. (2000). *Mizan al-Hikmah* (Trans.: Hamidreza Sheikh, Vol. 3, 2nd ed.). Qom: Dar al-Hadith. [In Arabic]
- Mojtabavi, S. J. (2000). *Islamic Ethics* (Vol. 1, 5th ed.). Tehran: Hekmat Publications. [In Persian]

- Naraqi, A. (1998). *Me'raj al-Sa'adah* (With correction, annotation, and editing by Mulla Ahmad Naraqi, 5th ed.). Qom: Hejrat.[In Arabic]
- Pinkaof, E. (2003). *From Problem-Centric to Virtue-Oriented Ethics* (With a preface by Dr. Legenhausen, Translation and Annotations by Seyyed Hamidreza Hasani & Mehdi Alipour, 1st ed.). Qom: Daftar-e Nashr-e Ma'aref. [In Persian]
- Plato. (2001). *The Complete Works of Plato* (Trans.: Mohammad Hasan Lotfi, Vol. 2, 2nd ed.). Tehran: Khwarazmi Publications. [In Persian]
- Plato. (2003). *Five Dialogues* (Trans.: Mahmoud Sanaei, 4th ed.). Tehran: Hermes Publications. [In Persian]
- Rahmani, Gh. (2010). *The Philosophy of Plato* (1st ed.). Qom: Bustan-e Ketab. [In Persian]
- Shirazi, S. (1989). *Al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-Aqleeyah al-Arba'ah* (Vols. 3, 4 & 9, 4th ed.). Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi. [In Arabic]
- Shirazi, S. (1981). *Asrar al-Ayat* (Introduction and Edited by Mohammad Khajavi). Tehran: Islamic Association of Wisdom and Philosophy of Iran Publications. [In Arabic]
- Shirazi, S. (2000). *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Edited by Mohammad Khajavi, Vol. 6, 3rd ed.). Qom: Bidar Publications. [In Arabic]
- Shirazi, S. (2004). *Sharh Usul al-Kafi* (Edited by Mohammad Khajavi, Vol. 1, 2nd ed.). Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. [In Arabic]