

In the Name of God
***A Comparison between Existence in Existentialism and Sadraean
Principality of Existence***

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Abstract

Focusing on the truth of existence in existentialism and leaving epistemological tradition behind in philosophy created a new philosophical trend in the West which left a dramatic effect on contemporary Western philosophical thought. Focusing on the truth of existence and leaving quidditive explanation behind, the principality of existence (fundamental reality), too, caused a new major trend in Islamic philosophy which influenced many philosophical subjects and led to close scrutiny of philosophical issues. At first glance, these two evolutions seem to closely resemble each other or may sound to be a single trend within two distinct fields, bringing about convergent results; however, a close inspection seems indispensable to find out the similarities and differences,. The present article intends to investigate existence in these two trends and thereby makes a brief comparison between them to illustrate the main elements of comparison of existence between these two philosophical approaches.

Keywords

Existence, quiddity, Non-existence, Free will, Existentialism, Principality of Existence, Mulla Sadra

Introduction: The Possibility and the Meaning of Philosophical Comparison

Although at first sight we encounter a myriad of issues and subjects which, in different areas of philosophy, have been discussed and examined by men of thought under the same rubric and seem to be different replies to a single question, these similarities, with regard to certain considerations, take on a differing meaning and consequently cause comparative philosophy to confront with difficulties. Below, a number of these considerations are cited in brief:

Historical Background of the Formation of a Concept

A large number of concepts put forth and explored in a philosophical system are founded upon backgrounds affecting their historical formation. All the concepts and elements playing a role in the explanation of a given concept have been formed based on that background and they refer their addressees to that background. The concept of existence in the West, which we seek to investigate in the present article, has been studied in a special context. Prior to analyzing that context, we need to call attention to issues such as the role of epistemology in the generation of modern Western philosophy, the contemporary subjective attitude, dualism of subject-object, and the dominant humanistic attitude in Western thought in the present era, for it is with this historical background that the existential attitude has developed; in contrast, in the context of Islamic philosophy, we encounter a different background. For instance, in Sadraean philosophy, when discussing existence, quidditive peripatetic attitudes and the effect of mystic attitudes of unity of existence should be looked into, because these fields have been influential in the formation of the philosophical attitude of the principality of existence. Each of these explanations – existentialism and principality of existence – should inquire into their own origin and probe for the meaning of existence they aim at in their evolution.

The Cultural Contexts of the Meaning of a Concept

The cultural particulars of a society lay the groundwork for a concept to find its meaning. As Wittgenstein puts it, these are the forms of life in which the meaning of a concept is determined. In different plays on words, the rules of

meaningfulness differ, and this plays a pivotal role in establishing the meaning of a given concept in differing cultural conditions under which the meaning of that concept is developed. It is likely that a single phrase be used in two distinct cultural contexts and conveys completely different meanings. No one can get to know the meaning of man in Western culture without understanding Incarnation or the innate sin of mankind. It is true that many of Western thinkers did not have religious inclinations, but the way they construe a concept like man is strongly embedded and evolved in a religious context, and their explanations should thus be essentially different from the conception of God's vicegerent in Islamic thought. Without knowing the principal cultural elements of a society, we are unable to obtain the real meaning of a concept. The pivotal role of man and the historical approach to reality in Western Christian culture play a significant part in explaining the meaning of existence; whereas in Islamic culture this role is assigned to divine message and the significance of spiritual journey in being nigh unto God and therefore, should be studied in the light of this context.

The Goals of Philosophical Investigation into a Concept

The philosophical analysis of a concept may be carried out to achieve various ends, each of which dictates the application of a different explanatory approach to that concept. If a philosophical analysis targets at finding out the way man gets mastery over nature and employs it in technology, it cannot be considered to be the same as an analysis aiming at the investigation of the relationship between man and the world in a comprehensive unity. It is therefore in the light of the objective of a philosophical analysis that we can provide the semantic explanation of a given concept. In more general terms, it is the concerns of a philosopher that influence the development of a concept and create the philosopher's philosophizing approach. The difference between the concerns of different societies affects the different senses understood from a concept.

The abovementioned issues are some of the considerations that must be seriously taken into account in comparing between philosophical concepts and explanation of a philosophical thought. These considerations, named in brief, as well as other hermeneutical considerations, have confronted philosophical comparison with serious difficulties, such that some thinkers have doubted the feasibility of a comparative philosophy. Although in this article we do not seek to explore all argumentations and replies and come up with an analytical result, it seems that in

spite of these obstacles and difficulties, we still can have a comparative philosophy. It is true that the above factors make it difficult to provide a complete comparison, nonetheless, understanding these factors and making efforts to present concepts based on their limiting conditions, can contribute to developing proper attitudes towards the comparison between philosophical fields and even towards making judgment about the degree of their validity. If the said factors render all kinds of mutual understanding impossible, then, the possibility of any sort of dialogue, which is the basis of all human interactions, will be negated and knowing other reflections prove impossible and futile, while all human interactions presuppose the possibility of mutual understanding and dialogue.

After this introduction, the article continues with this belief that despite serious considerations, philosophical comparison is possible and even indispensable for the exchange of thoughts and views. However, the results implying the sameness of concepts are extremely superficial and simplistic and when comparing, we should seriously consider, as much as possible, the conditions of evolution of a concept, its cultural contexts and the ends of philosophical explorations and finally the comparison should be carried out having these constraints in mind.

Method of Comparing Existence in Existentialism and Sadraean Thought

Now, in order to compare existence in Western existentialism and Sadraean principality of existence, it is necessary to first study the process of development of the concept based on its historical background in the context of Western thought and Islamic thought, and then illustrate their similarities and differences. It is clear that a detailed elaboration on existence-orientedness in these two fields is beyond the scope of this article; hence, it is attempted to study the principal axes of the discussion in brief and to the point so that the comparison takes place based on a general knowledge. At first, we deal with the background of how Western existentialism gained importance, inquire into the semantic explanation of the concept of existence, and elaborate on the main elements of this thought; then, the same background and explanation will be studied in Islamic Sadraean thought and we end the article by comparing the two.

Attention to Existence: a Radical Change in the Evolution of New Western Philosophy

Descartes, as the founder of new Western philosophy, made Cogito the basis of his philosophy. Philosophical explanation based on Cogito finally led to the distinction between subject and object, where subject was deemed the pillar of being. What gains significance here is man as the knowing agent, and the world here is as illustrated in the thought and perception of Cartesian "I".

Cartesian "I" is merely the thinker's "I" and according to Descartes, when he thinks, he exists. That is why Descartes is the initiator of new Western subjectivism. With Descartes therefore philosophical thought shifts to epistemology. The world is merely an object vis-à-vis Cartesian subject. Descartes sees the universe as the manifestation of human mind and considers the non-deceitfulness of God as guarantee of the objectivity of this perception. "For Descartes, mind is the mirror of nature. Mind offers itself the images of things existing outside with the real time and space of the universe as well as the objects and events existing therein. Yet, the real place of the universe exists independent from its manifestation and its essence which is perceived, as a creature in its existence is solely dependent upon God." (Wright, 1996, p. 254)

This interpretation has also affected the philosophers after Descartes. "The world for the philosophers after Descartes is a collection of things man faces, i.e., the collection of objective issues." (Ahmadi, 1381b, p. 283) Thus, man has sat in front of the world and should know it, merely know it. The Cartesian subject has a number of significant tasks to perform: knowing self or soul, knowing world or body, and knowing God. Cartesian subject therefore is involved in epistemology, and in this regard, Cartesian subject is man in that it is involved in knowing.

The philosophers after Descartes are all engaged in issues he had put forth. Rationalist philosophers such as Marlbrough, Spinoza, Leibniz and empiricist philosophers like Berkeley, Locke and Hume, who all came on the scene after Descartes, were in practice engaged with Cartesian discussions, particularly epistemology.

The confluence of the ideas of rationalist and empiricist philosophers resulted in the emergence of Kant. By presentation of Kant's views, epistemology reached its zenith. Kant's book, "Critique of Pure Reason", sought to offer an orderly systematic framework for man's knowledge and for the determination of its

conditions and limits, as if man had no other duty but to know. "Philosophy thereby was reduced to epistemology. Inquiry into the way we know the world and things became the only territory sciences deemed valid for philosophy." (p. 128). In effect, it is with Kant that subjectivity reached its apogee. Unlike Descartes, Kant does not consider the perfection of God a guarantee for knowledge; he rather believes that the whole universe at once becomes the reflection of human mind.

"It is therefore on account of man's attitude that we can talk of space, continuous objects and so forth. If we leave aside the conditions of innateness, conditions based on which an external perception takes place ... Space cannot be represented through anything else. There exists no space in the real world separated from its representation through a knowing agent. Understanding the existence of space is possible only in the eye of man. That's why Heidegger describes modern age as an era in which the world and its space dominate as a representation and image. With the Copernican revolution of Kant, the dominance of universe as an image begins." (Wright, 1996, p. 254)

Kant's mental efforts culminated in the idea that there is no way for man to get to know the "object per se", or *nomen*; rather, human knowledge should remain within the framework of the phenomena and the empirical world or *phenomena* not to get engaged in different sophistries.

Western philosophy, after Kant and with the emergence of thinkers such as Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, entered the realm of idealism, which in a way, is the result of believing in subject in modern age. The world is but the ideas and images in the mind of man. The zenith of idealism was the absolute Hegelian idealism. Here, man's knowledge wants to embrace everything and explains, conceptually, the whole universe and history.

"Hegel would talk of the existents as if they could think and would fit into the absolute thought and would find their existence as an absolute thought He called existents, in form of ideas, existence." (Ahmadi, 1381b, p.213) Thus, also for Hegel, the world and the things gain significance based on the way they change into ideas in man's mind and finally in absolute soul. Hegel, with absolute idealism, put *nomen* – which was unknown to Kant, completely aside and consequently, what remained was imaginations and ideas.

One of the most significant achievements of these trends is their holistic approach to man. In Descartes, “I” or the subject of the thinker, is man in general, not as a particular individual with his existential concerns; it is man who is sitting in front of the world and wants to know it. In Kant, too, man has always been man per se who should know his conditions and limits of knowledge. Hegelian “I” is assimilated into the entire history and government and is part of a whole whose duty is to know the ideas. Philosophy of Hegel is history-oriented in theoretical view and government-oriented in political view and leaves no room for individual. All these trends indicate a kind of theorizing free from existential concerns man encounters.

The Emergence of Existentialism vs. Holistic and Subjective Trends

In contrast to all these trends and holistic approaches, Kierkegaard emerged in the Western world. It was his personal life, the way he was brought up and his religious considerations which led Kierkegaard into this thought that, philosophical systems left from the past (philosophy of Hegel), which attempt to offer an abstract and at the same time comprehensive and universal explanation of the existence and the universe, even at their apogee, have lost sight of individual and the nature of man’s existence.

Kierkegaard argues that the Hegelian principle of dialectics cannot determine the meaning of existence, because, existence, in Hegelian dialectic and historical movement, transforms into a general abstract issue. He first took issue with Hegelian philosophy because of its “universality” and “objectivity”; he repudiated the possibility of mediation, i.e., the possibility of removing the contradiction between thesis and antithesis laid in a rationalistic synthesis and higher. He emphasized the priority or precedence of being over quiddity and it seems that he is the first one to attach an “existential” meaning to “existence”. He is radically anti-rationalism and in his view, through rationalist thinking one can never reach existence and God.

Hamann, (J. G. Hamann, 1730-1788) that has influenced Kierkegaard, considers existence inconceivable to thought, and with respect to the subject-oriented trend of the West, asserts: “the less I think, the more I am” (Wall, 1380, pp. 161-3). Kierkegaard distinguishes between “innate existence” and what is called to exist “haphazardly” and applies “innate existence” to personal life which is

derived from man's eternal responsibility based on his perfect self-awareness ... and he has risked (Cooper, 1995, p. 3)

It seems that Kierkegaard has concerned himself with a number of important tasks. First, attaching significance to particularity and individuality of man and his own self; second, overcoming epistemology which is the presupposition of subject-object distinction; and finally, putting forth two key concepts of fear and free will in order to pay attention to man's individuality and to overcome epistemology. In fear, subject and object are no longer in contrast, because in fear there is no dependant object; in fear, I meet only myself. My existence expresses itself in fear; fear makes me involved. Free will takes on meaning in contrast to Hegelian and Marxist fatalism, because, with my free will, I save my existence from being overthrown in collective will and as a result, with free will, I frequently materialize myself. He is radically against this interpretation that man is a being that has fear or free will, for this contradicts his aim and is yet another holistic attitude towards man.

“Kierkegaard made individual the basic subject of his philosophy and both he and his successors (other philosophers of existentialism) have confirmed that when an individual comes across decisions to make, brought to him by existence, he in fact shoulders non-transferable responsibilities. Undoubtedly, these philosophers have called our attention to something which is absolutely fundamental for being existent as a human being. Anyone in his personal situation should decide himself and take the responsibility of his decision himself.” (Macquarie, 1977, p. 100)

Kierkegaard is the enemy of conceptual thinking too, a kind of thinking that endeavors to conceptually and rationally explain the problems of the whole universe, from inanimate things, the plants and animals to man and God.

“According to Kierkegaard, collecting abstract concepts based on principals of rationalism ... in order to develop a system of thinking for justifying the universe and man and origin and source, is a vain attempt deserving ridicule. Man is not and cannot be the one who establishes the truth. It is truth which is encompassing and the man who is encompassed by it.” (Mosta'an, 1974, p. 71)

In Kierkegaard's view, basically each philosophy has a kind of idealism embedded in it, as it solely deals with quidditive concepts. He also does not see God as something to be substantiated with intellect. Intellectual substantiation of God is a sign of man's unfaithfulness to Him; if man believes in God, there is no need for his intellectual substantiation.

Kierkegaard establishes a link between fear theory and the theory of man's absolute loneliness before God and the grief of his fate. He finds a coincidence of passing time and perpetuity (eternity) in the "instant" (Bochenski, 1383, p. 126).

After Kierkegaard, Nietzsche sharply criticizes subjectivism, modern rationalism, Platonism and the ethics governing Western thought, and sets to overthrow the tower built with the coming of the age of illumination, modernity and Kant. Proposing concepts like will related to power, perpetual return, super-man, valuing of values and nihilism, he declares the end of Western metaphysics, paves the way for focusing on existence and reinforces the existentialist inclinations. "Nietzsche, who was an indicator of metaphysics' fruitful capacities coming to an end, insisted upon this belief that what is of importance is not the truth or correctness of this decree or that doctrine or belief, but their influence ... [here] better than in any other writing, we understand that metaphysics has come to an end by emphasizing its influences." (Ahmadi, 1381b, p. 276)

In spite of the fact that Husserl, with his phenomenology exhibited a way to reach the quiddity of objects and was not in the course of existentialist attitudes, he found a way to leave common Western epistemology and the dual attitude of subject-object behind, a way that proved a proper means of molding existentialist attitude. He changed the epistemological attitude by proposing "intentionality". In Husserl's point of view, awareness and the object of awareness do not exist separately; rather, awareness is always dependent upon something, i.e., it is "awareness of" or "knowledge of". "In Heidegger's philosophy too, we find that intentionality in which Husserl believed, meaning that the act of knowing involves something other than its intention and aim ... But in Heidegger's theory another meaning is prioritized which has not taken precedence in Husserl's theory and that is: knowing is discovery and unveiling" (Wall, 1380, p. 595).

Here, conceptual knowledge and explanation give their place to live human experience of things. True knowledge is possible through description of different human experiences. He also partly filled the impenetrable gap between man and the world, which was the result of Cartesian subject-object style, through

putting forth the concept of “زیست جهان”. Man is no longer an existent vis-à-vis the world, but lives in the world and in effect exists with the world and is constantly involved in experiencing the world. This thought paved the way for the appearance of the idea of “being in the world”, which was later set forth by Heidegger.

Bergesen, with the different interpretation of time he had, made contributions to help existentialist view take more extensive aspects under its umbrella. He called the current time spatialized time, and argued that the domination of the view that considers modern man as instrument prevents him from arriving at a real perception of time which is in fact the continuation. “He distinguishes between our scientific knowledge about ourselves and our living experience of ourselves. We do not experience separated and different units; we experience the passage, the flow. ... For Bergesen, (his famous terms) continuation cannot be measured. It is dependent upon our memories and a lot of our emotions, all of which are vague and mysterious.” (ibid, pp. 551-2)

It seems that Heidegger is the resultant of this philosophical revolution in the West. Heidegger, too, puts his conceptual explanation of the universe aside and forsakes the tools of Kant and Hegel. He instead attempts to analyze the relation between existence and man which he describes as Dasein (special existence of man) and thereby talks of a new relationship between existence and the existents. Thus, his existentialism is no longer a conceptual issue or an acquired knowledge. When man is described with Dasein and in possession of “being-in-the-world”, he is no longer the subject or the agent of knowing (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 20-33).

In history of philosophy, the only thing not thought of is existence itself which is nothing but presence and manifestation (Heidegger, 1987, p. 98). According to Heidegger, the history of philosophy has been the history of disregarding existence. He focuses on the works of the men of thought before the age of Greek metaphysics because they were free from “objectification” and metaphysical attitude. The gist of Heidegger’s words is that although existence has presence, manifestation and expansion, it is at the same time hidden and this makes him deem existence a riddle. That’s why he believes existence does not have a fixed definition.

The new age started with Descartes and culminated in the distinction between subject and object, whereas such a distinction does not exist. In other words, man

is not merely a subject whose only job is to know; rather, man finds himself prior to knowledge and deserving of being known; moreover, man, in his life, is constantly in the process of doing and acting and continually materializes himself with his acts. On the other hand, the world too is not merely an object or an object of knowledge; rather, it is mainly described by expansion, presence and manifestation. There is no one man and one world, but a man in the world. Therefore, the most fundamental existential description of man is his “being in the world”. Creatures other than man are merely there, but man exists, because he is aware of his existence and is responsible for it. “Man’s existence, due to the particular way he is related to the world, is in his being that exists and is distinct from [other] beings which exist merely by their being as parts of the world In his awareness and responsibility, man has openness to the world.” (Macquarie, 1976, pp. 69-70)

“In talking about existence, we too little speak of the existence itself and lose sight of the presence of existence in man’s quiddity and thereby we become unable to recognize this quiddity which, per se, contributes to the determination of existence. ... If we consider existence as an all-inclusive territory and consider human entities as special existences among plants and animals and presume a relationship between them, then, a relationship between the quiddity of these entities and what determines a relation like existence, will be observed (Heidegger, 1993, p. 401).

One of the main features of Dasein is its temporal structure. Time turns into a horizon along which being can be perceived and takes on meaning with anxiety or a care accompanied by anxiety. It is with this anxiety that Dasein attains its totality of existence within the three distinct temporal areas of the past, the present and the future. Thus, we cannot any longer see time as a collection of moments Like Aristotle, or as people think, describe time as a subject attained or lost (Mulhall, 1996, p. 182). We can claim therefore that man, with decisions he takes, makes things temporal.

“Dasein sets the time to arrive and specifies it with what it encounters within the limits of universe. ... As based on the far-sighted preparedness he has for being-in-the-world, he also possesses necessitation or a distinct involvement. “Presentiment” exploits the accessibility of the sun which is the emitter of light and heat. Sun determines the time spent with presentiment. It is based on this temporality that the most natural amount of time – day – is obtained.” (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 80, 465)

Existence, as exists, cannot be substantiated by reasoning; making deductions about existence is inconceivable, because we are trying to extract it from a different issue. The only possible way is then to demonstrate it. Existence can merely show itself. The conclusion is that Dasein is indeed a sort of phenomenology. (Vernu and Wall, 1372, p. 220)

Heidegger believes that man can perceive absolute existence also through understanding absolute nonexistence (and not relative nonexistence). Absolute and pure nonexistence means mere darkness, that is, where there is nothing, or as Heidegger puts it, where there is “well of nonexistence”. When man stands in front of this well, he is seized with awe and fear and then he finds himself in bewilderment about the existence and he will then be made to taste the existence. It is here that the perceptual model disappears and the self’s experience of existence emerges. Here, Heidegger’s words adopt a poetic form. With this view of Heidegger, the general man is no longer at issue; rather, self and its existence, the way it is involved with its choices and potentials, come under consideration. This is in effect a kind of increasing the profundity of philosophy, because philosophy which was up to then engaged in the discussion of existent, with Heidegger, shifts to the discussion of existence.

Existential Thinking in Sadraean Philosophy

Mulla Sadra, too, with his principality of existence in his exalted philosophy, in a different context and culture, brought about a fundamental revolution in the history of Islamic philosophy. “Mulla Sadra properly digested what had been done in this field by the Greek ancients particularly Plato and Aristotle and what the outstanding Islamic sages such as al-Farabi, Aviceenna (ibn Sina), Sheikh Ishraq and others had explained or had themselves added to and what the towering mystics had perceived via the guidance of their intellectual intuition and mystical power, and then established a new foundation and based it on sound and impenetrable principles and rules; regarding reasoning and argumentation, he changed philosophical issues such that they resemble principles of mathematics, each of which is derived and inferred from the other, and thereby he saved philosophy from the fragmentation of reasoning methods.” (Motahhari, 1373, p. 30)

“The philosophy of Sadr al-Muta’allihin, in addition to being unprecedented and novel in certain respects, is the result of eight hundred years of efforts made by

great researchers all of whom have contributed to the advancement of philosophy.” (pp. 30, 31) Like Heidegger’s philosophy, the philosophy of Mulla Sadra is a change in attitude; this means that the conceptual and quidditive attitude of previous philosophers is discarded and substituted by an existential, conscious and perceptual attitude.

Till Mulla Sadra’s time, all philosophical issues would be probed into based on a conceptual, quidditive model and with an Aristotelian categorical approach. If existence had also been under consideration, the dominance of quidditive attitude would have marginalized it and the issues related to existence would have been studied via that same attitude. Mulla Sadra made existence the pivot point of his philosophical discussion and by demonstrating the existential truth of the universe, endeavored to explore other philosophical issues from an existential perspective and in an entirely different context. Due to this fundamental difference and on account of the profound acquaintance with mystical doctrines, all philosophical issues went on a new course and overcame obstacles such as Western epistemology. For, in Sadra’s view, quiddity “is in fact something indeterminate, vague, dark and unreal. We cannot refer to quiddity without considering existence, neither rationally, nor conceptually. ... In contrast, existence is distinguished, determinate, bright, and real and it is the existence that frees quiddity from indeterminacy and draws a distinction between them.” (Qazi, 1380, p. 223)

The doctrine of principality of existence, which changed the subject of metaphysics from “existent” (ens) into “existence” (esse), revolutionized “the Aristotelian model” of the early Islamic philosophy and proposed a novel perception of the most profound order of reality in which everything is seen as the “presence” or “perception” of the very existence or the very divine act. Furthermore, it was through this doctrine that Mulla Sadra could demonstrate the chain connecting all levels of reality, and finally, he brought to light the doctrine of “supreme unity of existence”, which is the zenith of his whole metaphysics, and in effect, the apogee of the entire Islamic mysticism (Nasr, 1382, pp. 181-2).

The pivot of Mulla Sadra’s metaphysics is existence (Sadr al-Muta’allihin, 1363, p. 7). In his point of view, existence is an objective reality and the source of all powers and acts, and is therefore original; quiddity however is the limit of existence, i.e., it is the abstraction of mind. The concept of existence is the most evident of all and its nature is hidden and concealed. Existence cannot be defined

since it does not have genus and specifier and its describing as a noun is also incorrect, because perceiving the existence through something more or equally evident is inconceivable (ibid, p. 25 and Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1363, p. 7).

As was mentioned before, the first one to put forth the idea of principality of existence or quiddity as an independent issue was Mulla Sadra; he substantiated the principality of existence via close philosophical scrutiny. For Mulla Sadra, the principality of existence means the objective reality is the essential evidence of the concept of existence and the concept of quiddity talks only of the limits of reality and is predicated upon it accidentally. While refuting the theory of the principality of quiddity and its reasoning, Mulla Sadra puts forth eight reasons from *Mashā'er* and at least three reasons from *Asfār* in order to substantiate the principality of existence (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, p. 38 & 1363, p. 10).

Another central idea in Mulla Sadra's philosophy is gradation of existence and consequently the theory of "unity in plurality and plurality in unity". Mulla Sadra explains the entire chain of beings with these two theories. Unlike univocal concepts (e.g. the concept of body), the concept of existence is graded, i.e., the attribution of objects to existence is not similar; rather, there are anteriority, posteriority and priority, as attributing existence to the Exalted God, who possesses no restriction, cannot be compared with its attribution to other beings. Mulla Sadra and the followers of the exalted philosophy call these gradations "generic gradation" and believe in another gradation for the objective truth of existence which is described as "specific gradation" whose characteristic is that the two referents of existence are not independent from one another and each is deemed a rank of the other (1981, p. 35 & 1363, p. 8). Based on the graded nature of "the truth of existence", Mulla Sadra proposes unity in plurality and plurality in unity as the most evident attribute of existence. According to this theory, existence, which is the only objective and original thing, is a single truth, but of various ranks and degrees. Following this view, the plural and various quiddities appearing to the intellect and sense are not baseless, but are abstracted from the ranks and degrees of existence.

Unified existence is not pure and hence the mystics' theory of unity of existence is not acceptable; these plural existences are not heterogeneous either (the peripatetic philosophy believes in heterogeneity of existences); rather, they are ranks of a single truth and they share common grounds and causes for unity. However, distinction and unity are not contrary to having similarity to be

considered inconsistent with the expanse of existence which is indisputable and definite; rather, in existential truths, “the common aspect” fits into the same category as “the distinguishing factor” and the differences lie in their degree, their perfection and imperfection, and basically degrees are possible solely for the ranks of a unified truth and does not apply otherwise (p. 71).

Of importance about Mulla Sadra is that proximity to existence and its rulings in his philosophy are not conceptual, quidditive and categorical, but needs explorations with tools other than conceptual and quidditive ones; this proximity should be existential and conscious; this kind of knowledge draws near to intuitive knowledge. Conceptualization is the stage coming after existential and conscious perception. Anyhow, with Mulla Sadra, as with Heidegger, a kind of fundamental revolution took place in philosophy in order to give it more profundity; because Islamic philosophy, till then engaged in discussions of quiddity, shifted into the discussion of existence with Mulla Sadra. However, they both put forth their own novel ideas in two distinct contexts and with differing concerns.

One of the results of the principality of existence is that the only self-sufficient, independent existence is the Transcendent God and all contingent existents are poor and dependent on Him. (p. 47).

One of the principal thoughts of Mulla Sadra is his view regarding the substantial movement; he considers movement the nature of existence and is in the belief that the creative divine soul acts in the material world via the substantive movement, and through a temporal procedure, continues the creation process. (Vol. 2, pp. 98-196)

Existence is a single truth of various ranks; the more these ranks demote downwards, their limits extend and their scope narrows and as they promote upwards and approach the supreme rank, their limits decrease and their existence extends to the point that they finally reach the most exalted rank and such a supreme rank contains all existential excellences and is limitless, absolute and infinite. Therefore, all ranks of existence have limits and restrictions, save the supreme rank whose limit is being limitless. (Tabataba’i, 1370, pp. 24 & 26)

When discussing the existence-related issues, inevitably nonexistence comes into play too, because nonexistence is the reverse of existence and where existence is not present, nonexistence is there. Of course, nonexistence is imaginary and subjective as it has no quiddity, actualization and subsistence.

Regarding nonexistence, Mulla Sadra explains: nonexistence is a general simple concept whose meaning is subject to no dispute. Difference and variety emerge when “nonexistence” is attributed to different subjects. Such difference and variety are the consequence of these subjects. For instance, the nonexistence of eye differs from the nonexistence of whiteness and this difference is relative. (Sadr al-Muta’allihin, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 348)

Nonexistence is merely one and impossible to be divided into different kinds. In reality, there exists no such thing to be called nonexistence; thus, if someone asks: “what is nonexistence?” we cannot refer to anything and call it nonexistence; nonexistence, then, does not exist in that it is nonexistence.

Mulla Sadra’s attitude in brief: “this theory signifies that: 1) the ranks of existence are not fixed and determinate, but in move towards more supreme forms. 2) Existence is the only source which at the same time of being indivisible and single, causes plurality. 3) This movement of the world is uni-directional, leading to the perfect man who enjoys divine attributes. 4) Each supreme stage of existence consists of lower stages of existence and is better than them. 5) The more an object enjoys existence, the more real, more integrated, more detailed, and more causative it is. In sum, this theory of gradation based on which existence is constantly expanding, is the pivot point of Sadraean philosophy.” (Fazl-ur-Rahman, 1975, p. 267)

Comparison of Existence in Sadraean and Existential Thought

Now, after representing the major concerns of existential thought in the two philosophical traditions of Mulla Sadra and existentialism, to draw a parallel between these two major trends, we enumerate certain headings under which their resemblances and differences gain significance and our comparison revolves around these headings. Providing a single definition of the existential philosophy is no easy task to do, but we can name features shared by philosophers of existentialism, so that the investigation of these features reveal their points of divergence and convergence with the Mulla Sadra’s principality of existence.

1) Fundamental Revolution

As was implicitly mentioned, both philosophical trends were the origin of a great revolution and a serious trend vis-à-vis the prevalent philosophical trend in their own time. In Heidegger's words, both took "a different path". Heidegger resisted the prevalent metaphysics and epistemology and criticized their fundamentals. Mulla Sadra, too, made a stand against the dominant peripatetic trend and the quidditive principality and set forth the principality of existence. "Existentialism is a reaction to the formal European philosophy, which was basically a quidditive principality from Plato to Hegel. Years before the modern existentialism, Sadra, through defending the principality of existence, started a revolution in the world of Islamic philosophy" (Syed, 1380, p. 148).

2) *Passing from the Aristotelian Categorical Intellect*

Both philosophers discarded the conceptual, quidditive, categorical and moulded attitude towards events and objects. Both dispensed with employing quidditive and conceptual tools such as Kantian intellect (in Heidegger) and peripatetic intellect (in Mulla Sadra) and instead, proposed "the experience of existence". Existence begins for both of them with the live experience of existence that is conscious and intuitive and without the mediation of concepts. In fact, "though not a religious experience, Sadra's change of mind is for certain an existential one." In this regard, he reminds us of those existentialists (like Heidegger), who not through rational contemplation, but via existential experience, had an experience which revealed to them the reality or existence The existentialists do not concern themselves with theoretical speculation on existence in general, i.e., on substance or the meaning of existence" (Syed, 1380, p. 148) Anyhow, for both, the rational and conceptual reasoning is weaker than conscious existential experience.

The existentialists including Heidegger opposed the systematic, structural and moulded intellect. "Most of modern existentialist philosophers believe that the reality of existence (special human existence) cannot be described in a philosophical discussion. That is why they write plays, novels and stories." (p. 156). But Mulla Sadra is not against this intellect. In effect, he brings up metaphysics and intellect together, though for him the intellectual issues are of a different nature; this rationalism is a non-quidditive intuitive rationalism. That is why Mulla Sadra deals with rational reasoning too: "Yet, Mulla Sadra does not

deny intellect entirely; he believes in the intellectual perception of truth, a perception completed by intuitive certitude.” (p. 156). In short, existential philosophers send intellect into exile, whereas Mulla Sadra makes it servile.

It is true that Mulla Sadra and Heidegger react to intellect, but there are differences in the stances they adopt. The tool Mulla Sadra employs to know existence is intuition, but this intuition is not one to contradict intellect; rather, it is its complementary. Hence, Mulla Sadra’s attitude towards intellect not only is not hostile but also believes in a deductive intellect in philosophical wayfaring; by contrast, the contents Heidegger proposes in existentialism demonstrate that he neither advocates quidditive intellect nor does he conceive a role for deductive intellect.

Existentialists employ subjects like “stress”, “fear”, “decisive choice”, “death”, and “futility” or “alienation” to describe the existential states of man and thereby escape from conceptualization, which, in western philosophy, is engaged in epistemology and dualism of subject-object. Regarding their attitudes, Bochenski observes: “all existentialists negate drawing distinction between subject (mind) and object (external reality) and thereby devalue the intellectual knowledge in the realm of philosophy.

In their view, real knowledge cannot be acquired by understanding or intellect, but it should undergo real life experience. However, this lived test (or experience) occurs, more than anything else, due to fear via which man becomes aware of his mortality and the instability of his place in the world, the place in which he is doomed to death or into which he has fallen. (Bochenski, 1383, p. 128)

To look into the views of the ancients regarding existence, Mulla Sadra exploits issues generally prevalent in metaphysics or theology and after discussing all the shortcomings in their ideas, he turns to existential attitude towards philosophy. Hence, Mulla Sadra's approach to metaphysical issues such as causation, movement, necessity, unity and science is completely unique and distinct compared to his predecessors.

3) Definition of Existence

Existence, from the point of view of existentialist philosophers, cannot be defined, for defining is possible in the framework of concepts and deals with concepts,

whereas existence is not a concept and cannot be known by definition and acquired knowledge. What can be known through the process of definition is the existent not the existence. Existence cannot be defined and thus should be perceived. "That is why all philosophers of existentialism begin with a so-called "existential" test or experience which is difficult to be determined more precisely and is evidently of various kinds at the level of details. Apparently, this experience, for Jaspers, expresses itself in becoming aware of the fragility of existence, in the experience of "moving towards death" for Heidegger and in the concept of nausea for Sartre. Existentialists never conceal the fact that their philosophy is founded upon such an experience and that is why the existential philosophy, everywhere, even for Heidegger, has a personal experience-like role" (Bochenski, 1383, p. 127). Heidegger is in the belief that existence is almost completely hidden from us and we can only try to approach it. Sadra too regards existence indefinable. Existence is the most axiomatic and basic reality and concept. Existence is the most fundamental concept with whose aid we perceive other concepts, and the reality of existence is the most immediate and principal experience of existence; an experience which is the basis of our perception of the external world. Man's awareness of existence is immediate and intuitive and unattainable with any sort of mental analysis. Pure existence neither takes the form of an external material object to be perceived, nor changes into a mental finite concept. However, the immediate intuitive understanding of existence may later transform into a conceptual understanding. Profound perception of the reality of existence, unlike the subjective concept of existence (in modern existentialist terms, the essence of existence) is of the most difficulty, as it requires a special kind of spiritual preparedness not possessed by all people. However, if someone is habituated to contemplation, he will finally get to know the deep secret of existence (Motahhari, 1367, pp. 19-30).

Both philosophical trends draw a distinction between existence and existent. In other words, both of them separate the concept of existence and the truth of existence, and contend that the truth of existence cannot be perceived via concept. However, these trends are different in that: where Mulla Sadra talks of the concept of existence and deems it axiomatic, he has recourse to rational and intellectual reasoning. For him, existence is superior to all logical categories like genus, kind and specifier, because it has no definition, and what cannot be defined, cannot have any logical proof. Existence possesses no cause, no matter, no place; it is the cause of all causes, the form of all forms and the truth of all things (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 20-22). Hence, Mulla Sadra's analysis

of existence indefinable nature and its self-evidence is a logical one. The existentialist philosophers, however, provide a phenomenological analysis of this issue. Of course, phenomenology, according to Heidegger, is not a scientific philosophy per se, nor a science among other sciences, or a pre-science to offer desirable philosophical trainings (ethics, logic and so forth); rather, phenomenology is a way of doing philosophy. Therefore, unlike Husserl who seeks to separate phenomenology as a scientific philosophy in itself from the dominance of philosophical tradition, Heidegger endeavors to prove that phenomenology – as it had always wished for during its consistent efforts in the process of its development from the ancient Greece to Hegel – is merely a more explicit and more fundamental image of scientific philosophy. Without having recourse to any dogmatic (Husserlian) definition of phenomenology, he draws the main lines of these fundamental issues (Sheehan, 1992, p. 50).

4) The Difference of Existence in Mulla Sadra's View and Existentialism

The main subject of inquiry for existentialists is the term “existence”. The meaning they attach to this word is hard to be determined. Anyhow, at issue here is the specific nature of human existence. Man (who is rarely described as such and mostly is referred to by “Dasein” or “being there”, “existence”, “I”, “existent for himself”) has per se an existence. More precisely, he does not possess existence; rather, he is the existence of himself. If man has a quiddity, this quiddity is his existence, the result of his existence (Bochenski, 1383, p. 127).

Hence, Western existentialism is basically man-oriented. The fact that existentialism is defined as the tradition of the special principality of man’s existence is a testimony to this claim that inquiry into existence is first put forward by man. “For man is the only existent which questions existence in general and his existence is therefore existential, i.e. related to being. This being is specific to man who, among other animals, has the gift of being able to question. The ability to question is in fact an *a priori* analysis of the conditions of the possibility of awareness for human entity that is specific to in-the-world existence. (Navali, 1374, p. 335)

In Mulla Sadra’s point of view, the principality of existence deals merely with the very core of existence which is its truth and not its meaning and this entails all, from the pure divine existence to the material unstable existence. This pure

existence, via self-revealing process and through the creation of the ranks of existence, expresses itself in various forms. These ranks of existence tender certain innate characteristics to the mind. Hence, it is not in the external realities, but in the mind that quiddities appear as the second nature of the premordial reality, which is the very existence. The more complete the existence, the less its quiddity; God therefore possesses no quiddity. Existence is definite, certain, determined and real; but, quiddity is vague, dark, indeterminate, negative and unreal. Since quiddities are in themselves nothing, if they exist, their existence will depend upon their being attached to real existences, existences which are themselves attached to the absolute existence: God (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, vol. 1, p. 49).

Therefore, by existence, the existentialists have in mind merely the existence of man and the specific nature of man's existence in the world, whereas in Mulla Sadra's view, the truth of existence entails all ranks of existence; though the low ranks are of a nature dependent on the absolute existence, and the pure truth of existence is God, all these ranks, due to their sharing an spiritual cause, have received attention in Mulla Sadra's philosophy. The existentialists never apply existence to God and in fact see God outside this circle of existence. They solely endeavor to assess man's situation and there is no word on the absolute truth. That is why Heidegger does not discuss existence with regard to existents other than man; they are only there, but just man exists. However, for Mulla Sadra, merely the very core of existence is of concern. It is the absolute existence which has principality, meaning that generally, the truth of existence has precedence over quiddity. (It should be noted that it is in the arch of descent that the precedence is accorded to existence; if it was in the arch of ascend, in Sadra's belief, it was quiddity which would receive the priority. That is to say, in mind, we are dealing with quidditive plurality. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, vol. 1, p. 56)) In the external world, there is but existence and the quiddities are but the limits of existence in the mind. It is the truth of existence which cannot be defined and its essence is extremely hidden, though its meaning is quite evident and most easily understandable.

According to Heidegger, at the outset, we did not know the existence, but we easily perceived that among the existents known to us, there are two distinct categories. Those, which neither have relation to themselves nor possess or can have any kind of attitude, position or state, like stone, tree or all existents other than man, which are merely there, fit into the first category; the second category,

on the other hand, includes an existent that not only is there, but also has a relation to himself, to his peers and to the other existents, and has a condition, state and attitude towards them ... Man exists, but beyond that, he should exist (Beimel, 1381, pp. 52 & 53). That is why Heidegger looks for an entry into the truth of existence via the existents and selects, from among all existents, only man; because existence is meaningful only to the one who questions his existence.

5) The Precedence of Existence over Quiddity

Based on what was discussed above, another issue comes to the fore: for both existential philosophers and Mulla Sadra, existence has priority over quiddity, and both have emphasized this issue. However, they diverge from each other in that for existential philosophers, man's special existence has precedence over his quiddity, but for Sadra the true existence has priority over quiddity. In Sadra's attitude, in the external world, there exists nothing but existence, and this external world is filled with existence, though of various ranks. It is only in the course of mental analysis that we separate quiddity from existence. Hence, in Mulla Sadra's opinion, quiddity is the limit of existence, whereas for existentialists, quiddity is created by existence. "All these fragile, unstable situations of man originate from the fact that his special existence has priority over his quiddity. That is to say, man is not determined within a certain limit; rather, based on values he opts for, he is drawn towards the materialization of his existence which altogether creates his quiddity" (Navali, 1374, pp. 7-46).

The next point to arrive at based on the above discussions is that both existentialists and Sadra have deeply gone into the meaning of "quiddity". Though according to both philosophical systems quiddity is of a secondary reality, they disagree over one basic point; to existentialists, quiddity refers to the quiddity of particular individuals; they never imagine quiddity to be a holistic issue; as each man has one quiddity, that quiddity is specific to him. However, according to Mulla Sadra, quiddity is an abstract concept, generally applied to all men, and, possessing no integrated reality, and it is a mental, subjective phenomenon. If a reality can be attached to it, then at most we can say it is quasi-real (Vahid al-Rahman, 1378, p. 141).

6) Perception of Truth of Existence

For both Mulla Sadra and Heidegger, perception of the truth of existence is very difficult, because the prevalent interpretation of perception and understanding is epistemological and conceptual. Profound perception of the reality of existence, unlike the subjective concept of existence (in modern existentialist terms: the essence of existence), is of utmost difficulty, for it requires a special spiritual preparedness not possessed by all people. However, if someone is habituated to contemplation, he will finally get to know the deep secret of existence.

Heidegger very properly opens the discussion of how to face and touch existence and to that aim, puts forward concepts such as well of nonexistence, stress, death, etc. In effect, man's true experience of existence takes place when he personally faces such cases. In this regard, we can loosely declare that Heidegger too believes in "the mystic journey for perceiving the truth of existence", but Mulla Sadra does not much enter into that discussion. In his opinion, though the concept of existence is the most evident, its essence is extremely hidden; in his philosophy, Sadra proposes no way to experience the essence of existence.

However, it is sometimes said that perception of the truth of existence in existential philosophies including Heidegger's, is basically achieved through negative issues such as nonexistence, stress, death, etc. "Mulla Sadra, however, adopts a different attitude towards discovering existence. In his view, the secret and the manifestation of divine act is pure existence which is his sign and effect, i.e., the manifestation of that mysterious, light-like fact which causes objects to leave the ocean of nonexistence and enjoy the blessing of existence." (p. 156) But, this differing attitude can be seen as more relevant to mysticism and the path of men of intellectual intuition, that follows a different spiritual journey.

"In West, to understand existence, phenomenological methodology has been employed. Phenomenology is an epistemological theory and provides a new understanding of knowledge. Affirmative perception of existence is not provided for by any specific epistemological attitude in Mulla Sadra's philosophy. Thus, in Islamic tradition, ontology has no trace of epistemology and has a wider scope (Navali, 1380, p. 181).

7) The Distinction between Existence and Existent

On the one hand, Mulla Sadra draws a distinction between existence and existent and on the other hand, he sees them as to be one. That is to say, in his view, the adjectival form of existence which refers to what exists is different from its verbal form, i.e., to exist. To continue this discussion in a traditional Aristotelian framework, we can argue that what had been the focus of Aristotle's attention was existent, which in his philosophical tradition, refers to a quiddity actualized in the external world. However, leaving the principality of quiddity behind and in the light of the principality of existence, Mulla Sadra founded a metaphysics whose major concern is the analysis of existence, for in his opinion, quiddity is nothing but the limit of existence; in fact, quiddity gains validity from existence. That is why the principality of existence which is founded upon a new discovery and perception of reality, has turned into a pillar of Mulla Sadra's metaphysics; a pillar he seeks to logically substantiate so that it becomes the basis of substantiation for his other doctrines. This doctrine that shifted the subject of metaphysics from existent (*ens*) to existence (*esse*), revolutionized the Aristotelian framework of the early Islamic philosophy and offered a new perception of the most profound order of reality in which everything is seen as the presence or perception of the very existence or the very divine act (Nasr, 1382, p. 181).

Sadra argues that the truth of all things refers to their existential attributes, which is the same as their existential rank. Now, as the actualization of all things is determined by existence, then existence itself is essentially existent.

Drawing a distinction between existence and existent, Heidegger, Like Mulla Sadra, contends that metaphysics revolves around questioning existence. Repeating the question of Leibniz: "why, instead of nothing, there is something?", he considers the perception of the truth of existence as the main concern of metaphysics. In Heidegger's view, if we focus on the metaphysical tradition of the West, which started after Plato and Aristotle, we come to understand that in this tradition of thinking, existent has always been under discussion, but the existence itself has never received attention, such that, as regards existence, Western thinking suffers a complete forgetfulness inflicted upon it since two thousand years ago. Existence expects man to remember it as an appropriate issue for his mental contemplation (Vernu and Wall, 1372, p. 218).

Heidegger describes the existential attitude of the prevalent Western metaphysics as an ontic attitude, where existence has changed into a void term

denoting a forgotten meaning. In such an attitude, philosophers, rather than contemplating existence and being, concentrate on existent(s). Ontic attitude, with its scientific look, and absorbed in the characteristics of objects and existents, perceives existence and being merely in the light of such characteristics. Heidegger asserts that in such an attitude, "existence is regarded as a pre-experiential condition." They have also set forth this attitude as something known with whose aid the scientific investigation is to start; then, we can be sure that, finally, the primary meaning hypothesized for existence is confirmed. They declare that our perception of existence is dependent upon our understanding of the existential entities. Therefore, they cannot understand this premise that existence is the one which determines an existent as an entity. It is true that existence is always the existence of an existent, but this cannot be expressed in terms of the existent and its attributes and characteristics (Ahmadi, 1381b, p. 223).

8) The Meaning of Free Will

According to existential philosophers, man is always surrounded by possibilities. The world, prior to receiving man's attention, had a particular possibility. That particular possibility refers to the attributes of objects and events in the world. Man, with his free will, and with his choices and decisions, constantly predetermines his own possibilities. And these relate man to awe and fear, an awe which makes man aware of the instability of his state (Navali, 1374, p. 40). But, in Mulla Sadra's point of view, the attributes of objects and events in the world are justified based on "possibility by poverty". The discussion of freedom and determination of particular possibility no longer applies here.

In Heidegger and generally in existentialist philosophies, proximity to existence takes place through understanding man's free will; but in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, this is achieved via secondary philosophical intelligibles. Free will is a key concept in existentialist philosophies without which perception of man's existence is basically impossible.

"This can be conspicuously seen in Kierkegaard's thought; he believes that to exist and to have free will are expressions more or less synonymous. ... Like Kierkegaard, Sartre insists that no distinction can be drawn between free will and existence. This is not such that man first comes into existence and then possesses

free will and freedom; rather, to be man means to have free will in advance” (Macquarie, 1377, p. 179).

For Heidegger, too, things are more or less the same. Man, with his free will, can select from among his choices, and can constantly materialize himself with these choices. Thus, man, without free will, does not exist at all, and then, like other non-human existents, is merely there. Therefore, human existence can mainly be perceived through the experience of free will. We can then draw the conclusion that Heidegger “has always believed in a close relationship between existence and freedom (free will), and for him, without taking into account the latter, the investigation of the former is deemed impossible. ... when talking about human freedom, he meant the existential aspect of freedom: freedom as man seeks it with his existence” (Ahmadi, 1381a, p. 547).

On the other hand, Mulla Sadra attempts to understand existence through the secondary philosophical intelligibles. He argues that man, consciously and existentially, perceives existence as per se that flows in mind and reality. Issues perceived as per se enjoy absolute truth and thus in these cases we can establish relationship between mind and reality. Therefore, man first perceives existence consciously and existentially within himself; he then conceptualizes; and locating its referents in the external world happens next.

9) Nonexistence

For existentialists, nonexistence is for the purpose of reaching existence; nonexistence embraces the whole existence. Thus, to know existence and its truth precisely, one should proceed to the borders of nonexistence. Out of nonexistence, existence is to emerge, and hence existence and nonexistence are one. For instance, Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, puts forward the issue of complete ignorance about existence. In his opinion, man is oblivious to existence because he has merely focused on existent. Therefore, to reach the truth of existence, our attitude towards existents ought to change and transcend the mere focus on existent, and should go for the perception of the truth of existence. Transcendence comes about based on awe and bewilderment. The first feeling to seize a man is awe, for it is in this state that man gets free from his complete ignorance about existence; then, the next state is bewilderment which is followed by the start of philosophical thinking. These two states resemble each other;

however, their only point of divergence is that in the former nonexistence is the cause of awe, while in the latter existence results in bewilderment. That is to say, nonexistence is awe-inspiring and existence bewildering. Awe is a discovering experience in which man sees the experience of existence as founded upon nonexistence. Therefore, it is with the help of awe that it is possible to go beyond existential entities. It is merely due to the manifestation of nonexistence in man's foundation of existence that the complete poverty of existents is revealed to us; and only when the poverty of existents is revealed to us we wake up and we are seized with bewilderment. And it is just because of this bewilderment, i.e., the discovery of nonexistence, that we utter "why?" (Pruti, 1379, pp. 32-35)

Sadra, however, in his *Asfār*, arrives at this conclusion that nonexistence does not exist in that it is nonexistent. He goes on to analyze how human intellect can conceptualize based on what does not exist and then employs that concept as a subject. He is in the belief that intellect is able to imagine and create all kinds of concepts; for example, intellect can create the concept of nonexistence and it can even create the concept of absolute nonexistence. In other words, in Sadra's view, nonexistence is merely a mental form, not a reality. The discovery of existence takes place only through existence; on the other hand, the discovery of nonexistence is also via existence.

There seems to be three solutions for the issue of nonexistence: nonexistence does not exist at all; nonexistence exists but it is something different from absolute nonexistence; nonexistence exists. Parmenides accepts the first choice. Democritus believes in the second one and considers void nonexistence, a nonexistence which exists. Plato agrees with that nonexistence which he interprets as otherness. He considers all negations as determination, since for the determination of any meaning or example one should argue that it is not that meaning or not that example. In contrast to Parmenides' idea, non-being exists. Relative non-being is one of the principal categories of thought and for the stream of thought, the activity of mind as well as the factual reality, non-being is as necessary as existence. Aristotle accepted the relative non-being which is the potential existence, and this is the third conception of nonexistence. Hegel observes that conception of existence results in the conception of nonexistence. Conception of existence and conception of nonexistence are the conditions for the attainment of becoming, not that they exist.

Heidegger has attempted to find a reality for nonexistence. He asserts that when he talks of nonexistence, he in fact talks about existence, because existence refrains from being defined and conceptualized. Therefore, what we find in nonexistence is existence itself. Heidegger, more than others, has focused on the positive characteristic of nonexistence. But, as soon as we decide to define it, either we keep quite or we try to destroy it. (Wall, 1380, p. 167)

According to Heidegger, “out of nonexistence, existence is to emerge. In his view, existence and nonexistence are one. Man cannot enter his innate nature and ask metaphysical questions, unless he has the courage to face nonexistence.” (Syed, 1380, p. 152) In effect, the discussion of nonexistence, in a sense, is one of the oldest philosophical discussions. To Parmenides, man cannot know what is what exists not. Georgias, however, contends that if nonexistence does not exist, existence cannot exist either. Plato, too, puts forth something which seems to be something, but is in fact nothing. Aristotle observed that as existence can accept different attributes, nonexistence should be notices too. According to Heidegger, when man raises the fundamental question (why existents exist rather than do not exist?), he inevitably gets involved with nonexistence. If we say nonexistence exists, then how is it possible for a thing that exists to exist not. And if we say nonexistence does not exist, then how can we talk about nonexistence. Therefore, “Heidegger states that what nothingness does is to play nothingness. This is the only way we can talk of nothingness. ... if non-being is not at issue, so will being. Non-being puts being in the position of being. Human existence is related to being in that it places itself outside of non-being (Ahmadi, 1381b, p. 138).

To Heidegger, nonexistence is the oldest issue in philosophy and in his lecture “what is metaphysics?” he points to Parmenides’ statement that we can never know 'what something does not exist' means. In Heidegger’s view, if nonexistence is not a matter of concern, then neither is existence, hence nonexistence would place existence in its right position. Human existence is related to existence in that it places itself outside the nonexistence, and we inevitably ought to contemplate nonexistence. Heidegger sees nonexistence far beyond the mere negation of existence, and asserts: “I claim that nonexistence has precedence over negation and not” (Heidegger, 1998, p. 96).

In Mulla Sadra’s philosophy, however, nonexistence has not such a status at all. Sadra’s attitude towards nonexistence is exactly the one Heidegger avoids. He

contends himself with regarding it as the negation of existence and thus proposes an entirely negative nature for it. In the fifth chapter of the second stage of the first journey, he deals with nonexistence and deems it merely a concept which yields no results, and in his view, there exists nothing which can be really and essentially nonexistent: (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, p. 350).

Based on what was discussed, the following can be enumerated as the differences between Heidegger's and Mulla Sadra's attitude to nonexistence:

a) Nonexistence for Mulla Sadra is a relative nonexistence, not a pure nonexistence. Nonexistence is always the nonexistence of something. Absolute nonexistence "is unknown"; whereas nonexistence for Heidegger is absolute and pure nonexistence.

b) For Mulla Sadra, nonexistence is of a secondary position compared to existence, while to Heidegger, nonexistence is as fundamental as existence. Loosely we can say that in existentialist philosophies, existence and nonexistence are like "correlatives", but in Sadra's philosophy, they are like "contradictives".

c) In Mulla Sadra's view, nonexistence is but the logical act of negation. In Heidegger's philosophy, however, it refers to the meaning of the non-being reality. The disagreements among people, severity of hatred, the pain of failure and the bitterness of being ostracized, are all form of non-being which are stronger than the logical act of denial or negation.

d) Nonexistence is perceived via theoretical and conceptual intellect in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, while in Heidegger's, like existence, nonexistence is understood and perceived not through theoretical, conceptual intellect, but via human experience of nonexistence.

10) The Ranks of Existence

One of the principal ideas of Mulla Sadra is his theory regarding the gradation of existence. Such an idea is not a matter of concern in modern existentialism. Other significant elements are substantial movement and classification of reality. According to Mulla Sadra, in all ranks of possible existents there exist some contradictions which are then combined together at higher ranks; in modern existentialism, however, there are not any ranks of reality.

In Mulla Sadra's point of view, though existence is a single and simple truth, at the same time, it also has degrees interpreted as gradation of existence. That is, existence is a truth which is the source of unity and similarity in the world, and at the same time, the cause of difference and plurality. Such difference and plurality can be of different degrees. In other words, as Mulla Sadra has argued, existence has a hierarchy of ranks, and every existent in the universe, based on its special nature of existence, fits into one of these ranks.

But for Heidegger, existence is neither God nor the foundation of the world. That is no existent and in this regard it should be named "nothing". ... Existence is innately finite and appears merely in the exaltation of existence.

11) The Meaning of Principality and Possibility

Another point in the comparison between these two philosophies which comes into sight at the outset is that the words possibility and principality can be seen in both philosophies. However, these two words are merely literally similar, and of completely different meaning. In Heidegger's philosophy, possibility refers to the choices Dasein faces and is closely related to time and free will. However, by possibility, which is mostly described as possibility by poverty, Sadra means the innate poverty and need of existents, and the whole universe is dependent on existence and is the effect of the Self-existent.

"Principality" in Heidegger's philosophy is entirely different from what it is in Mulla Sadra's philosophy. In Heidegger's, principality refers to Dasein and its choices; the original Dasein can remember its past and historical roots and perceives what "tradition" offers to it and as it knows its past, its perception is a true original one and therefore it interprets its past. The real original Dasein which is aware of its past and history, seeks to know these choices and thereby it establishes new relations with history and the past. In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, however, principality is seen to be related to existence and in contrast to mental concept of credibility; it is also construed as externality and the context of reality and has nothing to do with the above mentioned facts.

12) God and Theology

There is no correlation between ontology and theology in existentialism, but the truth of existence in Mulla Sadra's thought is primarily and essentially God. "Existence, as a reality not as a concept, is the essence of reality and the ultimate truth. This ultimate truth is "Allah". His essence is only known to Him, for He is, absolutely and without qualification, Exalted in His essence." (Al-Atas, 1375, p. 22) Heidegger's contention is that theology, through relating everything to God, prevents questioning and thereby relieves itself. In divine thought, existence does not appear mysterious and puzzling. Mulla Sadra, however, regards God as the source and the destination of the world and sees everything in the move towards him. This movement is uni-directional, leading to the perfect man who enjoys divine attributes. (Vahid al-Rahman, 1380, p. 123)

13) Time

Time is another issue set forth in both philosophies, though entirely differently. As was discussed before, in Heidegger's philosophy, time is identical with existence and existence is the same as time and a considerable portion of his philosophy is dedicated to the issue of time and temporality.

In various works of Mulla Sadra too, time has come under discussion and investigation. In his works, he has proposed three views concerning time:

1. Time is the degree of situational movement of the greatest sphere regarding anteriority and posteriority. This view has been proposed in the *Sharh al-Hidayat al-Athirat* and the *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq*, and is in fact identical with the prevalent view in peripatetic philosophy.
2. Time is the degree of substantial movement of sphere regarding priority and posterity. This view has been expressed in various works such as *Ta'liqeh bar Elahiyat* (commentary on theology) and *Risalat al-Hodouth*.
3. Time is the degree of self-generative natural existence. The principal theory of Mulla Sadra, whose various aspects are explored and which is especially elaborated on in *Asfār*, is this same theory (Mosleh, 1378, p. 468). According to this theory, time is an attached identity which is the horizon of generation and binding, is a state among the states of the prime cause and a low rank among the low ranks of existence. In existence, it is the weakest of the possible beings and of

the most inferior rank in the known objects. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, pp. 381-382).

Furthermore, material existents share a root with time and as it is impossible to take away those three aspects of the objects, so is the separation of time from them. In other words, time is the fourth aspect of objects.

Therefore, in the discussion of time, these philosophies resemble each other in that in Heidegger's, time and Dasein are interrelated, and in Mulla Sadra's, time and existence in material objects are interrelated. However, in Heidegger, this relation is proposed merely with respect to Dasein and also its explanation and nature are totally different from how it is put forth in Sadra's philosophy.

Heidegger sees man as surrounded by a series of possibilities; it is according to these conditions that he explains principality. He does not take much notice of the details of an original man's behavior, but anyhow, he proposes an evidence to help distinguishing between a valid and a senseless life. The principality of life depends upon man's approach to his own temporal structure. If he forgets the past, sinks in the present, and waits for the future, he cannot be much effective. But, if he knows the past well, and constructs his present with his plans for future, he will have an original approach to time and existence. Mulla Sadra does not regard man as a temporal being, and consequently does not justify principality with a care accompanied by worry and directed towards different temporal areas. For Mulla Sadra, principality denotes actualization and externality. In other words, he talks of the stretch of existence in the context of reality and implicitly refers to the subjective or artificial nature of quiddity (Navali, 1374, p. 40).

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