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## Analysis of the Basis and Arguments of the Theory of "Active Intellect" in Islamic Philosophy

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### ABSTRACT

One of the influential topics in Islamic philosophy is the issue of "active intellect". This term has entered Islamic philosophy from Aristotle's philosophy and some interpreters of Aristotle's works. Islamic philosophers interpreted this issue in the context of their philosophical system and by expanding its concept from the field of natural and industrial (artistic) phenomena to the field of epistemology; they gave it a significant role. These philosophers have presented two types of arguments to prove the active intellect. Some of these arguments are formulated based on the theory of the nine spheres and according to the principle of causality. These arguments attempt to prove efficient causes for the existence of spheres and introduce ultimate causes for their rotational movements. Arguments of the second category also attempt to prove active intellect by relying on principles such as "every event and contingent needs an efficient cause" and "lacking a thing, it is not given to it". In this article, these arguments have been examined and finally, it has been concluded that the arguments of the first category are vulnerable and invalid due to the invalidity of their basis (planetary theory); and the arguments of the second category can only prove non-material and efficient cause or causes, provided that their premises are true, not the active intellect, i.e., the tenth intellect.

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## Introduction

Undoubtedly, Islamic philosophy has developed along with Greek and Hellenistic philosophy in the context of Islamic teachings. Among various issues, some issues have attracted the attention of Islamic philosophers, and influenced many issues with new color and content. One of these very influential issues is the doctrine of "Active Intellect" (*aql fa'al*). This Aristotelian doctrine, with the interpretation of some commentators of his works, took on a new color in the context of Islamic philosophy, and was introduced as the intermediary between the supersensible and the sensible world, and earned the titles of "Giver of forms", "Chief of the world under the Moon" and "Gabriel Amin" and it was considered to be the proximate origin of matter and form, soul and intellectual perceptions and revelation.

The Islamic philosophers removed this issue from the natural and Aristotelian background and the course of the gradual realization and actualization of the potentiality by the form, and they based it on some fundamentals of Islamic philosophy, such as a special perception of the efficient cause, and the need for a cause for every possible event, and the impossibility of giving a thing by something that lacks it, and proved this claim with arguments. Now the question is that what are those bases and arguments? And are these arguments sufficient to prove that claim or not?

The whole effort of this paper is aimed at clarifying the concealed foundations by referring to the original texts of Islamic philosophy and using a descriptive-analytical method, and analyzing the change of direction and the historical background of the topic, and by explaining and analyzing the arguments, show their weakness and strength and the limits of their efficiency.

### 1. Background of the theory of active intellect

Undoubtedly, one of the main sources of Islamic philosophy historically is the same Greek philosophies, especially Aristotle's philosophy. This philosophy has influenced the Islamic philosophy in various ways, including the Peripatetic Philosophy, Philosophy of Illumination and Transcendental Philosophy. One of these influential topics is the issue of "active intellect". In Book9 (Theta) of *Metaphysics*, after explaining the meanings of potentiality and actuality and their relationship, Aristotle enumerates the types of priority of actuality to potentiality and states that:

For from the potential the actual is always produced by an actual thing, e.g. man by man and musicians by musicians; there is always a first mover, and the mover already exists actually. We have said in our account of substance that everything that is produced is something produced from something and by something, and is the same in species as it (*Metaphysics*, 9, 1049b, 24-30).

Based on the above text and the system based on cause and effect, and potentiality (*quwwah*) and action, and matter and form in Aristotle's thinking, every phenomenon and production, both natural and industrial, is preceded by a potentiality that is actualized and flourishes, and is preceded

by an appropriate form and actualization (of the type of subsequent actualization) that actualizes and realizes that potentiality; Whether that actual existence and realizing agent exists in nature, such as the actual human being that causes the actualization of human potentiality and, as a result, the birth of a human person, or whether that the prior and actual agent is present in the builder's mind, like the shape and plan of a building in the mind of an architect, which causes the objective realization of the building itself outside.

Along with the above theory about products and artefacts in the natural world, in a historic paragraph in the 5th chapter of the third book of the book *On the soul*, Aristotle expressed the same point of view about the process of reasoning in the soul, and based the actualization of potential intelligibles in the sensible objects on passive and active intellect in the human soul. Aristotle's words in this context are as follows:

These distinct elements must likewise be found within the soul. And in fact thought, as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things: this is a sort of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential colours into actual colours.

Thought in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity... When separated it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal (Aristotle, *on the Soul*, 3, 430A, 10-24).

These interpretable phrases of Aristotle about "constructive reason" have caused conflicting views in the history of philosophy. Some of the interpreters and commentators of Aristotle's works and thoughts, by referring to some of his words and some of the phrases used in the mentioned paragraph, believed in the independent existence of the active intellect and considered it as a separate and immortal being outside of the human soul. Some others, referring to Aristotle's intellectual foundations about matter and form, and potentiality and actuality, and phrases used in the same paragraph, consider intellect to be an element of the human soul; and they believe that the active and passive intellect are two aspects and functions of this single intellect in man. The first group divided into two groups regarding the explanation of the existence of active intellect. Some like Alexander of Aphrodisias (the greatest commentator of Aristotle in the second century AD) "counted the active intellect in all human beings numerically as one and considered it the same as God" (Taylor, 2013, 121) and believed that this active intellect, which is the same as God " and at the same time that it actualizes the passive intellect, it also actualizes the potential intelligible" (Davoudi, 2009, 227 footnote). Some others of the same group, despite the fact that they consider it to be a substance separate from man, but they consider it not God and the First mover, but an immaterial intellectual being (for example, the tenth intellect of the ten intellects) and believe that it has, in itself, "an equal relation to all human beings and even to all the world that is under the moon" (Davoudi, 2009b, 105). Each of the two groups, that is, those who say that there is a separate

active intellect, and those who say that there is a creative (active) intellect within the human soul, have detailed proofs and evidences, which are beyond the scope of this article, and their details has been reported and examined in the precious book of. "*Intelligence (aql) in Hikmate Mashsha*" (Davoudi, 2009b, 95-103).

## **2. Muslim philosophers on active intellect**

Muslim philosophers were those who lived in the Islamic intellectual environment and were educated based on Islamic teachings, and after translating Greek books into Arabic, they studied Greek and Neoplatonic philosophies, and based on the conditions and backgrounds, they themselves put on the clothes of philosophy and founded philosophical schools, i.e. the Peripatetic Philosophy, Illuminationist Philosophy and Transcendental Philosophy. The first philosophers like Al-Kindi, Farabi, and Avicenna encountered Greek sources and thoughts based on the mental context and thought system formed in the Islamic environment, and based on that, they interpreted Greek thoughts. With the same approach, these philosophers turned to Aristotle's words about "active intellect" and by plundering of Aristotle's phrases on the precedence of every production and event by the previous actual factor of the same type, they strengthened the divine perspective based on the centrality of the efficient cause.

The explanation is that, as it was said, Aristotle emphasized in the ninth book of *Metaphysics* that every realization and actuality of potentiality and production in nature is preceded by the previous actual agent of the same type. The meaning of this text is that if the kernel of a palm tree or a human sperm materializes, and a palm tree and a human being are born, this birth actually originates from the actual palm tree and the previous human being. Taking advantage of these phrases of Aristotle, these philosophers first developed the realm of this interpretation and turned it into a general rule and extended its function not only to nature and industry, but also to the field of knowledge and the creation of an immaterial entity such as the human soul; and the actualization of intelligible forms (intelligibles) and the creation of the human soul were included in this rule. Secondly, they considered the meaning of "emergence" and "causality" contained in Aristotle's speech to be the efficient cause and giver of existence, and by highlighting and emphasizing the efficient cause with the color of Plotinus' thinking, they considered that efficient cause to be synonymous with active and creative intellect. The words of Kindi and Farabi, which are reminiscent of Aristotle's words in this context, are as follows: "Everything that is potential, becomes actual through another thing, which is the same thing, but in an actual way" (Kindi, 2008, 179). "Nothing potential can become actual except through a cause that is actual like {of the type of] the same potential thing" (Farabi, 2008, 144). According to this interpretation, this statement became a comprehensive rule that was considered as a basic, respectable and valid principle in all schools of Islamic philosophy.

Furthermore, Farabi writes focusing on the second analogy of the quoted paragraph from the book *on the soul*, i.e. comparing the function of the creative intellect to the role of light on colors in the case of visual vision:

That intellect gives to the material intellect, which is potentially intellect, something that is like the light that the sun gives to the sight, because its place for the material intellect is like the position of sun to the sight. Sight is the same potentiality and state in matter (body). That potentiality, before it sees, is potential sight, and colors are also potentially visible before they are seen. Neither in the nature of the potentiality that is in the eye, it is sufficient for vision to be actualized, nor is it sufficient for vision to be actualized in the nature of colors. It is the sun that gives light to the sight so that it can see with it, and also gives brightness to the colors so that they can be seen through it.... The work of this separate intellect for the material intellect is similar to the role of the sun for sight, and for this reason, it is called the active intellect. (Farabi, 2007, 97-98).

Ibn Sina also repeats and completes Farabi's words in this context and writes: "whatever has come out of the potentiality to actuality, has come out only by the actual cause." (Avicenna, 2006, 321). It is the active intellect that brings soul from potentiality to actuality in intellectual forms, which is related to our souls like sun (Farabi, 2007, 97-98), and the meaning of activeness of this intellect is its actuality and its role in bringing the soul out of potentiality into actuality. (Avicenna, 1984b, 98).

In the West of the Islamic world, the same approach on the active intellect was accepted, and philosophers such as Ibn Bajjah (500-533 AH) and Ibn Rushd (520-595 AH) considered the active intellect as the last immaterial intellect and believed in its independent and separate existence. According to Ibn Bajjah, the active intellect is pure form and actuality, and the forms and principles of things exist in its essence, and it is he who moves the matter; and the general rules and scientific explanation and the foundations of arguments about nature come to the human soul from it; and the real goal of man is to connect and contact with it (Saeed sheikh, 1994, 155-157; Goodman, 2006, 66-49). Ibn Rushd also repeats the same opinion of Ibn Bajjah and the previous Islamic philosophers, and considers the active intellect as a distinct and separate being outside of the human soul. (Saeed sheikh, 173-175, 1994) and believes that the number of different intellects is 38 and the last one is the active intellect. (Majid Fakhri, 2008, 312-312) and the relationship between the active intellect and human souls is like the relationship of the sun with the eyes, sights and colors (Fakhouri and Jar, 2011, 683).

Philosophers of the Philosophy of Illumination and Transcendental Philosophy also took a tortuous path by accepting the words of Peripatetic philosophers in this field and digesting it in their philosophical structure about the active intellect and the theory of Intellects. The reason for the difficulty of these philosophers in this field is their double effort to reconcile between two

competing and alternative opinions of the two great Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, in this field, and adding Platonic and sometimes mystical and religious content to it. The brief explanation of the matter is that, in his ontological scheme, Suhrawardi holds the theory of Peripatetic vertical Intellects on the one hand, and on the other hand, he defends the theory of the Platonic Forms (Ideas), and based on that, he also believes in countless but finite vertical intellects (Suhrawardi, 1993, vol.2. 140-138) and believes in the Masters of Species and Platonic Forms ((Fakhouri and Jar, 2011, 142-143). It is clear that in this scheme, in practice, the active intellect (according to the perception and narration of previous Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina), loses its specific position and function, and all its previous responsibilities are delegated to Masters of Species; and the creator, sustainer, and completer of human beings in this world is the Lord of human race, not the tenth intellect (Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 2, 144-143). The translation of Suhrawardi's phrases in this context is as follows: "A large number of the vertical dominating lights (alqawahir) arise from each other ...and they are the main and high-ranking dominants" (Suhrawardi, 1993, vol. 2, 142). "And you know that the series of vertical lights must be finite, and these lead to a light from which immaterial light no longer arises" (Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 2, 138-139). Shaharzuri - the prominent commentator of *Hikmat al-Ishraq* - writes about the number of Vertical Lights in Suhrawardi's thought: "And yet the emanated lights multiply in this way until their number reaches such a level that human faculties are unable to surround them" (Shaharzuri, 1993, 364).

The story is the same in the Transcendental Philosophy, and all human affairs, such as creation, continuity, evolution and resurrection are the responsibility of the Lord of mankind. For Mullasadra, from an ontological perspective, the Ideas are both the creators of worldly objects and the sustainers of their identity (Mullasadra, 2003, 261-260), and that individual and Ideal entity in the world of the Ideas "is the origin of other individuals, and individuals are effects and signs and shadows of that entity" (Mullasadra, 2003, 263; 1988, Vol. 2, 62).

Those immaterial ideas and forms are fundamentally entities, whose relation to these mortal sensible forms is the relation of origin to image and shadow; and because they are the agent, the end, and the form of these created and changeable images, they are considered the sources of these. (Mullasadra, 1988. Vol 5, 350).

From an epistemological perspective, intellectual forms are obtained for human souls via the ascension of the soul and observation of the same Ideas and Masters of Species. "When the soul perceives universal concepts, it observes luminous and immaterial essences, but not by abstraction of intelligible form from the sensible" (Mullasadra, 1988. Vol 5, 157). From eschatological perspective, the Ideas and Masters of Species are considered the ultimate goals of all worldly individuals, including inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans; and individuals of different species with their essential and existential and continuous movement are trying to reach the entity of the Lord of their kind (Mullasadra, 1988, vol. 5: 350; vol. 9: 261; Sabzawari, 2003, 614).

Tabatabai considers the arguments of Ideas to be weak (Tabatabai, *Nahayeh*, 319-317; *Badayeh*, 177-175), and turns again to the theory of the active intellect in the Islamic Peripatetic philosophy, and depends the occurrence of rational perceptual forms in the soul on the presentational observation of the Active Intellect, which is the source of all lower existential entities; and even based on the theory of "the return of acquired knowledge to the knowledge by presence", the occurrence of particular perceptual forms, i.e. sensual and imaginal, is also considered to be the result of the presentational observation of imaginary substantive beings in the disjunctive imaginal world (Tabatabai, *Nahayeh*, 239, 250-249; *Badayah*, 146-145). Like Suhrawardi and Mullasadra, he says about the number of vertical Intellects: "It has been proven that there are many vertical Intellects, although we have no way to count their number" (*Badayeh*, 174).

### 3. Intellectual foundations of Islamic philosophers about active intellect

Since Islamic philosophers lived in the context of Islamic culture, and Quranic teachings especially about creation and theology had captured their minds and hearts; they had a special view and approach towards the system of existence and based on that, they plundered some phrases of Greek philosophers and interpreted them. In other words, Muslim philosophers had certain intellectual foundations and based on the same foundations, they understood and interpreted and strengthened some fundamental topics and terms such as "Active Intellect". The philosophical foundations of these philosophers about the theory of active intellect are:

1. As we know, Aristotle was the first person who proposed the four causes, i.e. efficient, formal, material, and final causes comprehensively and boldly, and considered a phenomenon such as a table or an oak tree to be the product of these four causes. Islamic philosophers focused on this subject; firstly, they gave a special preponderance to the efficient cause, and secondly, they interpreted it as creation out of nothing (creation ex nihilo), and assigned this dignity and privilege only to incorporeal beings and above all to God. Reflecting on the works of Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, shows that the "creating god" and "creator out of nothingness" had no central place in their thinking (Jankar, 2009, 202) and the god of Aristotle's philosophy, i.e. the first mover, which is actuality and pure reason (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 2, Chapter 7, 1072B 30-25), moves the heavens only as a final cause, i.e. object of love, not as an efficient cause (Jankar, 2018, 203-201; Guthrie, 2018, 182; Gumpers, 1375, vol. 3, 1340 and 1461). Therefore, Aristotle's God is not the creator of the world. For Aristotle, both matter is eternal and uncreated and intellects have an independent and uncreated existence (Ross, 280, 2017). Aristotle, especially as he moved away from Plato, tried to interpret the phenomena of the world from the point of view of natural causes, not supernatural causes (Jankar, 2009, 204). "So Aristotle often equates the form with the efficient cause and the final cause" (Ross, 1998, 123); That is, the efficient and ultimate cause in all natural and industrial events is referred to and reduced to the same formal cause in the final analysis (Gawam Safari, 2015, 108-119); However, in Islamic philosophy, the efficient cause

became the same as the giver of existence and sat at the top. Most of Islamic philosophers with a divine and monotheistic approach obtained from religious teachings, and influenced by Neo-Platonists and making a distinction between existence and quiddity and believing in the necessity of an efficient cause for everything contingent, believe that efficient cause is the one that gives existence to an effect that does not exist by nature, and the origin of change and movement is not the efficient cause but, in fact, the natural cause. "What divine philosophers mean by the cause is not only the origin of movement, as naturalists think, but it means the origin and the bestower of existence" (Avicenna, 1984a, 257).

So it is this sort of cause that deserves to be the cause because this cause prevents the non-existence of a thing. He is the one who gives complete existence to everything. This means that according to the sages, it is called innovation, and it is the creation of something after its non-existence (Avicenna, 1984a, 266).

Therefore, in the opinion of the divine philosopher, the efficient cause is the bestower of existence and the bringer out of something from the concealment (hiding place) of non-existence to the realm of existence (Sabzawari, 1988, Vol. 2: 214 *Taliqahe*; Farabi, 2007, 35-46; Ibn Sina, 1984 A, 403), so the cause whose only role is to stimulate and change of matter, "such a cause is a "imperfect cause" (preparing cause), not a perfect agent" (Mullasadra, 1988, Vol. 2: 213).

2. According to the previous topic, in the eyes of Islamic philosophers, there is no divine agency and bestower of existence among bodies and the physical objects, (Mullasadra, 1989, Vol. 2: 217) and the only role of bodies and their relationship with each other is preparation and stimulate and movement, and It is also dependent on a special position and confrontation; and an body affects another object (body) on the condition that it has a specific relationship and distance with it and faces it; and since such a relationship between an object(body) and a separate being (immaterial) cannot be imagined and realized, therefore no material entity has no causality or effect on a separate being (Mullasadra, 1989, vol. 3: 101; vol. 6: 46) and basically, creation is not a feature and work of dead and inherently dark body (Suhrawardi, 1993, vol. 2, 109-110, 119).

3. Another basis of Muslim philosophers in interpreting and proving active intellect is the issue of the criterion of the need of a thing for an efficient cause. In the opinion of these philosophers, everything that happens (originated thing) and is possible, and is dependent on another, needs an efficient cause, and it is impossible for such a thing to exist without an efficient cause (Avicenna, 1983, 122, 177-176; 1985 A, 261-260). Therefore, everything that happens and is possible in this universe, needs an effective cause in the strict sense of the word.

4. Another important basis of Muslim philosophers in this field and many other issues is the same rule as "Bestower (the giver) of a thing does not lack that" or the lacking of something is not giver of it. These philosophers believe that based on the self-evident judgment of intellect, if something lacks an thing and according to the assumption, it is the originator and agent of it, it



means that this thing both has it and doesn't have it, and this is nothing but a contradiction! (Dinani, 1993, Vol. 2, 499-494).

5. One of the topics that, as a basis, plays an important role in proving the active intellect is the issue of the immateriality of the soul and rational perceptual forms from the point of view of Muslim philosophers. Peripatetic (Mashsha'i) and illuminated (Ishraqi) philosophers consider the human soul to be inherently immaterial and a originated thing (Avicenna, 2006, 310-306 & 288-300; Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 2, 203-200) and Mullasadra also believes that origination of the human soul is physical and its survival is spiritual (Mullasadra, 1989, Vol. 3: 330; 2003, 309); and all these philosophers introduce intellectual forms as completely immaterial. Therefore, it is clear that these philosophers will turn to the separate causes in the explanation of these immaterial originated beings.

6. By refuting the theory of Plato's Forms, Aristotle believed in three kinds of substance: sensible perishable substance, e.g. elemental bodies and plants; the indestructible and eternal sensible substance, such as the heavens; the immovable substance, i.e. the intellect and above all, God (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1, 1069a 35-31). In order to explain the system of existence with the help of reason and empirical findings, he starts with the circular and eternal movement of the heavens (*Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1, 1072-25-19, 7) and assigns an intellect to each heaven, and introduces (according to opinions of astronomers) intellectual substances as many as the heavens (*Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1, 1073 A 38-37). Therefore, for Aristotle, the number of heavens and, accordingly, the number of motionless substances are fifty-five (one of them is the first substance, God, and the rest are intellects, (*Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1, 1073b 4-3) or forty-seven (*Metaphysics*, chapter 8, 1074a 6-17).

Muslim philosophers also accepted this general scheme (theory of intellects and spheres) about the world, and by taking the Ptolemaic theory about the number of spheres for granted, and digesting Aristotelian thoughts in this field in digestion of Platonic and Islamic thoughts, they interpreted the system of existence and its degrees.

#### **4. Arguments of Muslim philosophers to prove the active intellect**

According to the above-mentioned topics and foundations, Muslim philosophers have generally attempted to prove the active intellect via two types of arguments: some of these arguments are partially based on cosmology based on astronomical theory, and by granting the theory of nine spheres with a special interpretation, they prove the ten intellects. In fact, these arguments are considered the common product of philosophical rules such as the principle of Causality and the Principle of the One, and the theory of astronomers (as a postulate).

The other group are the arguments that are mainly organized and formulated to explain the temporal events; especially the origination of the human soul and intellectual forms; and the basis of these arguments is the rule of "Bestower (the giver) of a thing does not lack it".

The arguments of the first category can be summarized and presented in this way:

1. Since the First Cause, namely the Necessity Being, is simple and immaterial, therefore, according to the Principle of the One, the first effect from Him will necessarily be immaterial substance (Avicenna, 1363 A, 404). In the first effect (first intellect), two or three directions are included due to its possibility and existential poverty. Now, from those dual reasoning (knowledge of Almighty Necessary and knowledge of its own essence according to Farabi) or the triple reasoning (knowledge of Almighty Necessary and knowledge of its own essence, and knowledge of its own possibility in the opinion of Avicenna), the second intellect and the first sphere and its soul are emanated, and from the second intellect in the same way, the third intellect and the second sphere and its soul are emanated, and the creation continues in the same way until it leads to the tenth intellect, and from the tenth intellect, not another sphere, but the world under the moon, and the first matter and form arise (Farabi, 2007, 55-53; Ibn Sina, 1984a, 407-406). "So the series of creation leads to the ninth heaven and the sphere of the moon; and the number of non-material beings after the First Being is ten, and the number of heavenly bodies is nine in total. So their sum is nineteen" (Farabi, 2007, 60).

2. Heavenly bodies are surrounded by each other (every upper includes the lower), and according to their characteristics, they are needy and possible (contingent). On the other hand, these spheres are not the efficient cause of each other, and their direct emanation from Almighty Necessary is also impossible based on the Principle of the One. Therefore, each of them needs a separate effective cause, which is the immaterial intellect (Avicenna, 1996, Vol. 3: 221-241). Thus, the number of intellects will be equal to the number of heavens and earth located in their center.

3. Since the spheres are moving and their movement requires a mover, and the mover is also distinct from the moved (mobile) according to rational criteria; Therefore, as many as the heavens, there must be movers that are pure actuality and motionless, and they stimulate the heavens as ends and ultimate realities. Thus, there are as many immaterial intellects as there are the spheres (Mullasadra, 1989, vol.7: 269-268) and the earth and its belongings also rely on another intellect other than those nine intellects, i.e. the tenth intellect.

4. The movements of the spheres, due to their rotation, are voluntary and arise from their conscious souls. Now, their purpose and motivation in these movements is either appetitive faculty or faculty of anger or rational desire. Desire based on appetite and anger is raised when it involves attracting of something suitable to the body or avoiding that which is against it; and such animal purposes are excluded in relation to the heavens (according to their existential structure). Therefore, the purpose of the heavens in the constant and willing movements is a fixed and permanent rational thing. This rational purpose is also not lower and insignificant thing like benefiting a lowly being. Therefore, this intellectual goal is aimed at an intellectual perfection, i.e. imitation of the intellectual separate being. On the other hand, this rational being cannot be the one God, otherwise the movements of the heavens would not be different in terms of direction and size. Therefore, the

purpose of movement of each heaven is imitation of the beloved. " So each of them has a special beloved who is his leader and complements him through stimulation, and this also follows him and tries to be like him" (Mullasadra, 1989, vol. 7, 269). Therefore, there are as many as the number of spheres, vertical intellects and objects of love; and the responsible and maintainer of the earth is another intellect called the active intellect.

5. The rotational movements of the heavens are infinite and continuous. Therefore, their sources must also be beings that are infinite in terms of influence and stimulation, and since bodies and material objects cannot be the sources of these infinite movements due to the finiteness of force and influence, and the Necessary Being is also not the source of these many movements according the principle of the One, therefore there is no other way than the reference of these movements to many principles, i.e. many intellects (Mullasadra, 1989, vol. 7, 269). So, there are as many vertical intellects as there are the heavenly spheres, and there is another intellect for the earth and its belongings.

A brief look at these arguments clearly shows that the arguments mentioned above are mainly based on the study of the spheres and the heavens to prove the intellectual substances and determine their number. However, there are also arguments that prove active intellect by studying the phenomena of the natural world, especially immaterial phenomena, such as the human soul and the realization of intellectual forms in it. These arguments mainly look for its efficient cause by pointing fingers at an immaterial and originated thing, and after refuting natural explanations, they turn to the divine explanation and the immaterial entity called the active intellect. These arguments can be presented as follows:

1. According to Aristotle's point of view, every body composed of matter and form; and the first matter and form are eternal and do not need an efficient cause; But Muslim philosophers have considered the first matter and form to be possible and have considered its efficient cause to be active intellect. Therefore, the body is composed of matter and form; and the inseparable matter and form are contingent beings and effect; however, neither matter can be the efficient cause of form, nor form can be the efficient cause of matter. Therefore, an immutable entity called the active intellect, with a making (*jael*), creates the form that requires a matter, and preserves the same individual and sustains matter by a form (Avicenna, 1984a, 89-80; Mullasadra, 1989, Vol. 7: 265; 1382, 167).

2. Another argument that can be presented to prove the active intellect is the same way of the origination of the human soul. The brief explanation of the argument is that the human soul is firstly, a temporal originated thing, and secondly, it is an immaterial substance (Avicenna, 2006, 279-300 & 308-307). Therefore, according to the aforementioned principles, it needs an efficient cause. According to the aforementioned principles, its efficient cause cannot be physical; Because the soul is stronger than the physical body due to its spirituality, and lower cannot be a cause for a stronger than itself. In addition, there is no a special position and confrontation between the

immaterial soul and the body, so that the body is the efficient cause for the soul. Therefore, its efficient cause is the Active Intellect and Giver of forms. (Farabi, 2008, 130, 137). Suhrawardi, who according to his philosophical thoughts, delegates the role and responsibility of the active intellect to the Platonic Forms and considers the creator of the human soul to be the Lord of the human species, writes:

From some of the all-dominant lights, that is, the owner of the dark body (Talism) of the rational(*nateq*) species, that is, Gabriel - who is considered to be a close father among the elders of the heads of the kingdom, and is the soul-giver, the Holy Spirit, the giver of knowledge and confirmation, and the giver of life and virtue- the immaterial light on the perfect human temperament is created and emanated (Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 2, 201).

3. Another argument that have been given for "active intellect's existence" and is actually the most important and famous argument in this field and has been reported in most of the books of Muslim philosophers with similar interpretations, the same argument through the way of the actualization of intellectual forms for the potential human intellect. These philosophers, relying on the aforementioned foundations, especially "a possible thing by its efficient cause becomes existent", and the rule of "Bestower (the giver) of a thing does not lack that" and referring to some of Aristotle's interpretations, especially the phrase "always an actual being, emerges from a potential being by means of an actual being; ...every phenomenon is something that emerges from something by means of something" and by focusing on the analogy used in Aristotle's text, i.e. comparing the function of the active intellect to the role of light on colors in the case of visual vision, prepared and presented a proof in this context that its summary is based on Farabi and Ibn Sina's interpretation as follows: The immaterial human soul has faculties, and the most important of which is the reasonable faculty. This intellect is initially potential and only has the potentiality and capability to become actual. On the other hand, reasonable forms and natures are also potentially contained and involved in sensible objects and concealed in them. Therefore, both the intellect (cognitive subject) and the intellectual form (object) are possible; but although both of these are potential, it is possible for them to become actual. On the other hand, there is no sufficiency to be actualized in the nature of the essence of any of these two; Therefore, both of these, in order to become actual and come out of potentiality to actuality, need a being that makes both of them actual, and the potential intellect is actualized through the attained intelligibles; and that source and agent must be a being that is actual and separate (Farabi, 2007, 97-96); otherwise, if it itself, in terms of intellectual forms, is potential, it will need another entity to become actual and will lead to an infinite regress. Therefore, in order to repulsion of the infinite sequence, it must be a being that itself and the intellectual forms included in it are actual (Farabi, 2008, 138). "And the act of this separate intellect similar to the action of the sun in the case of visual vision, and for this reason, it was called the active intellect, and its position and rank compared to the

immaterial(separate) beings that were mentioned (except the First Cause) is the tenth rank" (Farabi, 2007, 98). Ibn Sina also writes in the same context:

Sometimes the human soul is potential intellect and then it becomes actual intellect, and everything that comes out of the potentiality to actuality, necessarily comes out through the actual being. Therefore, there must be a cause that takes our souls out of the potentiality to actuality in the intellectual forms, and it is he who is the cause of intellectual forms, and that is nothing but the actual intellect, which has the principles and sources of rational forms immaterially in his essence, and its relation to our souls is like a relation of the sun to our sight (Avicenna, 2006, 320).

Therefore, after actualization of sensory and imaginative forms, the human intellect becomes ready and prone to connection and union with the active intellect, and in the light of that blessed connection and based on the previous special capacity, a special intellectual form is spread and illuminated by the active intellect (Avicenna, 2006, 322 ). On the view of these philosophers, it is not the case that intellectual forms are gradually abstracted from physical phenomena, and intellect itself performs this abstraction, and the principle and essence of intellectual form is preserved and the same in sensory, imaginary, and intellectual stages; In other words, it is not the case that the sensible form itself is transferred from the sensory and imaginary stage to the intellect, but the sensory and imaginary stages and their study by the soul and all the thoughts and reflections of the soul in these stages are only prepares for the soul to encounter and connect with the active intellect (Avicenna, 2006, 322); But intellectual forms are effects that "are brought to the soul from outside, and when the preparedness of the soul is perfect, the giver of forms bestows them" (Avicenna, 1983, 166).

In some of the works of Muslim philosophers, this argument is presented in a different way, and instead of emphasizing on the potential intellect and intelligible, it insists on the creation of immaterial intellectual forms and its need for an efficient cause. Based on this explanation, the intellectual forms in the soul are temporally originated things and immaterial and need an efficient cause. The efficient cause of these cannot be the physical body (due to its weakness and the lack of position and confrontation between the body and the immaterial entity), nor can the soul itself, which is inherently devoid of these forms, be the bestower of these. Therefore, the only assumption left is that the immaterial intellectual being (the closest intellects to the soul) is the creator of these intellectual forms (Tabatabaei, *Nahayeh*, 249).

4. Another argument that has been put forward in the context of epistemology to prove "active intellect" in Ibn Sina's works, and has been consistently reported by Khawja Tusi and Qutb al-Din Razi in *Sharh al-Isharat*, is that without a doubt, all of us sometimes experience a kind of forgetfulness (dhuhul) in the field of rational conceptions and with a little effort, we remember them again; and sometimes we experience another type of forgetfulness (forgetting) and we

basically do not remember the forgotten matter, unless we earn it again by a new and hard effort. Therefore, since there is a clear difference between temporary forgetfulness (*dhuhul*) and forgetfulness, then something must be there for this forgotten conception (in a state of temporary forgetfulness) to remain unchanged and preserved and to be remembered again. This preserver can be neither body nor physical; because the impression of intelligible forms in it is impossible, and neither can the soul; because the soul in itself, its relationship with the intelligible forms is potential, not actual. Therefore, the sustainer and source of these intelligible forms is another being in which all intelligible forms are actually present and it is nothing but the active intellect (Tusi, 1996, Vol. 2, 362-361).

### **5. Evaluation of arguments**

A reflection on the mentioned arguments and examining their foundations shows that the foundations of the first -class arguments are: the principle of causality and its implications, especially the special concept of the efficient cause and the One Rule, and the postulate known as the ten spheres. Islamic philosophers were trying to justify both the story of creation and the hierarchy of emanation and to solve the problem of the spheres within this scheme based on the causal system. What was obtained from the combination of these two attitudes and findings (philosophical and scientific) is the same that has appeared in the arguments of the first category. Therefore, considering dual or triple directions in the first intellect and determining the number of separate substances (vertical intellects) and their leading to the tenth (active) intellect, exactly follows the famous theory of the spheres at that time. It is clear that with the invalidity of the above-mentioned theory and the earth-centered thought, both things based on it, i.e. the theory of two or three directions in the first intellect and theory of ten intellects, will be shaken and invalidated, and it is no longer possible to defend the scheme of Islamic philosophers in this field.

A reflection on the arguments of the second category also shows that the approach of Islamic philosophers in analyzing and explaining some phenomena, especially in the field of epistemology, is mainly based on supernatural causes rather than natural causes. The description is that Muslim philosophers, especially the peripatetic philosophers like Aristotle, attempted to explain the changes and movements in this world by a natural approach. For this reason, peripatetic and Sadra'i philosophers attribute all the effects and actions of natural beings to specific forms and consider their forms as the proximate causes of these effects. For example, all the accidents of the bodies and actions of plants and animals and even humans arise from their specific forms, not separate and supernatural causes (Avicenna, 1984a, 179-180; Mullasadra, 1989, Vol. 3, 49-48).

The main point in our discussion here is that a group of interpreters of Aristotle's opinions are trying to consider active and passive intellect as two functions of one intellect within the human soul, and for this reason, like Aristotle himself, they insist that intellectual forms are not separate from sensible objects, but they are concealed and involved in these sensible objects and they are potentially present in them; and the human intellect, in terms of its constructive function and as a

positive state, plays the role of form and makes these intellectual forms in objects, actual, and it unites with these forms obtained from these sensible objects, and become actual (Davoudi, 2010b, 114-107) and "the inherent nature of intellect is that of being adorned in a form without matter" (Ross, 2017, 228). But the main point that makes the difference here is that all Islamic philosophers consider intellectual forms (rational concepts) immaterial, and the philosophers of the Peripatetic Philosophy and Philosophy of Illumination also consider the human soul immaterial at the very beginning of their creation. Now, these philosophers are faced with this difficult question, how do these immaterial and temporally originated things come into existence, and what are the causes of their existence? And how does an aspect of the human intellect create these immaterial forms? On the opinion of these philosophers, since immaterial beings are superior to material things in terms of strength and intensity of existence, and among the material things, there is no agency in the sense of the giver of existence; Therefore, the only way left is to turn to and cling to the immaterial being or beings. Therefore, it can be said that the Islamic philosophers once again turned their attention to the Platonic approach in the ontological explanation of knowledge and the immaterial soul; and to explain these, they turned to supernatural causes, and even a philosopher like Sheikh al-Rais, considers thought and supplication in deductive reasoning to be the introduction and foundation to receiving divine grace and emanation of the middle term; That is, in fact, the middle term of the deduction is the emanation of the separate (immaterial) being (Avicenna, 2021, 287).

For Islamic philosophy, all other than God are contingent beings and consequently, they need an efficient cause; and an efficient cause in the sense of the giver of existence, plays an essential and irreplaceable role and is restricted to immaterial beings, and on another level, it is unique and specific to God's agency; and in this approach, the divine explanation overshadows the natural explanation in the interpretation of various matters. It is clear that in the framework of this approach, the ground is provided for the presentation of supernatural causes and arguments of the second category. The following phrases, quoted by Aristotle and Mullasadra, clearly show the difference between these two approaches:

What is the material cause of man? The menstrual fluid. What is the moving cause? The semen. The formal cause? His essence. The final cause? His end (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 8, Chapter 4, 1044a, 35-34; 1044b, 1).

The father is the cause of the movement of semen into the womb; But to turn it into an animal form and its survival as an animal, its cause, is the Giver of forms (Mullasadra, 1989, vol.2, 213).

Based on the mentioned approach, the first matter and form also require an efficient cause, and the proofs of motion, creation (huduth), and contingency and necessity in proving the Necessary Being are formulated and presented accordingly; However, it should be noted that every argument results and yields only within the framework of its middle term and not more. Therefore, if we

accept all the four proofs mentioned in the second category and their detailed and debatable premises, their result will be that the separate (immaterial) agent or agents have created them; but whether this agent is one or many, and what is its rank and position; it is beyond the scope of these arguments.

## **Conclusion**

The following conclusions can be obtained from the aforementioned discussions:

1. Muslim philosophers moved the discussion of the four Aristotelian causes in the field of nature and industry (natural explanation) towards the centrality of the efficient cause, namely "creation from nothingness" i.e. emanation, and by adding the rule "bestower of existence does not lack it" to it, they attributed the real agency and activity in the natural world to immaterial beings, especially the active intellect (in the peripatetic philosophy), and they considered the tenth intellect to be the creator of the human soul and its remover of the potentiality to actuality in the intellectual forms.
2. Although this change of direction is debatable from one point of view, but from another point of view, it is very effective and history-maker and a turning point. In fact, the origin of the difference between the two viewpoints starts from here, is our world in its changes and transformations and in the course of its continuation and evolution, a self-sufficient thing, or beyond these transformations and events, there is a creative and completing hand called an immaterial being? This question becomes bold and powerful when some of these evolutions and emergences lead to immaterial things. The question is, does the process and transformations of this system based on matter, form, potentiality, actuality, and absence, lead to the emergence of life, soul, and an immaterial perceptual form or not?
3. In response to the above question, Muslim philosophers insist that it is impossible for life, consciousness, and the immaterial soul to arise through a purely material and natural process, and for this very reason, to explain these cases, they resort to active intellect or immaterial intellects and turn to divine explanation. The point worth pondering here is that Farabi and Ibn Sina considered this immaterial being to be the active intellect (tenth) and they proved it by relying on some of the astronomical assumptions of that time and compiling a set of arguments. While some of their arguments were disputed and rejected due to the falsity of the baselessness of those astronomical assumptions, and some others are incapable of proving a certain immaterial entity; in other words, these arguments are more general than claim. Suhrawardi and Mullasadra, while believing in countless vertical intellects, also believed in Plato's Forms and were confused in their ontological and epistemological justifications.
4. Therefore, although based on special philosophical rules, most of the proofs aimed at the world of immaterial beings, and the aforementioned proofs about the active intellect, lead us to an immaterial and separate being or beings, but determining its position and number is beyond the scope of these proofs.



5. Although in the explanation of the events of the world, natural and divine explanations have been proposed as two competitors throughout history, and great philosophers have been engaged in them and have taken certain positions; However, it seems that in the context of Islamic philosophy, especially the peripatetic philosophy, both explanations (from two distinct perspectives) can reasonably be reconciled; and removing one of them in favor of the other cannot be justified.

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