



<https://coth.ui.ac.ir/?lang=en>

Journal of Comparative Theology

E-ISSN: 2322-3421

Document Type: Research Paper

Vol. 16, Issue 2, No.34, Autumn & Winter 2025-2026 pp.37-44

Receive: 22/09/2025

Accepted: 14/12/2025

Two New Components of Spiritual Intelligence: A Mulla Sadra-based Integration of Practical Wisdom and Theoretical Wisdom

Nafise Mostafavi  *

Department of General Studies, Faculty of Multimedia, Tabriz Islamic Art University, Tabriz, Iran
na.mostafavi@tabriziau.ac.ir

Abstract

Contemporary research on spiritual intelligence (SI) finds a rich parallel in Mulla Sadra's concept of the "instinct of wisdom", which this study re-conceptualizes as "wisdom intelligence" (WI). Using a descriptive-analytical method, this study aims to shed light on the multiple dimensions of SI. In this study, criteria such as cross-checking, suddenness, spontaneity, unpredictability, correspondence with distant or future events, and consistency with reason, religion, and ethics are examined. This research identifies two new, essential components of SI. The first is the ability to navigate the complex, non-linear path of spiritual growth, recognizing both obstacles and catalysts. The second is the critical capacity to assess the authenticity of mystical inspirations and intuitions that are central to genuine spiritual experiences. Mulla Sadra's philosophy provides specific criteria for this assessment, including the mystical experience's consistency with reason and ethics, and its confirmation by a realized sage—a principle rooted in Sufi traditions like the documentation of spiritual biographies (*tadhkira*) as well as the preservation of lineages of authorization (*silsila of ijazat*). This research offers fresh insight into the intricate interplay between contemporary discourse on the epistemic value of mystical experiences and new components of spiritual intelligence, bridging Islamic philosophy with mystical education.

Keywords: Mulla Sadra, Wisdom Intelligence, Intuition, Mystical Education.

1. Introduction

Mulla Sadra ([Sadr ad-Dīn Shirazi, 1571–1640](#)), a towering figure in Islamic philosophy, developed a comprehensive philosophical system known as *Hikmat al-Muta'aliya* (Transcendent Theosophy). Central to his thought is the idea that wisdom requires a special capacity and talent, and individuals possess varying degrees of this innate instinct (talent). This innate capacity, however, requires cultivation and refinement through education and spiritual wayfaring, leading to what he termed "acquired wisdom". This study expands on an earlier Persian-language article ([Mostafavi, 2022](#)), which identified components of wisdom intelligence (WI) in Mulla Sadra's philosophy and compared them to Emmons' components of spiritual intelligence (SI) ([Mostafavi, 2022](#)). While the mentioned work focused on the intersection of philosophy and psychology, this study shifts its focus to the relationship between Mulla Sadra's philosophy and mystical education. By analyzing the writings of prominent Islamic

mystics such as Bayazid Bastami and Ruzbihan Baqli, we aim to shed light on the mystical dimensions of Sadra's thought and their implications for understanding Wisdom Intelligence. After briefly summarizing the findings of the earlier study, this research adopts an exploratory approach to address the following three research questions:

1) Based on the philosophical principles of Mulla Sadra, is it possible to incorporate additional components into the concept of spiritual intelligence? If so, what are these components?

2) How does Mulla Sadra's distinction between theoretical and practical reason inform the components of SI?

3) What challenges arise in distinguishing genuine spiritual experiences from carnal or demonic influences that require intelligence?

Through a descriptive-analytical method, this study analyzes key mystical texts and Sadra's philosophical works to identify and evaluate the components of WI. It also uses

*Corresponding author

Mostafavi, N. (2025). Two New Components of Spiritual Intelligence: A Mulla Sadra-based Integration of Practical and Theoretical Wisdom. *Comparative Theology*, 16(2), 37-44.

2322-3421© University of Isfahan

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND/4.0/ License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).



10.22108/coth.2025.146766.2037

comparative analysis within Sufi traditions to explore how spiritual experiences are validated.

2. Literature Review

Spiritual intelligence has garnered significant attention in the fields of psychology and education over the past three decades. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences laid the groundwork for this area of research. In the preface to his book, Gardner (Gardner, 2011, p. XIII) notes that the concept of existential intelligence emerged between 1994 and 1995. He describes existential intelligence as one of the nine types of intelligence, linked to the capacity to address fundamental questions about life and the divine (Gardner, 1999, p. 54). Zohar and Marshall (2004) further advanced this discourse by introducing "spiritual intelligence", associating it with a "God spot" in the brain that is connected to existential questions and profound emotions. They refined this idea by suggesting that 40 Hz brain oscillations, combined with activation of the "God spot", are indicative of spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2004, pp. 67-69). Hamer (2005) expanded on this, proposing a genetic basis for spirituality through the "God gene" hypothesis, supported by fMRI studies conducted during meditative practices. Robert Emmons, an effective figure in this field, identified four components of spiritual intelligence: transcendence, higher spiritual awareness, perceiving the sacred, utilizing spiritual resources (Emmons, 2000, p. 64).

Skarżyńska (2020, p. 505) identifies the ability to encode spiritual content into a symbolic system as a component of spiritual intelligence. This encoding encompasses several domains:

Language: The creation of distinct spiritual lexicons by believers (e.g., concepts like transcendence, eternity, nirvana, or heavens);

Numbers: The use of symbolic numerals (e.g., 'one' representing uniqueness or an indivisible whole; the 'Holy Trinity' signifying one god in three forms; or '666' symbolizing evil);

Visual Symbols: The development of symbolic graphics (e.g., visualizations of gods or demons, representations of the Holy Spirit, the menorah, 'om', yin and yang, or the ouroboros); and

Music: The composition of special kinds of music (e.g., Gregorian chant, Gospel music, Qawwali, vocalizations, or Christian rock).

In Iran, Ghojari Bonab and his colleagues have also expanded the components of spiritual intelligence to include the capacity for hermeneutics and the interpretation of deeper layers within religious texts (Ghojari Bonab et al., 2007, p. 136).

Although the concept of existential and spiritual intelligence has been discussed for less than three decades, Mulla Sadra introduced the talent for acquiring wisdom—what I refer to as "Wisdom Intelligence"—over four centuries ago. The components of Wisdom Intelligence (WI) from Mulla Sadra's perspective can be understood through a review of his definition of wisdom. For Sadra, wisdom encompasses knowledge of divine truth, attributes, and actions of God (Sadr al-Din, 1989, vol. 7/326-327), perception of stable intelligibles (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 115), and the investigation of separate, incorporeal entities such as angels (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 207). It also includes understanding essences through their causes (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 306), contemplating the ultimate purposes of things (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 270). Summarizing these definitions, the common thread is the understanding of various levels of non-material and metaphysical truths. This

experience begins with the apprehension of the inner reality and essence of things, gained through direct knowledge and the perception of their relationship to the Divine Existence. From there, it ascends to the highest levels of truth, which encompass a visionary understanding of the divine names and attributes, culminating in the illumination of divine lights within the soul (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 126). He adds that deciphering intricate philosophical works and religious texts, particularly *the Holy Quran*, is a domain reserved for those endowed with true wisdom and discernment (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 40).

Background

Mulla Sadra not only clarifies the instances of the concept of wisdom but also emphasizes the method of acquiring it. Wisdom, in Sadra's view, is a form of direct insight, which is why in his philosophy, he emphasizes "intuitive knowledge" or al-ḥikmah al-gharīzīyah as opposed to "learned knowledge" or al-ḥikmah al-muktasabah (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 87). This enlightenment, described in contemporary parlance as "heuristic", arises from the discovery of a certain level of truth. This process is akin to sensory perception in that it bypasses conceptual frameworks and mental imagery, providing an immediate and unmediated understanding of reality. The distinction lies in the fact that the concepts of wisdom are grasped through the inner senses rather than the five physical senses. Sadra's integration of philosophical rigor and mystical intuition provides a rich foundation for exploring the new components of Wisdom Intelligence (WI). By bridging these domains, this study seeks to uncover additional dimensions of WI rooted in Sadra's philosophy and its mystical underpinnings. As previously stated, this study continues the exploration of wisdom intelligence from the earlier research. To enhance the discussion, a brief summary of that Persian research is provided here.

Mulla Sadra presents a compelling argument: If all knowledge were transmitted solely through human teachers, it would necessitate an infinite regress of teachers, which is logically impossible. Therefore, he concludes that a portion of knowledge must originate from within the human soul itself. This inner capacity for learning requires a faculty he terms "Hads" (intuitive guessing or insight) (Sadr al-Din, 1989, pp. 384-386). The power of "Hads" varies among individuals. Some, due to the purity of their hearts, mental acuity, and strong intuition, can arrive at profound new conclusions. Intuition can be seen as a form of immediate perception (Mostafavi, 2024a). This intuitive apprehension is significant across all fields of knowledge, including wisdom. According to Mulla Sadra, individuals exhibit varying degrees of intuitive insight in their pursuit of wisdom, which can be categorized into three distinct spectra:

1. The Highest Spectrum: Individuals endowed with the "sacred faculty", who intuitively grasp truths without the need for empirical or conceptual reasoning. This level is exemplified by Prophet Muhammad, who received divine revelation directly (Mostafavi, 2024a, p. 369).

2. The Intermediate Spectrum: Individuals who possess intuition for acquiring wisdom but require structured education to cultivate and direct it. Sadra likens this process to taming a wild horse, where education refines and channels innate potential (Mostafavi, 2024a, p. 387; Sadr al-Din, n.d., p. 40).

3. The Lowest Spectrum: Individuals who lack intuition and innovation, often relying on the insights of others (Sadr al-

Din, 1981, p. 342).

Cultivating WI demands a multifaceted approach, encompassing education, moral refinement, focused attention, and refining beliefs. Mulla Sadra employs the metaphor of a mirror to elucidate the factors that influence the acquisition of wisdom. In this analogy, the soul functions like a mirror reflecting sacred truths. Individuals who lack intuitive insight and sagacity resemble unpolished mirrors cannot reflect these truths and, consequently, are unable to attain wisdom (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 87). Attaining wisdom requires multiple reflections, much like a person needs two mirrors—one in front and one behind—to see what lies behind them. To perceive the sacred realm, which the soul has turned away from, one needs additional mirrors.

Education, especially in philosophy and mysticism, acts as a series of mirrors, enabling comprehension of the metaphysical realm (Sadr al-Din, 2002, p. 91). So he states that "knowledge is the seed of (mystical) intuition" (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 386). In this parable, moral vices are like stains on a mirror, impairing the soul's ability to reflect divine truth and hindering the attainment of wisdom (Sadr al-Din, 2002, p. 90). Another factor is the presence of the heart, or in modern terms, second-order awareness (Black, 2008, p. 70). Sadr al-Din believes that merely focusing on the outward form of worship, without heartfelt attention to God, does not lead to the inner layer of these actions. This distraction and lack of attention to the holy world is like a mirror that is tilted away from an object and fails to reflect its image (Sadr al-Din, 2002, p. 91). Ultimately, while wisdom transcends the boundaries of religion (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 207), false beliefs function like a veil, obscuring the reflection of wisdom in the mirror of the soul (Sadr al-Din, 2002, p. 92).

While Emmons views all forms of transcending ordinary perception, regardless of the methods employed, as manifestations of spiritual intelligence, Mulla Sadra draws a clear distinction between authentic wisdom and other forms of extrasensory perception. Sadra explicitly rejects practices such as divination, talismanic rituals, sensory disruption, illegitimate austerities, brain-related seizures, mediumistic practices involving children or women, hypnosis-like techniques, sensory engagement through dance or clapping, and the interrogation of jinn through intimidation (Sadr al-Din, 1975, p. 478). He acknowledges that sometimes individuals may express insights from the realm of the unseen while in a semi-conscious state. In such instances, they may appear somewhat detached from their surroundings, yet they can convey insights about the unseen, as observed in cases such as individuals under hypnosis or, in the case of the mentally ill or epileptic patients, who occasionally predict future events (Sadr al-Din, 1975, p. 473). Sadra believes that a hot and dry (melancholic) temperament predisposes individuals to semi-conscious states. However, he warns that such awareness, frequently misconstrued as a mark of perfection, is ultimately a manifestation of deficiency and spiritual impoverishment (Sadr al-Din, 1975, pp. 472-473). Sadra also explores the possibility of acquiring supernatural knowledge during sleep, when the senses are suspended and the imagination is free to roam (Sadr al-Din, 1975, p. 471). Nevertheless, he emphasizes that insights derived from incorrect practices, semi-conscious states, or sleep do not qualify as wisdom.

While psychology primarily concerns spiritual intelligence from the perspective of well-being and the search for meaning in life, Sadra approaches wisdom from an ontological

standpoint, framing it as a method for the realization of gradational levels of existence and the pursuit of ultimate reality (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 190). This quest demands a broader worldview that transcends personal concerns, directing attention towards deeper, existential truths.

Another difference between contemporary research on spiritual intelligence and Sadra's view lies in its application to children. While researchers explore spiritual intelligence in children and adolescents (Walton, 2015, p. 46), Mulla Sadra argues that true wisdom is rare in childhood and requires cognitive and experiential development, except for those with a "sacred faculty" (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 387).

A comparative analysis reveals a genus-species relationship between Emmons' spiritual intelligence and Sadra's wisdom intelligence. That is, spiritual intelligence encompasses a broader spectrum than wisdom intelligence. Consequently, while high wisdom intelligence entails high spiritual intelligence, the reverse is not true. This distinction is evident in Emmons' criteria: figures such as priests or mediums, who may access vertical data or have vertical experiences, can exhibit high spiritual intelligence. However, from Mulla Sadra's perspective, they are not necessarily wise, as the mere reception of this vertical information does not, in itself, constitute wisdom.

3. Methodology

This research was qualitative and was conducted using the analytical-descriptive method. The theories of Mulla Sadra are comparable to contemporary research on spiritual intelligence. Therefore, this study aims to compare their approaches using a comparative evaluation method. The components of spiritual intelligence were initially outlined through a library research method. Then, two additional components were identified following an analysis of Mulla Sadra's teachings and the works of Muslim mystics.

4. Results

4.1. Two New Components Of Spiritual Intelligence

Mulla Sadra categorizes reason into theoretical reason (*'aql al-nazari*) and practical reason (*'aql al-'amali*) based on its function. Theoretical reason is concerned with theoretical knowledge, such as philosophy, physics, mathematics, psychology, and empirical sciences. Practical reason, on the other hand, deals with practical sciences and matters involving will, such as ethics, politics, and management (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 83).

Building on this distinction, two additional components can be added to wisdom intelligence (WI) or, in modern terms, spiritual intelligence. The first is rooted in practical reason. The second is grounded in theoretical reason.

4.2.1. The First Component

Before we delve into this component of SI, it is essential to examine the complexities of the path of spiritual wayfaring from two perspectives. The complexity can be divided into two broad

categories: the diversity of paths for different individuals and the non-linear nature of each individual's path.

1) The Diversity of Spiritual Growth Paths for Each Individual

Ibn Sina outlines the stages of mystical experiences as follows:

"The seeker, through willpower and ascetic practices, attains a state where he experiences pleasurable states and becomes aware of the divine lights. This light resembles a faint flash of lightning that shines briefly before fading away. Among mystics, this phenomenon is referred to as 'awqāt' (moments of spiritual ecstasy)" (Avicenna, 2003, p. 360).

With sustained austerity, the duration and intensity of the divine lights' effulgence increase, and their radiance grows stronger, deepening the seeker's pleasure and joy in perceiving them (Avicenna, 2003, p. 361).

The subsequent stages include "discovery" and "observation", where the seeker directly witnesses the sacred realm. However, an important point to note is that these stages are not the same for all seekers (Avicenna, 2003, p. 364). That is, the initial experience may not necessarily begin with a faint light.

The personality structure (Mostafavi, 2024b), level of WI, and life circumstances affect the length of the journey and the type of spiritual path, as well as the challenges associated with it.

Divine grace is one of the effective factors in accelerating and facilitating the spiritual journey. In this context, God plays an active role (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 122) and individuals' "existential receptacle" (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 115) defines the roadmap to spiritual realization and the specific manner of connection. There are those who reach their destination (instinctive wisdom) with minimal effort and maximum divine attraction—these individuals, considered spiritual elites, are known as "merely fascinated", or *majdhub-i sirf* (مجنوب صرف). On the other hand, there are those who endure years of austerity yet do not experience divine attraction, remaining mere seekers without any mystical encounters. Just as individuals with strong intuition can reach conclusions without the need for extensive data or intermediate steps in logical reasoning, those with strong intuitive abilities in Wisdom Intelligence (WI) can potentially bypass the conventional stages of spiritual practice and attain certain mystical states and insights through divine grace. The balance between "instinctive wisdom" (inherent wisdom) and "acquired wisdom" (knowledge gained through study and practice) determines how easily one receives divine attraction. Allameh Hassan Zadeh points out that "Just as the intuitive thinker traverses the realms of time and space in theoretical sciences, the spiritually fascinated individual transcends time and space in their mystical journey" (Sabzevari, 1990, p. 173). In light of the multiplicity of spiritual paths, a standardized protocol for spiritual development cannot be formulated. This requires individuals to draw upon their own wisdom intelligence.

2) The Non-linear Nature of the Spiritual Growth Path

This idea assumes that people are often faced with a dilemma and have to choose between several paths. Deciding which option promotes spiritual development requires spiritual intelligence. A right decision is a step closer to the sacred, while a wrong decision is a step further away.

In some cases, the priority of choosing a path is very clear. For example, Muslim mystics prioritize following the rules of Islamic Sharia above all else, as Mulla Sadra admits: "We have repeatedly emphasized that wisdom does not contradict the Sharia" (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 326). Obligatory and forbidden commandments within religious law provide the primary framework for determining wise action.

In many cases, the secondary selection criterion for true Sufis is religious recommendation or "مستحب" and abhorrence or "مكروه". It is reported that the famous mystic Abu Yazid Bastami once said to his companions: "In this region lives a man who is known for his asceticism and devotion. Let us set off and pay him a visit". They undertook a long journey for this purpose, but when they approached him, the man spat in the direction of the qibla. Seeing this rudeness, Abu Yazid Bastami refrained from greeting him and when he returned, he said to his companions, "How can someone who has not been a faithful custodian of external manners (*adab-e zahiri*) become a custodian of the stations (*maqamat*) of the saints (*awliya*) and the truthful (*siddiqin*)?" (Suhrawardi 1996, p. 22). Spitting in the direction of the qibla is not classified as a sin, but it is considered improper and contrary to respectful etiquette. As Bayazid Bastami stated, such an act is unbecoming of a true saint.

However, at times, the choices become more complex, and it is in such situations that pragmatic paradoxes in the behaviors of Sufis become evident (Mostafavi, 2025). The explanation for many of these seemingly contradictory actions lies in the understanding that the outward appearance of an act does not necessarily determine its spiritual significance. A deed that appears virtuous may not always contribute to spiritual growth, while an action that seems detrimental may, in fact, serve as a step toward spiritual advancement.

Ruzbihan Baqli points out that some acts of worship serve the ego and are acts of obedience that have turned into disobedience (Baqli, 1995, p. 594). He further suggests that while the sweetness and pleasure derived from worship and good deeds can indicate sincerity and devotion, this pleasure may also constitute a worldly recompense for obedience, yielding no reward in the hereafter (Baqli, 2007, p. 265). Citing the mystic Wasiti, Baqli emphasizes that seeking such sweetness in acts of worship is akin to a deadly poison (Qushiri, 2006, p. 299). Moreover, according to Bayazid Bastami, spiritual practices that bolster the ego and culminate in pride pose a graver spiritual peril than sin itself (Attar Neyshabouri, 1905, p. 161). At times, God may grant a mystic particular experiences or pleasures as a test of their true

devotion. If the mystic becomes overly attached to these, they will be hindered from attaining the highest spiritual stations. It is for this very reason that spiritual guides advise their students to avoid dwelling on the sweetness of worship and mystical experiences. To illustrate this point, Allameh Tabataba'i relates an experience of his own to his student:

"One day I was sitting in the mosque of Kufa and performing the prayer (dhikr). Suddenly, a heavenly houri (maiden of paradise) approached me from the right, holding a cup of heavenly wine in her hand, which she brought to me and presented to me. Just as I was about to turn my attention to her, I remembered the words of my teacher (who had previously advised me not to pay attention to mystical visions). So I averted my eyes and continued to pray" (Hosseini Tehrani, 2005, p. 31).

This very disregard for the sweetness of worship and mystical experiences is a stage of asceticism progression. Mulla Sadra defines the hallmark of a sage (حكيم) as asceticism (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 207). He believes that wisdom and spiritual freedom are the foundation upon which all other moral virtues are built (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 88). Asceticism is the purification of the heart from worldly preoccupations and the complete attention to the ultimate truth (God). Spiritual freedom means the dominance of rational soul judgments over bodily inclinations, such that the weaker the bodily desires and the stronger the intellectual desires, the more complete the spiritual freedom (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 87). Asceticism goes beyond a mere aversion to worldly pleasures, fame, and wealth; it encompasses various levels. Bayazid al-Bistami, the eminent Sufi, powerfully articulates this idea: "For three days I was an ascetic, on the first day from the world, on the second day from the hereafter, and on the third day from everything other than God" (Attar Neyshabouri, 1905, p. 167). Asceticism (zuhd) is also essential for attaining high spiritual states, as it involves the sweetness of experiencing mystical realizations. Attention to mystical observations acts as a barrier to reaching the state of annihilation (fana). As the seeker progresses, the obstacles become subtler, and recognizing them becomes more difficult. The path is rarely straightforward or predictable; what initially aids progress may later become a hindrance, and conversely, what seems like a destructive obstacle can ultimately contribute to growth. Khidr's killing of a person exemplifies this. When Moses confronted him about why he had killed the young boy, Al-Khidr replied: "I did not do [these things] of my own accord: 'these are the explanations for those things you could not bear with patience.'" (al-Kahf/82).

With this clarification, it becomes evident that due to the complexity and personal nature of the spiritual journey, making the right choices for spiritual growth often necessitates a high level of spiritual and wisdom intelligence.

4.2.2. The Second Component

Another component of wisdom intelligence or, in modern terms, spiritual intelligence, involves the evaluation of metaphysical experience (vertical data). Discerning between ego-driven delusions, demonic temptations, and genuine divine revelations and inspirations demands a unique intelligence grounded in theoretical reasoning. According to Sadr al-Din (1989, p. 18), the psychological factors of imagination and delusion can hinder wisdom. Mulla Sadra suggests that the imaginative faculties of the soul (nafs) can

sometimes be the source of unusual and extraordinary occurrences.

Strengthening will and imagination can not only shape spiritual experiences, but they can also be effective in the material realm. Sadra, like Ibn Arabi, points out that some individuals, by enhancing the power of imagination (imaginal abstraction), can create forms in the material world. The difference between these forms and other objects is that when the individual becomes heedless of that creation, it vanishes (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 267; Ibn Arabi, 1991, p. 88). This process is referred to as "Creation by Effort". In addition, he mentions individuals with strong imaginations possess special abilities such as predicting the future and comforting disabled individuals (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 87). This passage suggests that while these perceptions might be true, they are not wisdom and do not enhance one's knowledge or spiritual growth.

Steinbock examines the spiritual experiences of three figures from the Abrahamic tradition—Rabbi Dov Baer, Saint Teresa of Ávila, and Ruzbihan Baqli—through an analysis of their personal accounts. He seeks to identify criteria for authentic mystical encounters, focusing on their unexpected and seemingly inexplicable nature. These experiences, he argues, are not the result of conscious effort or prior mental preparation but rather arise spontaneously and unexpectedly, often presenting content radically different from the individual's ordinary thought processes (Steinbock, 2009). Although these criteria are effective for discerning the subjective nature of an experience and assessing whether it stems from imagination or delusion, they are not sufficient for distinguishing demonic temptations.

Maharaj uses the method of cross-checking to confirm mystical experiences. He cites the example of Sri Ramakrishna and another monk, Jatadhari, who both had the same experience of Ramlala (the infant Rama) at the same time. He concludes that this shared simultaneous experience validated the validity of their experiences:

"On some days Jatadhari would cook food to offer Ramlala, but couldn't find him. Then he would come running in distress to my room, and there would be Ramlala playing on the floor. Jatadhari's feelings were terribly hurt Then one day Jatadhari came to me, crying with joy, and said: Ramlala has revealed himself to me in a way that I have never known before but have always longed for. Now the desire of my life is fulfilled. Ramlala says he won't go away from here; he doesn't want to leave you. But I'm not sad about it anymore. He lives happily with you and plays joyfully, and I am full of bliss when I see him this way" (Maharaj, 2018, pp. 222-223).

Crucially, divine self-sufficiency (*ghina*) renders the act of providing food for Ramlala (or any deity) rationally inconsistent with omnipotent divinity. Divine beings, including God and angels—as exemplified by the narrative of Abraham and the angels in Surah Hud (Hud/70-71)—are not corporeal and thus do not consume food. Maharaj might counter the objection that divine needlessness of food renders the experience irrational by asserting that Ramlala did not consume the offering, and that Jatadhari's perception of preparing food was erroneous. However, the criterion of simultaneous vision, while demonstrating the experience's non-illusory nature, does not preclude its origin from a non-divine source, such as a demonic or malevolent entity. Sadr al-Din emphasizes reason as a key criterion in assessing the validity of mystical experiences. He considers logic and rationality essential tools for evaluating both observation and

gnosis, rejecting that which defies rational understanding (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 323). Nevertheless, Sadr al-Din recognizes the limitations of reason, acknowledging a realm of wisdom and truth that surpasses human intellect. His poetry, for instance, depicts a divine love experience that leads to the transcendence of intellectual faculties:

Reason departed and love took its place

Love, is the true heir, in this sacred space (Sadr al-Din, 2002, p. 140)

Mulla Sadra's epistemological framework establishes a hierarchical structure of knowledge, beginning with sensory perception, progressing to reason, and culminating in intuition/revelation. Although intuition may provide access to insights that transcend the limitations of reason, it cannot legitimately conflict with truths established through rational processes. It is crucial to distinguish between that which is "beyond reason" or "trans rational"—meaning inaccessible to rational analysis—and that which is "anti-rational", which signifies a direct contradiction or negation of rational principles. Mystical experiences, while potentially trans rational, are not inherently anti-rational. He asserts that his mystical insights not only align with but also transcend the rational conclusions he had previously drawn. He describes his experiences in the following manner:

"After persevering in this state of seclusion, withdrawal, inactivity, and solitude for a long time, my soul ignited with a luminous flame from the intensity of the struggles, and my heart was inflamed with a strong fire from the multitude of spiritual exercises. Thus, the lights of the kingdom poured upon it, and the secrets of the divine dominion settled upon it. The eternal lights caught up with it, and divine favors protected it. I was granted insights that I had never known before, and mysteries were unveiled to me that had never been unveiled in such a manner before. This Inspiration was not from mere proof, but rather, everything I had previously known through proof, I witnessed with additional evidence through direct perception of divine secrets, divine truths, divine deposits, and the hidden attributes of the Eternal. Thus, the intellect found rest in the lights of truth morning and evening, and through them drew near to Him and reached Him purified" (Sadr al-Din, 1989, pp. 6-8).

Rationality, a significant factor in evaluating mystical experiences is not a foolproof safeguard against deception. Demonic forces may skillfully manipulate these experiences, even leveraging the individual's own rational capacities to achieve their ends. Teresa argued that genuine spiritual fruits, such as inner peace, trust in God, and selfless acts of charity, could only stem from divine intervention. Fales raises pertinent questions regarding the boundaries of demonic power, specifically whether such entities could utilize seemingly good works for their own nefarious purposes (Fales, 1996, p. 32). Thus, a temptation might beckon one toward a lesser good to foster complacency or to obstruct a greater good.

Maharaj suggests an additional criterion for assessing the validity of spiritual experiences: their alignment with events occurring elsewhere. He recounts an instance of a purported vision of Sri Ramakrishna that occurred during a state of samadhi, accompanied by telesthesia, or remote viewing. During this experience, Sri Ramakrishna is said to have perceived Goddess Durga alongside specific details within Surendra's residence. This includes verifiable elements such as the arrangement of lights in the worship hall and the individuals and objects near the divine image. The subsequent

corroboration of these details by devotees is cited as supporting evidence for the authenticity of the claimed vision (Maharaj, 2018, p. 224). Unlike Maharaj, Mulla Sadra emphasizes the source of inspiration, not simply the verifiability of metaphysical experience (vertical data), as the determining factor in whether an experience constitutes wisdom. Sadra posits that individuals with ascetic practices can access the lower kingdom—the abode of jinn, demons, and the souls of sinners—receiving information about future events. These individuals remain separated from the sacred realm and are considered morally deficient (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 29). This differentiation, predicated on the origin of the inspiration,

finds support in Quranic verses that introduce Satan as "who is in the hearts of people" (Nas/5). Therefore, these inspirations and purported prophecies are often attributed to the world of jinn and demons, rather than being recognized as genuine wisdom. In contrast, the sage's wisdom is believed to originate from the angelic realm (Malkut) and ascend to the realm of divine names and attributes (Sadr al-Din, 1975, p. 473).

Discerning authentic spiritual experience can be so challenging that even Ruzbihan, during his spiritual journey, occasionally struggled with uncertainty, fearing demonic deception:

"I was terrified by the possibility that my experience could be a deception from the devil. It was as if Satan had cast a shadow of doubt, similar to when he whispered to Moses, questioning the divine origin of his experiences" (Baqli, 2014, p. 223).

Then, Ruzbihan recounts that in this state, God spoke to him, saying:

"These cries, these moans, these tears, this burning heart fueled by the radiance of yearning for My timeless face – could such fervor truly spring from the whispers of temptation? Do not despair, do not be troubled, for it is I, who draw My chosen ones into the light of My being, in a manner that fills their hearts with joy. Authentic rapture is found only in the unveiling of My Presence, regardless of the guise it assumes".

Through this dialogue, Ruzbihan arrives at a profound conviction: the deepest ecstasy can only spring from a divine wellspring. But does this criterion hold true within the framework of Transcendent Theosophy as well?

Following Avicenna, Mulla Sadra identifies the realm of imagination and illusion as the breeding ground for human temptation (Avicenna, 2004, p. 33; Sadr al-Din, 1975, p. 361). This implies that the allure of evil whispers offers an imaginary or physical pleasure. In contrast, the joy born of mystical experience transcends such superficial and fleeting delights, often ascending to a state of *sukr*, or divine intoxication. This profound joy emanates from the deepest wellsprings of human existence, its sweetness intensifying with each step on the path of spiritual ascent. In the final stages, beholding divine majesty reflected in all creation, the mystic becomes the most benevolent, and joyous of beings (Sadr al-Din, 1989, p. 190; Avicenna, 2003, p. 365). Again, this criterion, based on inner feeling, doesn't encompass all experiences and is ineffective for those who have not yet reached rapture and have no knowledge of mystical ecstasy. It is like someone who hasn't tasted excellent food and considers ordinary food to be excellent; these individuals also consider the illusory pleasures derived from self-deception and diabolical influence to be authentic. Discerning the true source of an experience can be an exceedingly subtle endeavor. As

Mulla Sadra notes, "only a perfected sage possesses the discernment to distinguish between a genuine and a pseudo-sage" (Sadr al-Din, 1975, p. 473). In a similar vein, Ruzbihan emphasizes the importance of consulting a spiritual guide to authenticate and validate mystical experiences (Baqli 2007, p. 283). This principle underlies the *silsila-yi ijazat* (chains of authorization) system prevalent among sufis. Disciples, after completing their prescribed training, would receive formal confirmation and authorization from their master, granting them permission to instruct their own disciples. The credibility of each individual within the *silsila* depended upon the established credibility of their master and the unbroken chain of masters extending backward in time. Another method utilized was *tadhkira-navisi* (biography writing), a practice in which mystic scholars would mutually verify and document the life histories and spiritual states of mystics. This process served as a means of preserving and authenticating their spiritual legacies.

It may be argued how the beginning of this chain (of spiritual masters) gains its legitimacy. In response, it is said that most chains of authorization (*silsila*) ultimately trace back to the Religious Elders such as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Imam Ali (AS). However, how are those who are merely fascinated or those who have no master (teacher) validated?

Bayazid Bastami, who famously stated, "You take your knowledge from the dead (books), while I learn from the Living One who does not die (God)" (Ibn Arabi, n.d., p. 31; Sadr al-Din, 1981, p. 12), is an example of someone recognized by other mystics, commentators, and disciples despite not having a master. The process of validation is complex. At times, a mystic may have no formal master and becomes recognized through other mystics. Conversely, a mystic might study under several masters at different stages, and their own renown later leads to the recognition of those masters (in a reverse manner).

Many mystics choose to remain in obscurity and do not seek recognition. Legitimacy is typically attained by those who aspire to nurture disciples and guide others, drawing upon their mystical achievements, the relative distinction of their writings, and the endorsement of others.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigates how one of the two key components of wisdom intelligence or, in modern parlance, spiritual intelligence, is recognizing the obstacles and facilitators of progress on the path of spiritual growth. Mulla Sadra describes the basic principles within the framework of theoretical instruction and practical discipline for cultivating spiritual intelligence; however, the details of this path remain deeply personal.

Consequently, no universal education can be applied uniformly to all spiritual seekers. This inherent complexity arises from two fundamental considerations: First, each individual's path is determined by his or her unique existential receptacle, contextual circumstances, and divine providence (*mashī'a*). While some undergo a long spiritual journey, others reach realization in a remarkably short time - a variation that is often influenced by divine attraction (*jadhba*), which can greatly accelerate this ontological ascent. Secondly, the path itself defies linear predictability. Paradoxically, elements that initially serve as catalysts for growth may later prove to be obstacles, just as apparent obstacles often turn into channels for transformative gnosis (*ma'rifa dhawqiyya*). The second component of WI (*Al-Ghrizah Al-Hikmi*) or SI contains the

distinction between genuine and invalid inspirations,

This study emphasizes that conventional validation criteria- including verification by correspondence with events in another time or place, phenomenological immediacy, spontaneity, non-linearity and precognitive accuracy- while useful for evaluating psychic phenomena, prove insufficient for detecting demonic obsessions. Mulla Sadra's philosophical system maintains that authentic wisdom (*hikma*) operates in harmony with both rational demonstration (*burhān*) and religious law (*sharī'a*). Yet these epistemological filters primarily exclude experiences that are irrational, extra-legal, or morally deficient, remaining insufficient for identifying subtle diabolical infiltrations.

The affective criterion of intense emotion also fails to capture the totality of truthful experience, especially for those unfamiliar with the indescribable joy (*ladhdha*) of a genuine mystical encounter. Consequently, authentication of such subtle spiritual phenomena requires extraordinary discernment and the highest degree of wisdom-intelligence- a point emphasized by Mulla Sadra's insistence on verification by a consummate sage (*al-'arif al-kāmil*). This imperative finds its institutional expression in the Sufi practices of documenting spiritual autobiographies (*tadhkirāt*), compiling hagiographies of saints (*manāqib*) and preserving initiatic lineages (*salās al-ijāzāt*), all of which institutionalize this essential principle of evaluation.

References

- The Holy Qur'an* (2004). (M.A.S Abdel Haleem, Trans). Oxford University Press.
- Attar Neyshabouri, F. (1905). *Tazkirat al-Awliyā* (A. Nicholson, Ed.). Brill. [In Persian]
- Avicenna, H. (2004). *Jame- al- Badaye*. Al-Elmiyah. [In Arabic]
- Avicenna, H. (2003). *Al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbīhāt* (M. Zāre', Ed.). Bustān-i Kitāb. [In Arabic]
- Baqli, R. (2007). *Taqsim al-khawater* (A. Farid al-Mazidi, Ed.). Dar Al-Afaq Al-Arabiya. [In Arabic]
- Baqli, R. (2014). *Kashf al-Asrār* (The Unveiling of Secrets) (M. Famoori, Ed.). Rozbar. [In Arabic]
- Baqli, R. (1995). *Sharh-e-Shatahiyat: dicription of mystical paradoxes* (H. Corbin, Ed.). Tahuri. [In Persian]
- Black, D. L. (2008). Avicenna on self-awareness and knowing that one knows. In S. Rahman, T. Street, & H. Tahiri (Eds.), *The unity of science in the Arabic tradition: Science, logic, epistemology and their interactions* (pp. 63–87). Springer.
- https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8405-8_3
- Emmons, R. (2000). Spirituality and intelligence: Problems and prospects. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10(1) pp. 57-64, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327582IJPR1001_6
- Fales, E. (1996). Mystical experience as evidence. *Philosophy of Religion*, 40(1), pp. 19-46.
- Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st Century*. Basic Books.
- Ghobari Bonab, B., Salimi, M., Soleimani, L., & Nouri Moghadam, S. (2007). Spiritual intelligenc. *A Research Quarterly in Islamic Theology (kalam) and Religious Studies*, 3(10), 125-147.
- <https://andishe.maaref.ac.ir/article-1-1746-fa.html> [In

- Persian]
- Hamer, D. (2005). *The God gene: How faith is hardwired into our genes*. Anchor Books.
- Hosseini Tehrani, M. H. (2005). *Mehr-e-Taban: Memoirs and Interviews of the Disciple*. Noore Malakoot Quran. [In Persian]
- Ibn Arabi. (1991). *Fusus al-Hikam*. Al-Zahra. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Arabi. (n.d.). *Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiyah*. Dar Sadr. [In Arabic]
- Maharaj, A. (2018). A cross-cultural defense of the epistemic value of mystical experience: Sri Ramakrishna, self-authentication, and the argument from experience. In *Infinite paths to infinite reality: Sri Ramakrishna and cross-cultural philosophy of religion* (pp. 196–237). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190868239.003.0007>
- Mostafavi, N. (2022). Comparative evaluation of wisdom intelligence with spiritual intelligence and its relationship with education. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 16(40), 111-126.
<https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2022.51084.3293> [In Persian]
- Mostafavi, N. (2024a). Intuition in the transcendental philosophy. *Journal of Religious Thought*, 24(4), 67-79.
<https://doi.org/10.22099/jrt.2024.51206.3112> [In Persian]
- Mostafavi, N. (2024b). Transcendent wisdom from structuralism to post-structuralism. *Journal of Mystical Literature Alzahra University*, 16(37), 73-102.
<https://doi.org/10.22051/jml.2024.37666.2548> [In Persian]
- Mostafavi, N. (2025). Mystical Paradox: A Comparative Study of Baqli and Stace. *Religious Inquiries*, 14(2), 81-98.
<https://doi.org/10.22034/ri.2025.425117.1818>
- Qushiri, A. H. (2006). *Qushiri's treatise, commentary by Forouzanfar* (A. H. Ahmad Osmani, Trans.). Elmī va Farhangī. [In Arabic]
- Sabzevari, H. (1990). *Sharh-i manzumah* (H. Hassanzadeh, Ed.). Nab. [In Arabic]
- Sadr al-Din Shirazi, M. (1975). *Al-Mabda' wa Al-Ma'ad* (J. Ashtiani, Ed.). Islamic Association of Wisdom and Philosophy. [In Arabic]
- Sadr al-Din Shirazi, M. (1989). *Al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a*. Mustafavi. [In Arabic]
- Sadr al-Din Shirazi, M. (n.d.). *Al-Hashiya Ala al-Elahiyat*. Bidar. [In Arabic]
- Sadr al-Din Shirazi, M. (2002). *Risalah-i se asl (The Three Principles)* (S. H. Nasr, Ed.). Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute. [In Persian]
- Sadr al-Din Shirazi, M. (1981). *Al-shawahid al-rububiyyah fil Manahij al-Sulukiyyah* (J. Ashtiani, Ed.). The University Publication Center. [In Arabic]
- Steinbock, A. J. (2009). *Phenomenology and Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- SKrzypińska, K. (2020). Does Spiritual Intelligence (SI) Exist? A theoretical investigation of a tool useful for finding the meaning of life. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 60, 500–516.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01005-8>
- Suhrawardi, Sh. A. (1996). *Awaref al- Maaref* (Kind gifts of knowledge). Elmī va Farhangī. [In Persian]
- Walton, R. (2015). *Precursor, indicator or mirage: What relationship exists between spirituality and type of giftedness?*. University of Wollongong.
- Zohar, D., & Marshall, I. (2004). *Spiritual capital: Wealth we can live by*. Berrett- Koehler Publishers Inc.