

On Causality Evolution in Aristotelian and Avicennian Philosophy and Transcendent Wisdom

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Abstract. The main questions raised in the present article include “What are common grounds and differences between Aristotle, Avicenna and Mulla Sadra’s approaches to causality?” and “How do their approaches to cause and effect evolve?” As the research findings suggest, Aristotle introduced four causes, considering the universe to be eternal and regards the agency a notion uniquely restricted to the final cause. On the other hand, drawing on his knowledge of Islamic teachings, Avicenna supports the Aristotelian four causes in addressing the creation problem but departs from his views by raising the notion of efficient cause as the creative cause to explain the problem of creation. Mulla Sadra considers the principality of existence and its gradation in order to hypothesize causality as an existential affair and views the effect as related to the cause. One of the most significant results of the present study, which was carried out by adopting a descriptive-analytical methodology, is that over time and with the evolution of some philosophical issues, the status of cause has become richer and the status of effect has become more subtle. As a result, certain ambiguities regarding causality in doctrinal discussions have been addressed.

Keywords. Four Causes, Final Cause, Efficient Cause, Creation, Principality of Existence, Gradation of Existence.

1. Introduction

One of the basic and significant topics in philosophy revolves around the discussion of causality. Causality is a philosophical issue since cause and effect are regarded as existing rights (Avicenna, 1997: 257). The notion of causality was first introduced in Aristotelian works and then was passed down from Neo-Platonists to the Islamic philosophy. The denotation of causality as intended by Aristotle evolved over time. According to Aristotelians, causality is associated with the notions of change and movement, while Neo-Platonists suggest that it implies creation and exportation. Inspired by verbal sources and religious beliefs, Islamic thinkers modified the Aristotelian denotation of causality and took it as a donator of existence and thereby interpreted the notion of creation and the relation between the Wajib al-Wujud (i.e., the Necessary Being) and possible existents (Javadi Amoli, 1996: 2-2/311).

In other words, causality as Islamic scholars intended, refers to two entities, one of which needs the other for its existence so that if the first is non-existent the second ceases to be. However, according

to natural scholars' definition, there is no such need at all and dependence on existence and impossibility of an effect without a cause is not even raised (Motahari, 1989: 7/320). Therefore, one may note that to Muslim scholars, causality is not solely the outcome and concurrence of two accidental phenomena and a perceptual affair. Rather, it is an intrinsic association between the cause and effect. In their opinion, causality cannot be proved through the senses. Instead, it is perceived through wisdom, because the senses serve to help perceive consequences while wisdom serves to perceive them.

The universe in Aristotle's philosophical system is eternal and a non-creature. He divides the cause into four elements: material, efficient, formal and final, and suggests that the efficient cause, as a mover, transforms the potential into reality, and that the final cause takes precedence over the other four causes.

Despite being deeply inspired by Aristotle, Avicenna distances himself from Aristotle when approaching the creation problem. He refers to the efficient cause as an enabler of existence and the originating cause of the universe to explain the notion of creation. He argues that the association between the cause and effect can be approached in the two fields of existence and nature. Whenever he points to the efficient and final cause, he refers to the existential association between the cause and effect; however, when he discusses material and the final cause, he refers to the intrinsic association between the cause and effect.

Mulla Sadra suggests that cause and effect have a gradational association with each other and cause has an independent existence, while effect has an intermediary role. According to the transcendent wisdom approach, the real existence is foreign and inherently unique. It is a type of unity, which warrants multiplicity, and it is a type of multiplicity that warrants unity. Similar to Muslim mystics, Mulla Sadra denies the existence of any duality between the cause and effect. Instead, he argues that the effect lacks an independent existence as it is the manifestation of the cause.

The present paper attempts to address the question regarding the evolving stances of Aristotle, Avicenna and Mulla Sadra on cause and effect, as they are the three great thinkers that have contributed to the problem of causality. In this study, it is suggested that divinity as the cause and the prime mover has evolved in the Aristotelian philosophical system into an efficient cause. Meanwhile, the Avicennian philosophical system considers the final cause as the cause of all causes. With the evolution of the wisdom discourse and Mulla Sadra's philosophy gaining momentum, the significance of the cause rose and its effect became more subtle. Therefore, rational explanation of most problems such as intrinsic unity and unity of divine acts as well as dependence of effect on cause are offered.

In this line, we first introduce the approaches of Aristotle, Avicenna, and Mulla Sadra toward causality and then compare them with each other.

2. Causality According to Aristotle

Aristotle takes wisdom as a science for dealing with cause and effect (Aristotle, 1984: 981b-983a) Cause is so significant to him so much so that he makes the perception of objects conditional on understanding their primary cause (Ibid, 983a24, 993b23, 194b18, 75b37-76a14). In fact, Aristotle takes cause as the origin and beginning of everything (ibid., 1013a); however, he does not define causal association and solely seeks to prove the first cause, its characteristics and the four causes (Ross, 1998: 122).

In Aristotle's works, cause is denoted by two terms "AITIOV" and "AITIA". In Greek, alitiov represents an entity on which something else is dependent. In fact, the four causes are taken as affairs to which an entity owes its existence (Heidegger, 1994:4). Some scholars suggest that alitiov represents cause while aitia refers to either cause or reason. In other words, when Aristotle decides to use a term to denote cause, he uses "aitiov". In comparison, when he intends to refer to a law or a method which points to cause(s), he uses the term "aitia" (Hernandes, 2010:2).

Therefore, some contemporary scholars (especially scientific and analytical philosophers) translate "aitia" as "explanation" rather than "cause". In other words, they believe that by the four causes Aristotle means four explanations (Aristotle, 1984: 93b22&94a20). However, a thorough review of Aristotelian works reveals that Aristotle does not use those terms quite thoughtfully. He sometimes uses the terms "aitiov" and "aitia" interchangeably. However, critics of Aristotelian works employ certain equivalent terms for "aitiov" and "aitia" by taking their own culture into account. Therefore, one cannot judge precisely the degree to which the equivalent terms agree with Aristotle's intentions. Since he uses

the terms according to the common culture of his time, the term "cause" in the Greek language in the Aristotle's time is different from the contemporary denotation of this term in contemporary Greek and other languages, for that matter.

Therefore, one may argue that causality in Aristotelian philosophy includes cause and effect and explanation of both of them (Heidegger, 1994:16). In his view, cause not only brings an entity into being but is also responsible for the distinct condition of that entity, too. In other words, cause can justify and prove that condition. Therefore, one might argue that the Aristotelian cause is a sum of answers to different types of "whys" about a certain condition (Qavam Safari, 2003: 99-102).

Aristotle frequently uses the terms "aitiov" and "aitia" as equivalent to "ārxe", a term which signifies "beginning". Based on metaphysical definitions, ārxē has multiple denotations: 1) The part of the entity where movement starts like a line or a road which starts somewhere. 2) From there, anything can come into being in the most beautiful way, not from the beginning, like learning, which must begin where it is easiest to learn, not from the beginning. 3) An entity whose emergence brings about the existence of another being, like a column for a house or a wood panel at the bottom of a ship. 4) Something out of an object from which the object is made of. In this case, the external entity enables movement and change like a baby born from his/her parents. 5) Something which moves according to the rational choice of the mover and it is constantly changing, like kings and leaders who were all called ārxē. 6) Something by which an object is primarily identified by, e.g., topical principles in discussion. The common point among all beginnings and origins is that they are all firsts and from there other entities come into being, or are perceived. Some of them exist in the object itself and some are outside of the object. Therefore, nature, elements, thinking, logical choice, essence and its derivations are all among originating and initial constituents. From Aristotle's viewpoint, all causes are somehow origins and beginnings. Thus, all origin types and characteristics of are also found in the cause (Aristotle, 1984: 1013a16). As a result, reason, explanation and origin all mean the same to Aristotle and they may be used interchangeably¹. In this line, one may argue that Aristotle is the first person to theorize on cause, point to its types and use it in his philosophy practically (Wahl, 2001: 316).

Aristotle suggests that essence or nature of an entity is actually its existence (existence due to its effect) and there is nothing superior to the intrinsic nature that the entity refers to. If the essence or nature is the originator, it will be the same as causality. Therefore, causality takes precedence over faculty from logical, chronological, and intrinsic as well as epistemological viewpoints (Aristotle, no date: 297). He views movement as perfection of a potential object. Therefore, movement is presumably a visible property that is derived from material and form. Based on this perspective, a tangible being is characterized by movement, time, place, division and evolution. In contrast, an intangible being is characterized by total efficiency and lack of movement, time, division and evolution. Aristotle calls the intangible being an unmoved mover for the love and affection of which the world moves. So, he transitions from discussing movement to discussing the prime mover (ibid: 295). In other words, the world as viewed by Aristotle is eternal, but it was not created out of eternity. Additionally, the movements of material beings in it result from their own nature. So, the Aristotelian god is not an actualizer or creator. In contrast, because of being a final cause the Aristotelian god is an efficient cause, too.

Aristotle in his twelfth book of *Metaphysics*, *Metaphysics Lambda*, regards the prime mover the same as God. Aristotle's logic for proving the prime mover consists of the following: 1) There is movement. Aristotle takes this as granted. 2) Movement requires an external mover. Here, the movement's need for a mover is detailed. In addition, the externality of the mover in relation to the moved is pointed out. From Aristotle's viewpoint, movement refers to actualization of a potential entity, since it is potential in the first place. In order for a potential entity to be realized, it should be a realizable entity. In addition, the realized entity cannot be inner-moved because in that case the moved is both potential and realized and this is paradoxical. 3) The mover and the moved are inseparable and recognizing a distance between the mover and the moved is meaningless. This is because the mover is

¹ Salem, M., Saidi, M. M & Akbarian, R. (2010). A semantic analysis of causality in Aristotelian and Avicennian philosophy, *Journal of Avicennian Philosophy*, p. 116-120

the ultimate and the actuality toward which the moved is moving. If something meddles in between the mover and the moved, it will be deemed as another actuality (actualized entity) and the mover will get nearer to the moved. 4) Hierarchy of movers cannot be indefinite. Rather, it should lead to a prime mover because any movement occurs in a limited time. If hierarchy of movers is alternatively taken as indefinite, indefinite movements should happen in a limited time since the mover and moved occur together. Based on the above, Aristotle concludes that a first unmoved mover exists² (Aristotle,1385: 241b-245b).

Therefore, one may argue that the Aristotelian philosophical system is incapable of perceiving the efficient cause as the creative cause of the universe. Instead, he solely sees agency in the efficient cause. Aristotle sees God as an intangible being which is the ultimate cause of the world and the world moves because of its love and similarity to God. As a result, in his opinion the relation between God and the universe constitute manifestation from the cause to the effect and it is not a matter of creation from the cause that leads to the effect. In other words, the relation between God and the universe is premised on movement and finality and not creation.

3. Causality According to Avicenna

Avicenna uses the terms “ground” and “origin” instead of “cause” and offers a distinct definition for it. In *Oyoon Al Hikmah*, he denotes ground as something to which another entity owes its existence. Therefore, the first entity is not independent of the latter entity or existence of the latter is realized by itself (Avicenna,1980:53). The best revisited definition he provides of cause and effect is in his *Kitab Al Hodod*. He posits that “cause” refers to any intrinsic being from which another realized intrinsic existence is derived. He does not observe that the realized existence of the cause is derived from realized existence of the effect (Avicenna, 2009: 649)

Avicenna divides causes into four, five and sometimes six types. In *Al-Isharat wa'l-tanbihat*, Avicenna identify four types and then he tries to prove them through rational reasoning. He suggests that “sometimes, an object is an effect either with respect to its nature or its existence. Existential cause is the same as material cause. Also, the formal cause is the cause which contributes to consistence of any material object without which the structure and essence of an entity will be obliterated”. However, regarding the causes of existence, he argues that “object in its existence belongs to another cause, which is either efficient or the final cause” (Avicenna,1983:3/11)

In *Elahiat* section of *Kitab Al-shafa* Avicenna endeavors to use rational reasoning to prove that there are four or five types of causes. Similar to *Al-Isharat wa'l-tanbihat*, Avicenna defines cause and intention behind each of them. Then, he divides causes into two categories: the causes that contribute to consistency and are a part of an object (formal and material), and those causes that are not part of an object’s existence (efficient and final). Next, approaching the subject from a different standpoint than *Al-Isharat wa'l-tanbihat*, he concludes that “the set of causes are four in type from one perspective but from another perspective, they have five types. This is because if something which is capable and not a part of an object is taken as external to the object, we have five types. Alternatively, if both of them are taken as one due to common potential and power, we get four types of causes. Therefore, something capable which is part of an object should be taken as a material cause and not as a formal one” (Avicenna, 1997: 258). Here he distinguishes between the subjective cause and the material cause, when it comes to a composite object made of material and form and he takes them as two types of cause.

In *Elahiat-e Nejat*, Avicenna takes certain considerations into account so as to divide causes into six types. Instead of “cause”, he uses the term “origin” and then notes, “Origin means either a part of effect or nothing. If it is a part of effect, realization of origin will not contribute to the realized existence of effect which in that case the origin is the same as an object or element. So, if the origin is a part of effect and its realization contributes to realization of effect, in that case it is the “form” (Avicenna,2000:518). Material or element is the same as the material cause as it is taken as a cause of constitution. The sixth type of cause that Avicenna identifies as the second cause is “form” as it is the

² Tayebnia, M. S., Akbarian, R & Saidimehr, M. (2012). Differences in approaches of Aristotle and Avicenna to proving the existence of God, *Journal of Comparative Theology*, p. 4-6.

cause for constitution.

Then, he points to four other types of cause and argues that “if the origin does not imply being a part, it is either constituting or convergent. If origin is convergent the effect is described with it like a form in relation to a material (a thing) or the origin is described through effect like a subject in relation to its extent. If the origin is consistent, it is something that contributes to emergence of a phenomenon and so it is an effect; or it is not the origin of emergence of a phenomenon, where emergence of the phenomenon is due to it. In the latter case, it is a cause (Avicenna, 2000:518-519). Therefore, the six types of causes are: 1) Constitutional material, 2) Constitutional form, 3) Extent subject, 4) Material form, 5) Efficient and, 6) Final³.

After reinforcing and promoting the argumentative and discursive aspects of the previous scholars' views about causality and then including belief-based discussions such as the creational role of God, Avicenna shows no toleration for eternal and non-creational status of the Aristotelian universe. In his opinion, God is not solely the mover of the universe but also an efficient cause and awarder of existence to the universe.

Addressing the distinction of existence from nature and the difference between potentially existing and essentially existing, Avicenna divides the creatures of universe into two types namely potentially existing and essentially existing. He argues that an essentially existing being is the one whose essence or nature requires it to be. In contrast, a potentially existing being is the one whose nature does not require it to be. Avicenna takes the divine efficient cause as a factor which removes the potentially existing being from the status of potentiality and awards it an opposite existence through its essence (Avicenna, 1997: 257).

As a result, one could argue that “any creature other than God, no matter to what rank and level it belongs, has an essential characteristic of location. As a result, it is a creature with divine essence as its origin. In fact, being a potentially existing being is just a label on the lowest to the highest creatures in the universe” (Yasrebi, 2006: 283).

Avicenna notes that potential beings are made up of two externally distinct aspects of existence and nature. He suggests that an object's need for cause is due to its own essential aspect and the effect is existentially related to the cause (Avicenna, 1983: 13, 61). In other words, one may argue that from Avicenna's viewpoint causality is an existential affair between the cause and effect. Thus, the effect in its existence needs the cause. In other words, cause is the essence that grants existence and effect is the essence which enjoys existence.

By distinguishing between existence and essence in potential existing, Avicenna takes the existential possibility as the basis for addressing the existence of the divinity. In the fourth section of *Al-Isharat wa'l-tanbihat*, he discusses the notions of necessity and possibility to support the existence of the divinity. He details his reasoning in a few preludes. In the first prelude, he maintains that any creature in itself has solely two conditions: it is either essentially existent or it is potentially existent. In the second prelude, he points out that existence of any potentially existing entity is owing to something else. However, dependence on the other cannot continue forever. Therefore, considering the nullity of the vicious chain we will undoubtedly get to a cause which should be there due to its essence (Beheshti, 2008: 116-117).

As a result, instead of the terms in the Aristotelian system of philosophy such as potentiality and movement, essence of potentiality and the first unmoved mover, Avicenna points to existence and essence, potential possibility, essentially existent and efficient cause as the awarder of existence. The distinction of natural philosophers from divine scholars and the difference they recognize between the origin of movement and origin of existence deeply influenced the philosophers after him. These notions might be derived from Islamic texts. For instance, one could point to inferences of some Quran verses such as verse 67 of Surah Maryam, “Does not man remember that he was nothing and nowhere and we brought him into being?” Also, verse 82 of Surah Yasin reads, “His order when he intends to create something is so that as soon as he says, ‘be!’ the thing will be”. There are hadiths which offer their

³ . Beheshti, B. Izadi, H & Mirzakhani, M. (2013). Avicenna's contributions to the problem of causality, Anishe-dini Press, Shiraz University, p. 116-117

interpretations of the above verses but they are beyond the scope of the present paper.

4. Causality According to Mulla Sadra

There are two general and specific denotations to the term cause. The general conception of cause suggests the cessation of another object, that is, the effect on it, and includes the perfect and incomplete cause. The special conception of cause signifies that which is necessary for the existence of the disabled and for the absence of the non-disabled (Mulla Sadra, 1981: 127/2).

Following the general and specific denotations of causality, Mulla Sadra divides general cause into perfect and incomplete cause. Then, he divides the partial cause into Aristotelian four causes, namely efficient, formal, material and final. Similar to Avicenna, Mulla Sadra describes material and formal causes as internal causes and refers to final and efficient causes as external causes to objects (ibid. 2: 127-128).

Concerning the definition of the four causes, he notes that “cause is either a part of something or external to it. In the case of the first type of cause, the object is potential relative to the cause. In that case, the cause is the material. Alternatively, an object is realized by its association with the cause and in that case, the cause is formal. A cause that is external to the object or manifestation of the object indicates that the cause is the final one. Alternatively, manifestation of the object might be derived from the cause and in that case, it is the efficient cause (ibid. 2: 128).

Elsewhere, he discusses the associations of the four cases with each other, “material to the being made of material and form is material. But for something that material is not a part of, the material is the form or element. Form to a being made of material signifies a formal cause. Since realization of material without form is impossible, the form jointly partners with efficient cause to enable the material. Since material is a private affair and form is a general affair, if form intends to turn into a private affair, it will need material. Material is the joint partner of efficient cause for the form. Also, the final cause acts like an efficient cause to the agent. In other words, the cause of being a cause is the efficient cause. But, in relation to the action of the agent, it serves as the final cause. This means that the final cause has a mental image in the agent. Meanwhile, the cause of being a cause is an efficient cause because if that form is not subjective, action is not done by the agent and it has a hidden stage from the agent which is final (Mulla Sadra, 1942: 68-69).

In contrast to previous scholars, Mulla Sadra notes that association between cause and effect is “Izafe-Ishraqiat” (radiative extension). It means that there is solely essential independence and effect belongs to the cause in all of its aspects and the effect has no independence. For instance, if a speaker stops speaking there will be no speech. Instead of dividing a being into essentially and potentially existing sections, Mulla Sadra points to gradual degrees of existence. Consequently, reality has degrees and the highest degree of reality is occupied by the divinity and the lesser degrees belong to created beings in the universe (Mulla Sadra, 1981: 99/2).

Rather than making a distinction between existence and essence, and adopting the terms essential possibility and types of being (i.e., essential and potential), Mulla Sadra uses certain other terms such as existence, superiority of existence to essence, minor possibility of existence and ranks of reality of existence (e.g., existence by interaction and existence by attachment). As a result, he turns Avicennian essential originality into existential originality. Then, he adopts the viewpoints of mystics and scholars to explain and prove the existence of the divinity. In order to explain his rational method further, he states, “Existence is original and ranked. The highest rank belongs to God and lower ranks belong to possible beings. God is the absolute dominator; he is the real unity and all existential perfections of other beings are extensions of Him” (Mulla Sadra, 1981: 49/1 & 120/1, 381/2 & 86/6; Tabatabai, 2007: 359/3; Mesbah Yazdi, 1985: 205). Adopting a mystical method of analysis, Mulla Sadra endeavors to show that potential essences will face eternal and permanent cessation and all beings have a single reality. So, beings are manifestations and outcomes of that unique reality. In other words, God is dominant and indefinite and his indefinite existence leaves no place for realization of other beings. This is because if there is another being the divine’s existence will no longer be absolutely dominant. In the latter case, the divine’s existence will be made of its own existence and lack of the other being (Mulla Sadra, 2009: 135 & 191; Mulla Sadra, 1981: 292/2).

A review of the above arguments shows that Mulla Sadra's rational explanation is founded on originality and unity of gradation of existence. Therefore, Mulla Sadra's mystical explanation and analysis are premised on originality, subjective unity of existence and overshadowing of divinity. These issues should be addressed further in future studies.

Based on the notion of gradual existence, there is a unique reality which despite having unity has diverse and different degrees. The lower the rank goes the bigger its extent will become. In contrast, higher ranks of existence are correlated with lower areas of existence and more extensive existential perfection. The highest rank sees no limits and has all existential characteristics of lower beings but in their perfected forms. The highest rank is the rank of the divinity and other ranks which have shortcomings are occupied by possible beings (Tabatabai, 2007: 36/1). Based on the notion of mystical private unity, existence has only one manifestation which is God. Other beings, although they have a reality to them, lack an existence of their own and are solely the manifestation of the sole reality of the divinity (Javadi Amoli, 2011: 311/3).

According to Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, essence is a credited affair. It cannot be faked or added, and it is inferred from external indications such sensual and rational evidence. Therefore, essence is out of the realm of cause and effect (Mulla Sadra, 1944, 37; Mesbah Yazdi, 1985: 22). Mulla Sadra does not believe the relationship between essence and existence to be of possessive type. He disagrees that there are two existences, one of which belongs to the other. In other words, he considers the relationship between essence and existence to be based on unification. In this sense, both essence and existence are conditional on one and the same thing (Mulla Sadra, 1944: 32-33).

As a result, Mulla Sadra takes the relation between cause and effect to be of the *Izafe-Ishraqiat* kind and not of a categorical extension. In the case of categorical extension, there are two parties namely "related" and "related to". In contrast, in the case of "*Izafe-Ishraqiat*" (radiative extension) there is only one party. Therefore, realization of additional beings is not presumed. The association between "related" and "related to" is not something that joins them together in a relationship, and "related" is essentially the same as the relationship (Javadi Amoli, 1949: 127-128).

Therefore, one may argue that from Mulla Sadra's perspective the common stance of scholars on the essential possibility and occurrence as the premise of effect's dependence on cause is not valid. In his opinion, potential beings with their whole essence are related to the cause and apart from belonging to the cause those beings have no other essence. In other words, the notion of dependence of effect on cause presumes that there is a link and dependence between cause and effect and this viewpoint is what Mulla Sadra denies.

5. Comparison

Aristotle maintains that philosophy or *Hikmat* is a science for discussing primary causes and principles because the ultimate goal of theoretical understanding is perception of reality (Khorasani, 2005: 48). In his philosophical system, material, formal, efficient and final causes are indeed answers to different types of questions about beings and these causes are related to outward manifestations of beings as well as understandings of them (Qavam Safari, 2003: 102). In contrast, Avicenna does not submit to the belief that philosophy is about cause and effect. In other words, he takes a being as something inferable from its effects (consequences). He ranks causes as primary philosophical problems because cause and effect are among distinct traces of "being due to consequences". Therefore, a being is essentially related to cause and effect. Consequently, causes are philosophically discussed in terms of their existence and their inference from effects and consequences (Avicenna, 1957: 15).

Aristotelian philosophy prioritizes understanding the world over understanding the unmoved mover and the essence with absolute actuality. Aristotle seeks to explain the reason(s) behind movement of material along with evolution of material from potentiality to reality through the unmoved mover. In other words, the world as viewed by Aristotle is ancient and eternal and it lacks any record of non-existence. The Aristotelian God is an unmoved mover. Such a god is not the creator of the universe as he solely awards beings with their existence. Also, the Aristotelian God lacks informed intention and actualization potential based on rational thinking and conforming to final purposes of beings. In

comparison, Avicenna does not presume a beginning for creation but he takes the universe as accidental and essentially possible. In addition, God is not solely taken as the unmoved mover as He overflows into and awards existence to universe based on awareness of knowledge. In addition, eternity of universe does not chronologically lead to its non-effect status, since potentiality of the universe's existence could be of the essential type.

Causality as addressed by Aristotelian system of philosophy refers to a being which is distinct from essence and dominating it (Avicenna, 1983: 61/3). However, causality in Aristotelian philosophy has nothing to do with "existence as an independent affair".

According to Avicennian philosophy, the potentially existing entity needs something other than itself to be awarded existence. In that case, it has an essence and it is neither doomed to be or not to be (Avicenna, 1957: 51). Therefore, the association between cause and effect as viewed by Avicenna is existential, i.e., the role of cause is awarding existence to its essence, and effect's need for cause is due to essential possibility of being of the cause. Since Aristotle takes the cause as the mover and actualizing agent of the potential being, the need for cause was derived from potentiality.

In Aristotelian philosophy, material and form are eternal and permanent while the efficient and final cause are essential to an object. In his opinion, final, formal and efficient causes are identical and movement of any material object is a natural movement. In contrast, the Avicennian philosophy points to causality in two existential and essential fields. When efficient and final causes are addressed, an existential relationship between cause and effect is presumed. In contrast, material and formal causes are premised on essential association between the cause and effect (Avicenna, 1961:258).

Therefore, one may contend that the Avicennian philosophy is similar to the Aristotelian system of philosophy when it comes to division of cause to four types, namely efficient, final, material and formal. However, they differ in the way they explain things. Avicenna discusses the four types of causes in alignment with a natural system of causality. He distinguishes between the natural agent as the origin of movement and the divine agent as an awarder of existence. In the Aristotelian philosophy, cause is not taken as an awarder of existence to the effect as cause solely provides effect with its actuality and the cause turns the effect from a status of potentiality to a status of reality.

From the Aristotelian viewpoint, material and the universe are eternal and God solely thinks of himself and the generalities. The Aristotelian God, as the final cause of the universe, is ignorant of humans but the universe and humans solely move for their love for and similarity to God (Ackrill, 1961: 385-386). In contrast, the Avicennian philosophical system takes the role of God in the universe to be an informative, active and effective one. He regards the universe as something created by God. The Avicennian God with his thorough perception created the world and his divine knowledge dominates all details and general affairs of the universe because such a God is aware of the cause and he is total and eternal. The world needs God for its emergence, survival and subsistence (Avicenna, 1984: 83; Avicenna, 1983: 122 &129).

Avicenna evolves the Aristotelian epistemological distinction into an existential distinction. He deals with creation of the universe based on Abrahamian belief system. According to Avicennian philosophical system, being is divided into potentially existing and essentially existing. Since circularity is impossible, the potentially existing being will join an essentially existing which is self-dependent (Avicenna, 1984: 20/3). In other words, the divinity is essentially existent and its creatures exist for something other than themselves. God actualizes beings and awards them existence.

In other words, one may argue that Aristotle goes from recognizing distinction between the natural aspect of material and form to recognizing distinction between tangible and intangible beings. He takes the intangible being as the unmoved mover or the final cause of the universe for the love of which the world moves (Aristotle, no date: 395). In contrast, Avicenna goes from recognizing a metaphysical

distinction between essence and existence to a creative efficient cause. He divides the beings in the universe into two types, namely the potentially existing and the essentially existing. In his opinion, the essentially existing is a being whose nature or essence requires it to be. In contrast, the potentially existing is a being whose nature does not require it to be (Avicenna, 1961: 31/1).

Mulla Sadra does not approach the distinction between potentially existing and essentially existing as a combination of essence and existence. He denies that existential potentially of tangible beings is based on the need of the effect for the cause. This is because the essentially existing is abstract and subjective and cannot be taken as the criterion of need of an objective and real being. The basis of need for the potentially existing is an existential lack (Mulla Sadra, 1942: 74).

According to philosophical system of Mulla Sadra, existence is a foreign reality which is basically unique and its uniqueness is the same as multiplicity. Just like multiplicity of potential and action, multiplicity of beings does not result from their nature as their multiplicity stems from their unity. Although cause and effect are actually different and distinct, they are essentially one. In fact, there is a universal reality, its strong stage is cause and its lower stage is the effect (Javadi Amoli, 1989: 122).

Mulla Sadra's stance on originality of existence and his belief in superiority of existence to essence is different from Avicenna since the latter takes beings as an integration of existence and essence. In other words, Mulla Sadra believes that what forms beings from without is their own existence and existence is solely the manifestation of a being (Mulla Sadra, 1981: 292/2).

One may also argue that Aristotelian scholars take the effect as something which is linked to the cause. In contrast, Mulla Sadra approaches the effect as something unrelated to the cause but it is the effect of the cause. In his opinion, the effect cannot be perceived without the cause. In the Avicennian philosophy, beings are divided into essentially existing and potentially existing. The potentially existing is made up of existence and essence, while the essentially existing does not need essence. However, Mulla Sadra takes the essentially existing as a rich and inclusive being which is indefinite in its existence and appearance and therefore, it is the same as essence. The essentially existing does not depend on anything while the potentially existing is a being without independence and its nature is based on insufficiency and dependence.

6. Conclusion

Aristotle, Avicenna and Mulla Sadra all agree on the four causes but disagree on which of the four types of causes (i.e., formal, material, efficient and final) to introduce as the ultimate cause. Taking the significance of creation of universe into account, Avicenna departs from the Aristotelian stance on efficient cause as the mover. Instead, he introduces the efficient cause as contributor to creation. In other words, Aristotle addresses God as an intangible being that is the ultimate cause of the world and the world moves due to its love for and similarity to God. However, Avicenna presumes that existence is different from essence and he makes a distinction between potentially existing and essentially existing. Avicenna approaches the efficient cause as the creational cause and awarder of existence. In addition, he points to beings' need for cause both in their essence and their existence. From his perspective, causality is so significant to existence that essential causes will be meaningless if they are devoid of a cause. In contrast, Mulla Sadra presumes that existence is a unique reality. Drawing on the notion of gradational unity, he takes cause as the strong level and effect as the lower level of existence. Finally, he takes the mystical notion of private unity into account and describes cause as a real affair and the effect as a (lower) level of cause.

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