

Cognition between Cause and Effect from the Perspective of Avicenna and Mulla Sadra

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Abstract

The principle of cognition between cause and effect as one of the subsidiary rules of the principle of causality is an important issue in the history of Islamic philosophy, in such a way that the denial of this principle draws one to deny the principle of causality. The aim of this paper is to study this issue from the perspective of Avicenna and Mulla Sadra, as the two of the greatest Islamic philosophers. Regarding the Avicenna's view, this study shows that he admits the principle of cognition as well as the rule of uniqueness (the rule of Al-Wahid) as two rational rules, but his other philosophical principles such as the principle of diversity of existent beings are not consistent with the principle of cognition between cause and effect. In Mulla Sadra's perspective, based on his own philosophical principles such as principality of existence (asalat al-wujud), the gradational unity of existence, and the Possibility of indigence (imkan-I faqri) according to which, the existence of cause and effect are transformed into independent and relative existence, cognition of cause and effect finds new meaning.

Keywords: Avicenna, Mulla Sadra, Cognition, Cause, Effect

Introduction

Cognition principle, as one of the branches of the principle of causality is an important philosophical topic in the history of Islamic philosophy. This means that every effect cannot be emanated from every cause, but rather each specific effect comes into existence by a specific cause. What has made this principle significant is that many explanations on philosophical issues such as quality of emanation of a multitude from single cause or quality of relationship between temporality and eternity, etc. are dependent on the acceptance of the principle of cognition between causes and effects (Qaramaliki, 1996). Rejection of this principle entails denial of the principle of causality and leads one to accept chance in relationship between cause and effect.

Background of discussion on the causal cognition can be found in Greek philosophy, especially in the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. In Plato's cosmology, sensible creatures exist due to taking advantage of the ideas, which possess the same name in the world of ideas (alam al-mithal); in fact sensible world is like a copy of the world of ideas (alam al-mithal) (Copleston, 1996). Signs of this discussion can be seen in Aristotle's philosophy. Based on Aristotelian principle of analogy "everything comes into existence due to its homonymous cause, for example heat comes from heat" (Aristotle, 2006). The idea that each cause possesses all perfections of its effect is also accepted by Aristotle. (Aristotle, 2006). It is worth mentioning that in the above passages from Aristotle on causality are confined to the world of nature and do not include divine agent and creator. In other words, cause as the creator of objects from non-being, has been discussed not only in Aristotle's philosophy but also in the whole of Greek philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus (Qavam Safari, 2003).

Discussion on cognition or appropriateness of cause and effect appears so obvious in Neo-Platonic philosophy. The doctrine of emanation is the most fundamental doctrine in Plotinus's philosophy. He applies the term "cause" to one and nondual being. Since the one lacks everything he believes that it emanates everything.

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He also says: How is it possible that this "one", which is simple and does not contain any binary or difference, emanate multiple things? Thus, since "the one" contains nothing, therefore it emanates everything (Akbarian & Marzani, 2012).

Also in Islamic philosophy the theme of cognation between cause and effect has a special place, for example, in Islamic Peripatetic philosophy of Avicenna, he included a chapter about it in his book entitled "kitab ilahiyat al-shifa" (the book of healing). There, he argues that in what respects the existence of an agent is stronger than object. In his other works, such as "Al-tiyqat" Avicenna has also discretely dealt with the subject of cognation. After Avicenna, Fakhr al-Razi, slightly extended the scope of discussion about cognation and posed new materials. However, Fakhr Razi's perspective on this subject is critical, in his books entitled *Alarbyn Almshrqyh*, he offers serious criticism of both the rule of uniqueness (*alwahid*) and cause and effect cognation. Finally Mulla Sadra, quite new perspective and a different ontological approach put forward a fresh theory in this regard. Mastering earlier intellectual schools, Mulla Sadra attempts to take advantage of their positive and useful points in his philosophical system. (Avicenna, At-Taliqat, 1983).

Having a brief look at the historical background of the subject of cognation between cause and effect in Greek and Islamic philosophy, the present article aims to discover final views of Avicenna and Mulla Sadra as the two of the greatest Islamic philosophers in this subject and in this way we will discover the difference and common points of their views.

Cognition between cause and effect from Avicenna's perspective

The Peripatetic philosophers argue that the idea of plurality in God's nature comes from rejection of the rule of uniqueness (*the Rule of 'Al-Wahid*) and their argument on the rule of uniqueness (*the Rule of 'Al-Wahid*) eventually leads them to principle of Cognation between cause and effect. It can be said that the rule of uniqueness (*the Rule of 'Al-Wahid*) is based on the principle of cognation between cause and effect, and due to proportionality and cognation between cause and effect, Islamic philosophers have accepted this rule. Moreover, through Avicenna's argument for the rule of uniqueness, one can understand Avicenna's view on the principle of cognation. According to Avicenna, if the meaning of unity be interpreted and perceived correctly, the rule of uniqueness (*the rule of Al-Wahid*) becomes obvious and no longer in need to any argument.

Thus, in the fifth chapter of his book entitled "al-isharat wa-l-tanbihat" (Remarks and Admonitions) Avicenna refers to this rule as admonition and provides an argument to prove the principle of cognation. His argument is as follows: emanation of two different objects from a unique and simple cause entails composition in the nature of the cause which was assumed as unique and simple. He believes that the emanation of an object in such a way that the concept of (a) is not the same as concept of the object of (b) is different; this difference comes from the difference between these two concepts. If two unique causes emanate the two different objects of (a) and (b) these two objects come into existence by different aspects in the nature of the aforementioned causes. Here the contradiction that Avicenna speaks of it becomes apparent. Thus the basic assumption that the simplicity of the unique cause would be invalid and it should be either two objects or an object or an object which has two different attributes (Tusi, 1982).

Elsewhere, Avicenna says: "It is not possible that the first being that is emanated from God to be plural or to have numeric composition or to have composition of matter and form, because if two different objects be emanated from God, in this case, each of them should have particular aspects in God's nature which is different from the other one. If this difference is not existent in God's nature, this question will be arisen that how these two different aspects are related to God's nature because in this case the nature of God will be divided (Avicenna, 2007). In his book entitled "ilahiyat Najat" he provides an explanation on this issue to the effect that if two different objects be emanated from the necessary existent they will be emanated by two different aspects of its nature (Avicenna, 2000).

From this we can conclude that cognation between cause and effect is essential. The important point is that although this argument within itself puts forward the issue of cognation, how this principle is compatible with specific principles of peripatetic philosophers (based on their principle of divergence) is not clear. This paradox leads our mind to the fact that based on principle of diversity of beings no room remains for cognation between the Necessary Being and His creatures. That is why Peripatetic philosophers believe that the pure multiplicity is a real issue which rules over the world. They regard the distinction of realities of existence to be of whole of essence rather than some part or something out of essence (Tusi, 1982).

Thus according to this view, peripatetic philosophers believe in diversity of existent things particularly the diversity between the nature of the necessary existent and possible beings. Inconsistency in peripatetic philosophers views regarding diversity existent things along with Avicenna's argument on proving the rule of al-Wahid which refers to the principle of cognation is noteworthy. On the other hand, the argument on the rule of Al-Wahid is based on the real relationship between cause and effect rather than subjective one because in this case the nature of the effect is derived from the nature of the cause so nature of effect in its existence is strongly dependent on the nature of cause. Therefore, it is impossible that an effect come into existence by chance, definitely there should be a causal and essential relationship between them. This is where the rule of Al-wahid is related to the cognation principle since the rule of Al-wahid is based on the necessity of cognation between cause and effect. Yet, Avicenna believes in diversity of existent beings. To resolve this inconsistency, he accepted the principle of cognation as well as the rule of Al-wahid as two rational rules, because disbelieving these rules leads to making a preference without a criterion and also leads to denial of the principle of causality. But his other philosophical principles such as the principle of diversity of existent beings are not consistent with the principle of cognation between cause and effect since he believes in essential diversity of beings and also believes that there is no similarity between the necessary existent and the contingent entities.

Cognition between cause and effect from Mulla Sadra's perspective

In his book entitled "the Transcendent Philosophy", Mulla Sadra based on his own philosophical principles discusses the principle of causality with a new approach. Based on principality of existence (asalat al-wujud), gradational unity of existence and Possibility of indigence (imkan-i faqri) according to which the existence of cause and effect are transformed into independent and relative existence, cognation of cause and effect finds new meaning. In his view each effect is requisite for the essence of its cause (Shirazi, 1990). And the existence of each cause is more perfect than the existence its effect likewise the existence of each effect is more imperfect than the existence of its cause. In other words, it is impossible that the reality of existence of cause and effect to be different from each other, but rather both of them share the same reality and the cause in itself contains of all existential perfection of the effect (Shirazi, 1990).

According to the above statements about the nature of cognation between cause and effect in transcendent Philosophy it can be said that existential perfections in strength and weakness and integrity are subordinated to the principle of existence (Ashtiyani, 2002).

Due to the fact that the principle of causality claims real relationship between two different existant (based on prepatetic philosophers view on causality) or two grades of existence (according to Mulla Sadra's perspective) this relationship would have three key concepts which are as follows: emanation or dependence, necessity, and cognation or appropriateness. Accordingly the concept of cognation or appropriateness between cause and effect makes sense in relation to the existence of this kind of real relationship between them. Since the causality relationship is real so there should be a specific feature in cause which due to it effect could be attributed to it. This feature requires a specific effect to be emanated from cause. This interpretation of cognition is called the minimal interpretation which vast majority of Islamic philosophers and theologians agree upon.

With respect to the fact that in Mulla Sadra's transcendent philosophy the existential relationship of cause and effect as two independent beings is turned into the relationship of an independent existent (cause) with a copulative existent (effect). Since cause and effect are two grades of the same existence, accordingly cause in its existence is superior to effect in such a way that cause embraces all existential perfection of its effect. In other words it can be said that effect with all its perfection exists in a supreme being which is called cause. This interpretation is called maximal interpretation of cognation which finds meaning in the light of the principles of Mulla Sadra's transcendent philosophy and it is one of his philosophical innovations (Akbarian & Marzani, 2012).

In Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy many arguments in accordance with its certain principles have been raised in this regard, including the following arguments:

- 1 According to Principality of Existence causation and effecthood are posed in the realm of existence and the existence of an effect derives from the existence of a cause.
2. Existence is unique and gradational reality and its diversity is either vertical or horizontal.

3. Since causation requires a vertical relationship between cause and effect, thus the existence of cause must be stronger than the existence of effect, and therefore, there is vertical diversity between the existence of cause and effect and causality and effecthood are inherent regarding different the degrees of existence.

Given the above premises, we can conclude that in Mulla Sadra's perspective the existence of the effect is a degraded form of the existence cause; and cause by itself possess all existential perfections of its effect and due to this feature, every being cannot be the cause of every object, but rather there is a specific ontological relationship between them, namely the cognition between cause and effect (Akbarian & Marzani, 2012).

Conclusion

This study showed that Avicenna as a peripatetic philosopher accepted Principle of cognition between cause and effect as a rational rule, as lack of belief in it eventually entails rejection of the principle of causality. But according to his other philosophical principles such as the principle of diversity of beings since he believes that all beings are essentially different from each other and believes that no similarity and homonymy exists between the necessary existent and all possible beings therefore we can conclude that according to the above explanation, the principle of cognition cannot be accepted by him. Regarding Mulla Sadra's perspective in this respect, we can conclude that based on his own philosophical principles such as principality of existence (asalat al-wujud), gradational unity of existence and Possibility of indigence (imkan-i faqri) according to which the existence of cause and effect are transformed into independent and relative existence, cognition of cause and effect finds new meaning in his philosophy. In his view each effect is requisite for the essence of its cause. And the existence of each cause is more perfect than the existence its effect likewise the existence of each effect is more imperfect than the existence of its cause. In other words, it is impossible that the reality of existence of cause and effect to be different from each other, but rather both of them share the same reality and the cause in itself contains of all existential perfection of the effect.

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