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AL-MUḤAQQIQ AL-IṢFAHĀNĪ'S ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT AND SPINOZA'S ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD: A COMPARISON

Mehdi Khayatzadeh* and Mohammad Pakdin Asl**

Abstract: Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī and Spinoza, two prominent intellectuals of the Islamic and Western worlds, respectively, have proposed different versions of the ontological argument for the existence of God. We present five versions of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument in three general dimensions: first, the concept of the necessary being (*wājib al-wujūd*) as a mental concept; second, the concept of the necessary being as a representation of something external; and finally, the reality of the necessary being or what externally exists by its essence. Only one of these versions is compatible with al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's words. On the other hand, Spinoza presents six arguments in which he has deployed the concept of God in three ways: the concept of God as a concept, the concept of God as a representation of something external, and the mental existence of this concept. In this article, we compare the accurate construal of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument with Spinoza's six arguments, where we make a case for a strong similarity between the grounds and forms of the ontological argument as formulated by these two intellectuals.

Keywords: *Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī, Spinoza, ontological argument, concept of God*

INTRODUCTION

Arguments for the existence of God draw on the rational method, which come in various forms in different philosophical and theological traditions (including Christian and Islamic traditions).[1] One type of rational argument for the existence of God is the ontological argument, which has different versions. In ontological arguments, the concept of God is scrutinised to prove God's existence; that is, they assume the definition of God entails the external existence

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1 For more about the different types of arguments or proofs for the existence of God, see Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, *Amuzish falsafa* (Qom: Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, 2012), 2:419-429; Michael Palmer, *Darbari-yi Khuda* (Tehran: 'Ilmi va Farhangi Publications, 2014), 4-5.

of such an entity. A glimpse of the history of ontological arguments can help us to better grasp such arguments and the developments they went through over time.

In Western philosophy, the ontological argument was first presented by Saint Anselm (1033-1109). He offered two versions of the argument; both came under attack at the time.[2] The argument was ignored for a number of centuries after Anselm until it began to be extensively discussed in the 13th century when it was widely received.[3] The main objection levelled at Anselm's argument in the period came from Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).[4] Then in the 17th century, René Descartes (1596-1650) provided an alternative version of the argument, trying to respond to objections raised against the previous version.[5] Later, Spinoza (1632-1677) and Leibniz (1646-1716) offered different versions of the ontological argument.[6] The main post-Cartesian critics of the argument is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). He raised objections against Descartes' version of the argument, although the objections are widely thought to work against Anselm's version as well.[7] After Kant, William Findley (1768-1846), Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and John Hick (1922-2012) rejected the argument, and Norman Malcolm (1911-1990), Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) and Karl Barth (1886-1968) tried to present new versions of the argument and revive it.[8]

In the Islamic world, on the other hand, the ontological argument was first presented by Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (1771-1829).[9] Majid Fakhry, an Egyptian author, believes, however, that this argument was first provided by Fārābī.[10] Roger Scruton holds that references to the ontological argument might be found in parts of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and its interpretations by Fārābī and Avicenna,[11] although no explicit reference can be found in Fārābī's words.[12] In Avicenna's words, the only possible reference that can be found is his argument of the sincere (*burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*), which is different from the ontological argument. Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī can, therefore, be deemed the first scholar in the Islamic world who has offered this argument. Another version of the argument was later provided by Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Gharawī Iṣfahānī (1878-1942), known as al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī.[13] Of Muslims intellectuals, 'Allāma

2 Donald M. Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (USA: Thomson Gale, 2006), 15-16.
3 Jonathan Barnes, *Burhan-i Vujudu*, trans. Ahmad Dayyani (Qom: Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy, 2007), 21.
4 Ibid.
5 Palmer, *Darbari-yi Khuda*, 17.
6 Frederick Charles Copleston, *Tarikh-i Falsafa*, trans. Ghumariza A'wani, 5th ed. (Tehran: 'Ilmi va Farhangi Publications, 2009), 4:272, 407, 408.
7 Palmer, *Darbari-yi Khuda*, 20.
8 Ibid., 35-48.
9 'Ali Afzali, *Burhan-i Vujudi dar Falsafi-yi Gharb va Falsafi-yi Islami* (Tehran: Iranian Institute for Research in Philosophy, 2016), 629.
10 Majid Fakhry, "Burhan-i Vujudi va Farabi," trans. Muhammad Sa'id Hana'i, *Tahqiqat-i Islami* 4, no. 1 and 2 (1989): 63-73.
11 Roger Scruton, *Spinoza*, trans. Isma'il Sa'adat (Tehran: Tarh-i Naw Publications, 1997), 36.
12 Afzali, *Burhan-i Vujudi*, 623-628.
13 Muhammad Husayn Gharawī Iṣfahānī (Kumpānī), *Tuhfat al-Hakim: Manzuma fi-l-Hikma wa-l-Ma'qul*, ed. Muhammad Rida Muzaffar (Beirut: Al al-Bayt Institute, n.d.), 71.

Ja‘farī and Ḥusayn ‘Ushshāqī have defended the argument,[14] while scholars such as ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Ayatollah Javādī Āmulī and Mahdī Ḥā’irī have criticised the argument.[15]

According to the arguments and analyses that will be addressed in this article, the proper formulation of Muhaqqiq Isfahani's argument is: if the putative instance of the concept of the necessary being is not realised in the external world, then either it is essentially impossible or a possible being that did not come to existence because of the nonexistence of its cause. However, both horns are false: an instance of the necessary being is by nature incompatible with essential impossibility and impossibility by something else (essential possibility).

Spinoza presents six arguments, which deploy the concept of God in three ways: (1) the concept of God *qua a* concept, (2) the concept of God in that it represents something beyond itself, and (3) the mental existence of the concept of God. His second argument is like Muhaqqiq Isfahani's argument. The upshot is that a thing's existence and nonexistence require a cause and reason. The cause of a concept's nonexistence either lies within or outside its nature. For example, the cause of the nonexistence of "square circle" lies in its essence or nature, since its essence involves a contradiction. As for God, no reason or cause is outside its essence that might hinder its existence. It follows, if God did not exist, it would be because of its essence in that it involved a contradiction. However, this is implausible about an absolutely infinite and endlessly perfect entity. On this account, no cause or reason within or without God's essence might hinder its existence. Accordingly, God necessarily exists.

In this article, we formulate an accurate construal of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument as we provide a formulation and categorisation of Spinoza's six arguments. Deploying an analytic method, we will then compare their arguments regarding their foundations and forms.

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14 Muhammad Taqi Ja‘fari, *Tafsir va Naqd va Tahlil-i Masnavi-yi Jalal al-Din Muhammad Mawlawi*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Islami Publications, 1957), 14:20-44; Husayn ‘Ushshaqi, "Burhan-i Muhaqqiq Isfahani bar Vujud-i Khuda, Taqrir-i Ishkalat, Pashukh-ha," *Naqd va Nazar* 43 and 44 (2006): 178-179.

15 ‘Abd Allah Javadi Amuli, *Sarchishmi-yi Andishi*, 5th ed. (Qom: Isra Publications, 2007), 118-121; Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, *Al-Ta‘liqat li-Jami‘ al-Hikmatayn ‘ala Tuhfat al-Hakim Ayatollah al-Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Husayn al-Isfahani* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i ‘Ulum-i Islami, 2001), 207-209.

AN ACCURATE CONSTRUAL OF AL-MUḤAQQIQ AL-IṢFAHĀNĪ'S ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

In his versified work, *Tuḥfat al-Ḥakīm*, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Gharawī Iṣfahānī[16] has provided a new argument, in the form of a few verses, to prove the existence of the necessary being, similar to an argument offered by Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī.[17] Here are these verses:

Mā kān^{a} mawjūd^{an} bi-dhātih^{i} bi-lā / ḥayth^{in} huw^{a}-l-wājib^{u} jall^{a} wa 'alā

Translation: What exists by its essence without / any [restrictive or causal] aspects is the glorious and transcendent necessary being.

Explanation: Whenever a predicate is predicated on a subject in a proposition, three aspects or states are conceivable:

1. Constraining aspect
2. Causal aspect
3. Absolute aspect.

In other words, three possible scenarios exist when predicating a predicate on a subject.

First, there is a constraint (*qayd*) within or along with the subject, allowing predication of the predicate on the subject. It is in virtue of this constraint that the predicate is predicated on the subject. In such predication, the predicate literally belongs to the constraint and is only figuratively attributed to the subject. Thus, in the proposition "the wall is white," for "white" to be predicated on "the wall" it is necessary for *whiteness* to be with the wall; otherwise, the predication would not be true. In this proposition, the predicate "white" literally belongs to whiteness and is in virtue of whiteness that "white" is predicated on the wall; that is, the real proposition is "the wall's whiteness is white." This is referred to as the constraining aspect (*al-ḥayth al-taqyīdī*).

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16 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Gharawī Iṣfahānī, known as Kumpānī, is an important neo-Sadraean philosopher. He was born in Najaf in 1878. He began his studies in the Seminary of Najaf at a young age. He was an expert in Persian and Arabic literature and composed poems in both languages. He was a prominent scholar of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and its principles (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and was a student of Ākhūnd Khurāsānī (1839-1911) for 13 years. Along with Mīrzā Nā'īnī (1860-1936) and Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-'Irāqī (1861-1942), he was a well-known student of Ākhūnd. After Ākhūnd Khurāsānī's death, he began his advanced lectures on jurisprudence and its principles; he taught several courses of jurisprudence principles. As to philosophy, he was a student of the well-known philosopher and mystic Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Iṣṭahbānātī (1837-1907), a student of 'Alī Zunnūzī, known as Mudarris Ṭihrānī (1818-1889). His philosophical character is evident in all his works, even in poems he composed in praise of Prophet Muhammad and his household. He wrote important works, such as commentaries on *Kifāyat al-Uṣūl* and al-Shaykh al-Anṣārī's *al-Makāsib*. His main philosophical book is the versified work called *Tuḥfat al-Ḥakīm* (The Philosopher's Gift), which introduces philosophical problems in versified terms, similarly to Sabzawārī's (1797-1873) *al-Manẓūma*. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī died in Najaf on 14 December 1942 and was buried in adjacent to Imam 'Ali's shrine. His prominent students include Ayatollah Khū'ī (1899-1992), Ayatollah Muḥammad Hādī Mīlānī (1895-1975), 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1904-1981) and Ayatollah Muḥammad Riḍā Muẓaffar (1904-1964). See al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's biography by Muḥammad Riḍā Muẓaffar – Muhammad Husayn Gharawī Iṣfahānī (Kumpānī), *Hashiyat al-Makasib*, ed. 'Abbas Muhammad Al Siba' Qatifi (Qom: Anwar al-Huda, 1997), 1:5-14.

17 Gharawī Iṣfahānī, *Tuhfat al-Hakim*, 71.

Second, the predicate is predicated on the subject without need for additional constraint on the subject; that is, the predicate literally belongs to the subject, although a cause is needed to prove the predicate for the subject. Thus, in the proposition "the wagon is moving," the attribute of movement is assigned to the wagon because of a force exerted on it from the locomotion. In this proposition, the movement literally belongs to the wagon, but, for the wagon to move, it needs a cause. Such an aspect in virtue of which a predicate is attributed to the subject is called a causal aspect (*al-ḥayth al-ta'līlī*).

Third, the predication of an attribute on a subject does not require any constraining or causal aspects. Thus, in the proposition "God exists," the predication of existence on God is neither in virtue of a constraint on the subject nor in need of a cause with which existence is attributed to God. This is called an absolute aspect (*al-ḥayth al-iṭlāqī*).[18]

On this account, an entity is a necessary being if it exists by its essence and without a constraining or causal aspect. Only the necessary being has no aspect other than existence and does not require a cause to exist.

Wa huw^{a} bi-dhātih^{i} dalīl^{u} dhātih / aṣdaq^{u} shāhid^{in} 'alā ithbātih

Translation: The necessary being is by its essence evidence of [the existence of] its essence / the truest evidence of its proof.

Explanation: As pointed out in the introduction, this is a quasi-causal (*limmī*) argument, proving the existence of an essence through its necessity. The idea that God's essence is its own proof is grounded in *ḥadīth*. For instance, consider Imam 'Ali's supplication: "O He Who signified His essence by His essence."[19]

Yaqḍī bi-hādhā kull^{u} ḥads^{in} ṣā'ib / law kam yakun muṭābaq^{un} li-l-wājib

la-kān^{a} immā huw^{a} li-imtinā'ih / wa-hwa khilāf^{u} muqtaḍā ṭibā'ih

aw huw^{a} li-iftiqārih^{i} ila-l-sabab / wa-l-farḍ^{u} fardiyyatuh^{u} li-mā wajab

Translation: Every veridical conjecture[20] judges that if there was nothing to which the necessary being corresponds, this would either be because of its [essential] impossibility, in which case the impossibility is contrary to its nature, or it is because of its need for a cause [and thus it does not exist because its cause does not exist], while we have assumed this token is a necessary being.

Explanation: In the first verse, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī characterises the necessary being as an entity whose existence is free from constraining and causal aspects, and it is in virtue of this that existence is necessary for it. That being the case, he rules out the scenario of the impossibility and possibility of the necessary being in the three verses above.

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18 For more on types of "aspect," see Javādī Āmulī, *Sarchishmi-yi Andishi*, 300-301.

19 Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Tutath al-'Arabi, 1982), 84:339.

20 'Allāma Ja'farī has translated "*kull^{u} ḥads^{in} ṣā'ib*" into Persian as what translates in English as "accurate insightfulness." See 'Ja'fari, *Tafsir*, 20, ft. 1.

Fa-l-naẓar al-ṣaḥīḥ fi-l-wujūb / yufḍī ilā ḥaqīqat al-maṭlūb

Translation: Therefore, the right reflection on the necessity [of the necessary being] leads to the [proof of the external] reality of the desideratum [of this argument].

A survey of the work by contemporary intellectuals yields five versions of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument, the difference being over the starting premise.[21] For some people, such as Ḥusayn 'Ushshāqī, the starting premise of this argument is the reality of the necessary being, which turns it into another version of the argument of the sincere.[22] Others, such as Ayatollah Javādī Āmulī, believe the starting premise is the concept of the necessary being *qua a* concept.[23] 'Abd al-Rasūl 'Ubūdiyyat and Mahdī Ḥā'irī, among others, take the starting premise to be the concept of the necessary being as a representation of an external instance.[24] The difference between these versions goes back to the argument's middle term. These five versions can be considered within three main dimensions:

1. The formulation of the argument in terms of a mental concept as a concept
2. The formulation of the argument in terms of a concept as a representation of a putative instance
3. The formulation of the argument in terms of the argument of the sincere, which rests on the external reality.[25]

According to 1 and 2, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument will be a version of the ontological argument, and according to 3, it will be a version of the argument of the sincere.

The accurate construal of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's verses rests on a purported reality. Here is the accurate formulation of his verses:

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21 To elaborate, sometimes the argument starts with a mere concept, the analysis of which leads to an external instance. In this case, a component of the concept, such as absolute perfection or necessity, is drawn upon to prove external instantiation of the concept. In other accounts, the concept is taken as a representation of something factual at the beginning of the argument and the external instantiation of what it putatively corresponds to is established through analysis of the concept. In this case, an instance of the concept is assumed then demonstrated that, if it was not externally instantiated, a contradiction in the purported instance would follow. Finally, the starting point of the argument is taken to be neither the concept nor its purported instance, but an absolute fact or one of its features is drawn upon to argue for the existence of God. For example, the necessity of an existence is proved through its purity (*ṣirāfa*).

22 'Ushshaqi, "Burhan-i Muhaqqiq," 173-174.

23 Javādī Āmulī, *Sarchishmi-yi Andishi*, 6:115-118.

24 'Abd al-Rasul 'Ubudiyyat, *Daramadi bi Nizam-i Hikmat-i Sadra'I*, 4th ed. (Qom: Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute; Tehran: Samt, 2013), 2:171-173.

25 The argument of the sincere is from external instantiation of the absolute reality or one of its features for God's existence. For example, it is an argument from the purity of existence for the necessary being. The argument was first presented by Avicenna (d. 1037) in the fourth pattern (*namaṭ*) of his *al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt* (Remarks and Admonitions). Husayn ibn 'Abd Allah Ibn Sina, *Al-Isharat wa-l-Tanbihat*, Commentaries by Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and Qutb al-Din al-Razi (Qom: Nashr al-Balagha, 1996). Other versions of the argument were later formulated by Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, Sabzawārī, and 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī. See Muhammad Sadr al-Din Shirazi, *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliya fi-l-Asfar al-'Aqliyyat al-Arba'a*. 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath, 1981), 6:12-16; Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, *Sharh al-Manzuma*, ed. Hasan Hasanzada Amuli, 5th ed. (Tehran: Nab Publications, 1990-2000), 3:505-506; Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *Usul-i Falsafi-yi Ri'alism*, 2nd ed. (Qom: Bustan-i Kitab Institute, 2008), 293-294.

> If the concept of the necessary being has no external instance or has nothing to correspond to, then one of the following two scenarios will be the case: the putative instance might be impossible by essence, or it might be possible, which does not exist because its cause does not exist. Both scenarios are, nevertheless, absurd: characteristically, an instance of the necessary being can neither be impossible by its essence, nor impossible by something else (while possible by its essence).

This version of the argument involves two claims:

1. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument is premised on the concept and is ontological, rather than reality; the argument of the sincere characteristically begins with the absolute reality or a property thereof, such as its purity, while Iṣfahābī's argument involves no such reality; it seeks to prove the necessary being only on the basis of analysis of the concepts of the necessary, impossible and possible.
2. The argument is concerned with the concept as a representation of an external instance.

Both these claims can be established in al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's verses:

> if there was nothing to which the necessary being corresponds, this would either be because of its [essential] impossibility, in which case the impossibility is contrary to its nature, or it is because of its need for a cause [and thus it does not exist because its cause does not exist], while we have assumed that this token is a necessary being.[26]

The verse "if there was nothing to which the necessary being corresponds" can support both the above claims, since it shows the starting premise of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument is the assumption that the concept of the necessary being has no instantiation or nothing to correspond to. Whereas, if it was a version of the argument of the sincere, he had to start from an external instance, of which the concept of the necessary being was true, while the instance was not really a necessary being. This is how the conceptual argument and the argument of the sincere differ. The former begins with a concept as a representation of an instance, while the argument of the sincere is concerned with an instance of which the concept is true. According to the above verses, the starting point of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument is the concept of the necessary being. Therefore, the first claim is accurate and it is not a version of the argument of the sincere.

On the other hand, as is implied by the verse, this argument does not involve analysis of the concept of the necessary being as a concept; instead, it grapples with the concept of the necessary being as a representation of something external, establishing its objective existence by analysing the reality that serves as its purported instance. The claim is corroborated by subsequent verses. To illustrate, we will revise the argument in logical terms:

> If there is nothing to which the concept of the necessary being corresponds, that would be either because of its essential impossibility or because of its impossibility in virtue of something else. Both horns of the consequent are false. Therefore, the concept of the necessary being corresponds to something external.

[26] Gharawī Iṣfahānī, *Tuhfat al-Hakim*, 71.

Thus formulated, the argument is an exclusive syllogism (*al-qiyās al-istithnā'ī*), the consequent of which is a predicative proposition (*al-ḥamliyya*) with a disjunctive predicate (*muraddadat al-maḥmūl*). Here is how al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī has argued for the falsity of both horns of the consequent:

> this would either be because of its [essential] impossibility, in which case the impossibility is contrary to its nature, or it is because of its need for a cause [and thus it does not exist because its cause does not exist], while we have assumed that this token is a necessary being.[27]

On his account, if what the concept of the necessary being is nonexistent by its essence, its essential impossibility will contradict the internal requirement of its nature. If it is nonexistent in virtue of something else – that is, it is possible in itself – then if it is an individual, it will contradict the concept of the necessary being. In other words, the property of truth inherent in the concept of the necessary being is at odds with the essential or extrinsic impossibility of what it corresponds to in the external reality. The problem in both cases is with what the concept of the necessary being represents, rather than the concept itself, which shows the starting premise of the argument is the concept of the necessary being as a representation of an external instance.

Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's verses are in both respects (i.e. being premised on the concept and the concept being considered as a representation of something external) compatible with this version of the argument. Of contemporary intellectuals, 'Abd al-Rasūl 'Ubūdiyyat,[28] Fayyāżī[29] and Mahdī Ḥā'irī Yazdī[30] construe al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument in this way.

THE FORMULATION OF SPINOZA'S ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

Baruch Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677)[31] has provided arguments for the existence of God in three of his books: *The Ethics*, *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, and *The*

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27 Ibid.

28 'Ubudiyyat, *Daramadi*, 2:171-173.

29 See Ghulam Riza Fayyazi, "Ontological Argument in the Islamic Thought," *Hikmat-i Islami* 29 (2013), http://hekmateislami.com/?p=2551.

30 Ha'iri Yazdi, *Al-Ta'liqat li-Jami'*, 207-208.

31 Spinoza was a prominent philosopher in the 17th century. He was born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 1632. For education, he was sent to a Hebrew school in Amsterdam, where he learned the Hebrew language and literature, the secrets of the *Talmud*, Kabbalah, and text of the Torah and its exegeses from the well-known Rabbi Manasseh Ben Israel (1604-1657). During his education, he was introduced to Jewish doctrines as well as the story of the Jews, studying the works of great Jewish philosophers and theologians, such as Maimonides (1135-1204), Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (1089-1164), the well-known exegete of the Torah Levi ben Gerson (1288-1344), a commentator on Averroes's work, and Solomon ibn Gabirol (1020-1058). After a while, he was taught by a prominent Dutch physician, who was a competent teacher and atheist, learning scholastic philosophy and the philosophy of René Descartes. Spinoza was familiar with Islamic philosophy as well. He learned the philosophy of Averroes through Maimonides and Levin ben Gerson, and Ibn Masarra's mysticism through ibn Gabirol. His familiarity with scholastic philosophy led to his familiarity with Muslim philosophers such as Fārābī, Avicenna, Averroes and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī.

Principles of the Philosophy of René Descartes.[32] Not all these arguments are ontological. Thus, the third argument cited and reconstructed by Spinoza from Descartes in *Principles of the Cartesian Philosophy* is not ontological.[33] Other arguments cited in this book are similar to those cited in his *Short Treatise*. Therefore, in this section, we will consider arguments cited in his *Ethics* and *Short Treatise*.

All these arguments have not been formulated in terms of the standard ontological argument – the move from the concept alone to its instance. Some of these arguments draw on other elements as well, which renders them similar to cosmological arguments.[34]

Spinoza's Arguments in Ethics

Spinoza's philosophical views mainly appear in his *Ethics*. His ontological argument as formulated in this book is grounded in his philosophy, his philosophy is based on his definition of substance, and it is on his account of substance that his argument for the existence of God is based. This is what distinguishes Spinoza's ontological argument from other ontological arguments presented by his predecessors, since they deployed the ontological argument to prove at least one god, whereas he has deployed the argument to prove at most one god.[35]

Before presenting the arguments in *Ethics*, we need to introduce the definitions, axioms and propositions used in the formulation of the arguments in this book.

Definitions, Axioms, and Prerequisite Propositions

In the section on definitions in the first part of the book (On God), Spinoza provides eight definitions, some of which are deployed in his articulation of the argument:

> [Definition 3] By substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the conception of which does not require the conception of another thing from which it has to be formed.[36]

The definition involves two points: (1) substance exists in itself, and (2) it is not conceived through anything other than itself. However, Spinoza's philosophy involves a hidden assumption: reality and conception correspond to each other, and the relation among conceptions corresponds to relations among facts.[37] The assumption is obvious from his definition of substance, since he accommodates being in itself – a characteristic of the external reality – within the notion of substance, then concludes the substance of the world is God

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32 Baruch Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael L. Morgan (UK: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002), 33-40; Baruch Spinoza, *Sharh-i Usul va Falsafi-yi Descartes va Tafakkurat-i Ma ba'd al-Tabi'i*, trans. Muhsin Jahangiri (Tehran: Samt Publications, 2003), 77.

33 Spinoza, *Sharh-i Usul*, 80-88.

34 Don Garrett, "Spinoza's Ontological Argument," *The Philosophical Review* 88, no. 2 (1979): 198.

35 Scruton, *Spinoza*, 50.

36 Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Works*, 217.

37 Scruton, *Spinoza*, 50.

(proposition 14)[38] and it is impossible to conceive an effect without conceiving its cause (axiom 4).

Later, Spinoza provides a definition of God:

> [Definition 6] By God I mean an absolutely infinite being, that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.[39]

Spinoza enumerates seven axioms. Here are four axioms related to his arguments:

> [Axiom 1] All things that are, are either in themselves or in something else.
>
> [Axiom 4] The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of the cause.
>
> [Axiom 5] Things which have nothing in common with each other cannot be understood through each other; that is, the conception of the one does not involve the conception of the other.
>
> [Axiom 7] If a thing can be conceived as not existing, its essence does not involve existence.[40]

Spinoza presents his arguments in the section on propositions in part 1. Before dealing with his arguments, we will point to four essential propositions in his words:

> [Proposition 2] Two substances having different attributes have nothing in common.[41]

He argues for this proposition from his third definition.[42]

> [Proposition 3] When things have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other.
>
> **Proof:** If things have nothing in common, then (A. 5), they cannot be understood through one another, and so (A. 4) one cannot be the cause of the other.[43]
>
> [Proposition 6] One substance cannot be produced by another substance.

He provides two proofs for the proposition. His second proof is based on definition 3 and axiom 4:

> …if substance could be produced by something else, the knowledge of substance would have to depend on the knowledge of its cause (A. 4), and so (Def. 3) it would not be substance.[44]
>
> [Proposition 7] Existence belongs to the nature of substance.

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38 "There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God." Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Works*, 224.
39 Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Works*, 217.
40 Ibid., 217-218.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 219.

> **Proof:** Substance cannot be produced by anything else (Cor. Pr. 6) and is therefore self-caused [*causa sui*]; that is (Def. I), its essence necessarily involves existence; that is, existence belongs to its nature.
>
> [Proposition 11] God, or substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists.[45]

Under this proposition, Spinoza draws on his previous premises to provide three proofs for God's existence.

First Proof

Spinoza formulates his first proof in terms of an exclusive syllogism consisting of two predicative propositions:

> If you deny this, conceive, if you can, that God does not exist. Therefore (A. 7), his essence does not involve existence. But this is absurd (Pr. 7). Therefore, God necessarily exists.[46]

In this proof, he has drawn on axiom 7 and proposition 7.

Formulation of the First Proof

If God or substance did not necessarily exist, then it would be possible to conceive a nonexistent God. Such a conception is, nevertheless, unreasonable. Therefore, God or substance necessarily exists.

The mutual implication between the antecedent and consequent in the argument is obvious. The falsity of the consequent is established through axiom 7: If a thing can be conceived as not existing, its essence does not involve existence, whereas according to proposition 7, substance should involve existence; otherwise, it would not be in itself, which would contradict the fact it is a substance.

On this account, Spinoza's first argument is based on the concept of God *qua a* concept.

Second Proof

Spinoza's second proof is focused on rejection of intrinsic and extrinsic obstacles to God's instantiation. He begins with the premise that a thing's existence or nonexistence requires a cause or reason. Thus, if a triangle exists, its existence requires a cause, and if it does not exist, then its nonexistence requires a cause or reason. The cause or reason exists either in the nature of the thing or outside it. For example, the cause of the nonexistence of "round square" inheres in its essence, because such essence involves contradiction.

The second premise: substance's existence follows its essence, and according to proposition 7, substance's essence involves existence. On the other hand, the reason for the existence of a triangle or circle does not come from its nature and features, but from the natural order of being.

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45 Ibid., 222.
46 Ibid.

The third premise: if there is no cause or reason preventing the instantiation of something, then that thing will necessarily exist.

Conclusion: if there is no cause or reason for God's nonexistence, then it can be concluded that He necessarily exists. Such a reason or cause exists either within His essence or outside it, in which case the cause will have a substance or nature different from God's substance and nature, because if the external cause has an essence similar to God's, then His existence should be endorsed. On proposition 2, however, the substance of the nature of things other than God has nothing in common with God. Therefore, such a nature cannot be the cause of God's existence or nonexistence.

This implies there is no reason or cause outside God's essence, which prevents His instantiation, and if God does not exist, it will be because of His essence, which is to say that His essence involves a contradiction. This is, nevertheless, unreasonable about an absolutely infinite and perfect being.

On this account, no cause or reason might be found inside or outside God's essence, which prevents His existence. Therefore, God necessarily exists.[47]

Formulation of the Second Proof

If God does not exist, it is either because of an obstacle outside it or because of an obstacle inside it (i.e. involving a contradiction), but both obstacles are ruled out. Therefore, God necessarily exists.

Establishing the mutual entailment between the antecedent and consequent:

> When something does not exist, this is either because the cause of its existence does not exist or because there is an internal or external obstacle to its existence. God does not need a cause for His existence, so there is no cause the nonexistence of which leads to God's nonexistence, since according to definition 6, God is a substance, and according to definition 3, substance exists in itself, having no external cause. Therefore, the only reason for God's nonexistence would be the existence of an external or internal obstacle.

Falsification of both horns of the consequent:

> There is no obstacle outside God which prevents its existence, because either such an obstacle has a nature similar to God's or it has a nature different from God's. In the first scenario, if such a cause has a nature similar to God's and is existent, it means that God exists. In the second scenario, since such a cause is different from God, it has nothing in common with God (proposition 2), and according to proposition 3, when things have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other. In consequence, such a cause cannot be the cause of God's nonexistence. In this way, the first horn of the consequent – an external obstacle – will be ruled out.

As to the second horn of the consequent, the existence of an internal obstacle is also false, since an internal obstacle amounts to the fact its nature involves a contradiction, while according to definition 6, God is an infinite and eternal substance, and according to proposition

[47] Ibid., 222.

7, existence belongs to the nature of substance. Therefore, an internal obstacle for God's existence is also ruled out.

That being the case, with the mutual entailment between the antecedent and consequent in both horns of the consequent, the negation of the antecedent will be established; that is, God's necessary existence.

Spinoza's second argument is based on the concept of God as a representation of an external instance. In this argument, he argues from analysis of the nonexistence of God's putative instance for His existence.

Third Proof

Failure to exist is patently a weakness, whereas the ability to exist is a power. On this account, if the entity whose existence is necessary does not exist and finite entities exist, it will follow that the finite entity is more powerful than the absolutely infinite existence, but such an assumption is plainly illogical. Therefore, either nothing exists or the absolutely infinite entity necessarily exists. Intuitively speaking, we exist, which implies the absolutely infinite entity – i.e. God (definition 6) – necessarily exists.[48]

After his articulation of this proof, Spinoza points out that he has deployed an a posteriori method in his third proof, because such proofs are more easily understandable for people. In a reply to an objection, he adds that he does not talk about external effects in these arguments, but he is only concerned with substance. According to proposition 6, substance cannot be produced by an external cause. The existence and perfections of external effects come from their causes, rather than their selves. As to substance, however, things are the contrary – every perfection of a substance comes from its self, which is why its existence is grounded in its nature and is nothing but its essence. This implies a thing's perfection does not negate existence from it; instead, it necessitates existence, whereas imperfection negates existence. God's essence as an infinite substance rules out any imperfections and implies all perfections. It is, therefore, absurd to doubt His existence – the utmost certainty belongs to God's existence.[49]

Formulation of the Third Proof

Prima facie, it seems this proof does not look like an ontological argument, but an a posteriori argument. A moment of reflection, nevertheless, reveals that Spinoza has built this argument, just like the other two, on the concept of God. Here is how the argument should be formulated:

> If God or an entity whose existence is necessary does not exist, then finite entities should not exist either, while we intuitively see that finite entities exist. Therefore, God or the necessary being also exist.

The mutual entailment between the antecedent and consequent:

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 223.

> Spinoza establishes the mutual entailment between the antecedent and consequent based on a self-evident proposition: a thing's failure to exist is evidence of its weakness and its existence is evidence of its power. On this self-evident principle, if the necessary being does not exist, whereas a finite entity exists, it will mean the finite being is more powerful than the infinite and necessary being. According to definition 6, however, God is an infinite being with infinite attributes, and His weakness in contrast to finite beings is at odds with His infinite attributes. Therefore, in this argument, the existence of finite entities leads to a contradiction in the concept of God.

In this proof, just like the second proof, Spinoza has drawn on the concept of God as a representation of an external instance; for evidently, and as Spinoza is well aware, the concept of God as a mental entity is weaker than the external existence of other entities. What he has posited as the starting point of the argument here is a putative instance of God – if such an instance does not exist, then it will be weaker than contingent entities.

Spinoza's Proofs in his Short Treatise

In his *Short Treatise*, which opens with proofs for God's existence, Spinoza provides three arguments.[50] His first two proofs are a priori and his third proof is a posteriori.

The First Proof

Premise 1: "Whatever we clearly and distinctly know to belong to the nature of a thing, we can also truly affirm of that thing."

Premise 2: "Now we can know clearly and distinctly that existence belongs to the nature of Cod."

Conclusion: We can truly affirm the existence of God.[51]

This argument resembles the first proof presented and elaborated by Spinoza in *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*. Here is how he has formulated Descartes's argument:

Proposition 5: The existence of God is known solely from the consideration of his nature.

> Proof: To say that something is contained in the nature or concept of a thing is the same as to say that it is true of that thing…But necessary existence is contained in the concept of God…Therefore it is true to say of God that there is necessary existence in him, or that he exists.[52]

As to content, this is similar to Spinoza's first proof in his *Ethics*. Both proofs rely on the concept of God *qua a* concept, although they are differently formulated. The argument can, nevertheless, be thought to concern a putative instance of the concept of the necessary being as well. On this account, this will be like the second and third proofs in *Ethics* as relying on the concept as a representation of an external instance.

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50 Ibid., 37-40.
51 Ibid., 37.
52 Ibid., 133.

The Second Proof

Premise 1: "The essence of things are from all eternity, and unto all eternity shall remain immutable."

Premise 2: "The existence of Cod is essence."

Conclusion: God's existence is from all eternity and to all eternity shall remain immutable.

It is a principle of Descartes' and Spinoza's philosophies that every entity has an immutable and eternal essence. In the case of God, His essence is the same as His existence. This being the case, as to the contingent entities, it is possible to distinguish their essence from their existence, while in the case of God, essence and existence are inseparable – his eternal essence entails his eternal existence. This principle is invoked in the above proof.[53]

Just like the second and third proofs in *Ethics*, this proof is built on the concept of the necessary being as a representation of something external.

The Third Proof

Spinoza's third proof in his *Short Treatise* is his a posteriori argument in which he draws on the idea of God and the characteristic of the human mind to prove an external instance for the idea of God: "If man has an idea of God, then God must exist *formaliter*."[54]

To prove the mutual entailment between the antecedent and consequent, Spinoza relies on three principles:

1. The number of knowable things is infinite
2. A finite understanding cannot apprehend the infinite
3. A finite understanding, unless it is determined by something external, cannot through itself know anything; because, just as it has no power to know all things equally, so little also has it the power to begin or to commence to know this, for instance, sooner than that, or that sooner than this. Since, then, it can do neither the one nor the other it can know nothing.[55]

The first (and major) premise is established as: if the human imagination is the only cause of his ideas, then one will not be able to apprehend anything, but there are things he can apprehend. Therefore, the human imagination is not the only reason for his ideas.

The first premise of the argument is proved by the first principle that the number of knowable things is infinite. Moreover, according to the second principle, one cannot know everything, because the human understanding is limited, and according to the third principle, one could not know anything had one not been affected by external objects to know something antecedent to something else.

53 Afzali, *Burhan-i Vujudi*, 298.
54 Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Works*, 37.
55 Ibid., 38.

Taking these preliminaries into account, the second point will be established: the cause of human ideas is not their imagination, but an external cause forcing him to understand something antecedent to something else, and it is nothing but the fact that things whose mental essences exist in the understanding actually exist and are closer than other things to human beings. On this account, if a human being has an idea of God, then it will be evident that God should actually exist. Now the human idea of God is clear, because human beings know God's attributes and these attributes could not have been shaped by the human, because humans are not perfect. Furthermore, human beings know that these attributes are intuited by God; that is, they know an infinite being cannot come from combination of two finite parts. In other words, it is impossible for two infinite beings to exist; there is only one infinite being that is perfect and immutable, because we know nothing seeks its own nonexistence, and God cannot be improved, since He is perfect and there is nothing better than Him. Moreover, it is impossible for God to rely on something outside Himself, because He has infinite power.[56]

In this argument, Spinoza draws on the concept of God *qua a* concept to prove God's existence. Notably, however, his deployment of the concept of God in this argument is slightly different from the use he makes of this concept in his first proof in *Ethics*. In the present argument, he relies on God's mental existence in its own right, whereas in the argument in *Ethics* he relies on the concept of God as a representation.

Spinoza's third argument is similar to the second proof he presents in *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*.[57]

While Spinoza believes he has relied on entities other than God to prove God, he has ultimately argued for the external instantiation of God through analysis of the concept of God as an infinite and all-perfect being. In this way, the argument might also count as a version of the ontological argument.

Summary

On the whole, Spinoza has presented nine arguments for God's existence: three in *Ethics*, three in his *Short Treatise* and three in *Principles of the Cartesian Philosophy*. The first and second proofs in *Principles* are similar to the first and third proofs in *Short Treatise*. The third argument in *Principles* is not ontological and is akin to the argument from possibility and necessity. Of the six proofs in *Ethics* and *Short Treatise*, four are a priori and two are a posteriori. The arguments in *Ethics* are grounded in Spinoza's peculiar definition of substance and the accommodation of substance in the definition of God. However, the arguments in his *Short Treatise* are not based on these assumptions. Unlike *Ethics*, *Short Treatise* is not written in a geometrical form, obviously involving the epistemological foundations of the Cartesian philosophy, such as clarity and distinctness of the idea of God and eternity of essences of things. These arguments are focused on God as a nature whose essence is existence. The first proof rests on the impossibility of negating existence from God's nature. The second proof analyses

[56] Ibid., 37-40.
[57] See Spinoza, *Sharh-i Usul*, 78.

the concept of God and the identity of His existence and nature to negate internal and external obstacles to His existence. In the third argument, he draws on God's absolute power, formulating an a fortiori syllogism between existence of contingent entities and God's existence. The fourth argument is generally built on the human clear and distinct knowledge of God. The fifth deploys the identity of essence and existence in God and eternity of essences of things. Finally, the sixth argument draws on the concept of God entertained by the human mind and the basic premise that the concept is derived from God's external existence to prove God's existence.

While Spinoza has six distinct arguments as far as their forms and middle terms are concerned, the core of these boils down to three proofs:

1. Proofs built on the concept of God as a concept, such as the first proof in *Ethics* and the first proof in his *Short Treatise*.
2. Proofs formulated around the concept of God as a representation of an external instance, such as the second and third proofs in *Ethics* and the second in *Short Treatise*.
3. A proof drawing on the mental existence of the concept of God in its own right; that is, the sixth argument.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AL-MUḤAQQIQ AL-IṢFAHĀNĪ'S AND SPINOZA'S ARGUMENTS

The arguments by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī and Spinoza have similarities and differences across two dimensions:

1. The grounds and principles of the two philosophers that contribute to the formulation of these proofs.
2. Their formulations of the ontological argument.

Similarities and Differences in the First Dimension

Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī was a neo-Sadraean philosopher, whose philosophical foundations tend to be similar to those of Mullā Ṣadrā's Transcendent Wisdom (*al-ḥikmat al-muta'āliya*). The main tenets of the Transcendent Wisdom are the primacy of existence (*iṣālat al-wujūd*) and existential need (*al-faqr al-wujūdī*) of contingent entities.[58] These two tenets are advantages of the Transcendent Wisdom over other Islamic and Western philosophical schools. Spinoza's philosophy is not committed to these two principles, which is a remarkable downside. Regardless of these two major differences, there are several similarities between Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical principles and Spinoza's. In what follows, we will point to three such principles.

[58] Gharawī Iṣfahānī, *Tuhfat al-Hakim*, 11, 25.

The Only Substance (Being in Itself) is God

Relying on the primacy of existence and existential need of contingent entities, Mullā Ṣadrā changes the meaning of the possibility in things other than God from essential possibility to existential possibility. One corollary of the need-based possibility of things other than God is that the only being in and for itself is God.[59] This is similar to Spinoza's definition of substance.[60] His definition involves two ideas: (1) substance exists in itself, and (2) its conception is not formed by other conceptions. On this account, substance is, ontologically speaking, a being in itself and independent, and is, epistemologically speaking, independent in that its conception is not derived from other conceptions. Moreover, Spinoza makes it explicit that an effect cannot be a substance because it depends on its cause in its instantiation and conception.[61] This implies that the only substance is God as the cause of the world.

Therefore, the two philosophers agree on their view of the meaning of substance (a being in and for itself). Notwithstanding this, in Islamic philosophy, substance is a category of quiddity, and by "being in itself and for itself," Mullā Ṣadrā means the characteristic of a being from which the essence of substance is abstracted, whereas Spinoza takes the being in itself to be "substance." That is, in Spinoza's view, substance is a philosophical secondary intelligible (*al-ma'qūl al-thānī*), rather than an essential concept.

Knowledge of the Effect Depends on Knowledge of its Cause

According to the need-based notion of possibility in the Transcendent Wisdom,[62] a being in other (*wujūd fī ghayrih*) is characterised by the fact it cannot be conceived without its relatum. To illustrate, knowledge of something corresponds to the thing; so, knowledge of an effect should correspond to the effect. Correspondence amounts to identity, which implies any relation between the two things extends to knowledge of them as well. Thus, if A is the cause of B, then knowledge of A corresponds to A, and knowledge of B corresponds to B. Knowledge of B – that is, knowledge of its whole reality – is the state of being an effect. In consequence, knowledge of B is obtained when it is apprehended in the domain of its cause (i.e. A), which amounts to saying that knowledge of B is attained through knowledge of A. To put it differently, when an effect is known in virtue of its being an effect and having a cause, knowledge of it should correspond to it in this respect, which means the relation between the thing and its cause should also hold between knowledge of it and knowledge of its cause so the apprehension of the effect fully corresponds to its reality.[63]

59 See Sadr al-Din, *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliya*, 1:80.
60 Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Works*, 217.
61 Ibid., 218-219.
62 The need-based possibility consists in existential weakness of the effect and its existential dependence on its cause. See Tabataba'i, *Usul-i Falsafi*, 48.
63 See Tabataba'i, *Usul-i Falsafi*, 261-262.

Similarly, Spinoza makes it explicit in the principles outlined at the opening of his *Ethics* that knowledge of an effect depends on knowledge of its cause.[64] This is, therefore, another point of resemblance in the philosophical foundations of Spinoza and al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī.

God's Essence is His Existence

Spinoza's second proof in his *Short Treatise* is based on the premise that God's essence is His existence.[65] This is also made explicit in proposition 20 of his *Ethics*.[66] This is similar to a principle held by Muslim philosophers to the effect that God has no quiddity or essence, which is articulated as "God's quiddity is His existence."[67]

The principle has been composed in a verse by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī:

Lays^{a} li-dhāt al-ḥaqq^{i} ḥadd^{un} māhuwī / bal dhātuh^{ī} nafs^{u} wujūdih al-qawī

Translation: There is no quiddity-based limit for God's essence; instead, his essence is identical to His strong existence.[68]

It is, nevertheless, asserted in Islamic philosophy and made explicit by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī that God has no quiddity or essence in the sense of "what is said when answering the question 'what is it?'" On this account, Mullā Ṣadrā's "God's quiddity is His existence" amounts to saying that God has no quiddity, and His reality is exhausted by His existence. This has not, nevertheless, been made explicit in Spinoza's philosophy.

Similarities and Differences in the Second Dimension

There are three similarities between the two philosophers as to the second dimension; that is, their formulation of the ontological argument.

Explaining the Concept of "God"

Before presenting their respective arguments, both philosophers articulate what they mean by "God," assigning an eternal necessity to His existence. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument is focused on an entity who has no (constraining or causal) aspect in having the attribute of existence.[69] At the opening of his *Ethics*, in definition 6, Spinoza sees God as a substance consisting of infinite attributes.[70]

A moment of reflection on this definition leads to the eternal necessity of God's existence. This is to say, both philosophers agree on a definition of God, although in Spinoza's philosophy and in Western philosophy in general, eternal necessity and essential necessity have not been

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64 Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Works*, 218.
65 Ibid., 37.
66 Ibid., 220.
67 Sadr al-Din, *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliya*, 1:96.
68 Gharawī Iṣfahānī, *Tuhfat al-Hakim*, 12.
69 Ibid., 71.
70 Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Works*, 217.

discriminated. This ambiguity has led to objections by Kant and others against the ontological argument.

Deployment of Both Aspects of the Concept of God in the Formulation of the Argument

The "concept of God as a concept" and the "concept of God as a representation of an external instance" are common themes of different versions of the arguments presented by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī and Spinoza. Two versions of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument are based on the concept of God as a concept and one version of his argument is built on the concept of God as a representation of an external instance. Of the six arguments presented by Spinoza, the first proofs in his *Ethics* and *Short Treatise* are formulated in terms of the concept of God as a concept, and the second and third proofs in his *Ethics* as well as the second proof in his *Short Treatise* are formulated on the concept of God as a representation of an external instance. Therefore, in both philosophical systems, both aspects of the concept of God are appealed to, although, as pointed out before, the accurate construal of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī, in accordance with his verses, is the one in terms of the concept of God as a representation of an external instance. The concept of God as a concept appears only in formulations provided by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's commentators.

Another advantage of Spinoza is that in his sixth proof he draws on the mental existence of the concept of God in its own right. This is not found in al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument or its interpretations.

Reliance on the Same Invalid Consequence in Proving God's Existence

Spinoza's second proof for God's existence is similar to al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument. Spinoza believes, if the concept of God had no instance, it would be because of internal obstacles (internal conflict) or external obstacle (an external cause). In al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument, essential impossibility and absence of a cause for existence are invalid consequences of there not being an objective instance for the concept of the necessary being. Both philosophers have articulated their arguments in terms of the same ensuing predicament.

CONCLUSION

The ontological argument is a remarkable argument in proving God. There are serious critics of the argument in Islamic and Western philosophies. New versions of the ontological argument were presented by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī and Spinoza as two prominent intellectuals in the Islamic and Western worlds. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument has been construed in terms of five formulations within three main dimensions: first, the concept of the necessary being as a mental concept; second, the concept of the necessary being as a representation of something external; and finally, the reality of the necessary being or what exists in the external reality by its own essence. In my view, the core of this argument is the concept of the necessary being as a representation of something external; that is, in his argument, the concept of the necessary being is considered (by common technical predication

or *al-ḥaml al-shāyi' al-ṣinā'ī*) as a mirror of something external – a putative instance. On this account, the only construal of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī, which is consonant with his verses cited above, is the one in terms of the second dimension.

Spinoza has also presented six arguments in which he relies on three concepts of God: (1) the concept of God as a concept, (2) the concept of God as a representation of something external, and (3) the mental existence of the concept of God.

There are similarities and differences between the arguments presented by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī and Spinoza in two respects:

a. The foundations and principles of the two philosophers, relevant to the formulation of their respective arguments.
b. Their formulation of the ontological argument.

Conclusions concerning (a):

1. The distinction between the philosophical foundations of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument in that he is a neo-Sadraean philosopher and those of Spinoza's argument lies in the former's commitment to the primacy of existence and the existential need of contingent entities.
2. There are three similarities between their respective philosophical foundations:
   2.1. They have a similar view of the meaning of substance (being in and for itself), believing the only substance (being in itself) is God. However, in Islamic philosophy, substance is a category of quiddities and "being in itself and for itself" refers to an existential feature from which the nature of substance is abstracted. Spinoza, on the other hand, takes "substance" to consist in being in itself. That is, in Spinoza's view, substance is a philosophical secondary intelligible, rather than a quiddity-based concept.
   2.2. They believe that knowledge of an effect depends on knowledge of its cause. According to the need-based conception of possibility in Transcendent Wisdom, being in other is characterised by the fact it cannot be conceived without its relatum. A similar idea is found in Spinoza's philosophy.
   2.3. They both take God's essence to be His existence. What is highlighted in Islamic philosophy, however, is that God has no quiddity in the sense of "what is said in answering the question 'what is it?'" This being so, "God's quiddity is His existence" amounts to saying that God has no quiddity, His reality being the same as His existence. This has not been made explicit in Spinoza's philosophy.

As to (b) – that is, their respective formulations of the ontological argument – there are three points of similarities:

1. They both have articulated what they mean by God, assigning some sort of eternal necessity to Him.
2. What is shared by the accurate construal of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument and Spinoza's arguments is the "concept of God as a representation of an external instance."

Of Spinoza's six arguments, the second and third proofs in his *Ethics* and the second proof in his *Short Treatise* are built on the concept of God as a representation of an external instance. Therefore, both philosophers have drawn on the concept of God as a representation of an external instance.

3. Spinoza's second argument for God's existence is similar to al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument. In this argument, Spinoza traces the absence of an instance for God to internal obstacles; that is, internal conflicts, as well as external obstacles; that is, an external cause. In al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's argument, essential impossibility and nonexistence of the cause are cited as two invalid consequences of there not being an objective instance for the concept of the necessary being. Therefore, both philosophers have articulated their respective arguments by appealing to the same ensuing predicament.

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