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## Title: Concept of ultimate reality in philosophy of Mullā Sadrā and Upanishads

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**Title: Concept of ultimate reality in philosophy of Mullā Sadrā and Upanishads: A  
comparative study**

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## Concept of ultimate reality in philosophy of Mullā Sadrā and Upanishads: A comparative study

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### Abstract

*The aim of this study is a comparative project between two philosophical systems composed by Indian tradition, Upanishads and Iran philosopher, Mullā Sadrā (1571-1636 A.D). These two mystic schools may often be thought to oppose one another in their ideas, but I will discuss that they are similar in several aspects. I will consider connections between Upanishads and Mullā Sadrā primarily in concept of ultimate reality that leads us to existence representative of absolutism found within their respective traditions. The striking differences generally perceived between aspects of Hinduism and Islam has however somewhat prevented scholars to develop interest in the comparison of philosophies rooted in these two theological traditions.*

**Keywords:** *Upanishads, Mullā Sadrā, Absolute, Brahman, Necessary existence.*

### 1. Introduction

Having gone through a succinct description of the ideas of Mullā Sadrā and Upanishads on the metaphysical issues of ultimate reality, world, soul and causality etc, we may now try to give a comparative study of the topics which are viewed in the preceding paper. In this study a number of commonalities can be seen but the dissimilarities are also evident though they cannot be overemphasized. According to both Mullā Sadrā and Upanishads, their rationally constructed philosophies were of secondary importance in relation to what would be attained by mystical intuitions and experiences. These metaphysical issues considered as aids in the attainment of intuitive realizations. Both insist that we should not mistake the end (realization) for the means (the philosophies being articulated). The subjective mystical experiences that lie at the heart of both philosophies are however, unanalyzable in so far as

1 they cannot be objectively grasped. The mingling of theoretical constructions and intuitive  
2 experiences are characteristic of all mystical philosophies including those of Mullā Sadrā and  
3 Upanishads. This paper endeavors to compare the ontological constructions that Upanishads  
4 and Mullā Sadrā use to help describe what they have experienced through intuition and  
5 expressed through the philosophical vocabulary they inherited from their receptive  
6 backgrounds—Indian in the case of Upanishads and Greek and Islamic in the case of Mullā-  
7 Sadrā. First we will go through the similarities between Upanishads and Mullā Sadrā because  
8 it is particularly important that we take note of how these two conceptual systems function in  
9 similar manner. Considering these similarities will also allow us to properly realize the  
10 metaphysical divergences and how each system has its own special mechanisms that are  
11 adapted to perform within a specific set of suppositions. Discussing and Understanding  
12 similarities will also give a deeper insight in making decision what issues are matters of  
13 diverging emphasis and what constitutes true difference.

14 Upanishads recognize the Vedas as being functional guides that derive value from the  
15 truths they convey. In this sense Mullā Sadrā also situated himself firmly within orthodoxy.  
16 One significant point in their systems is that they endeavor to defend and interprets the  
17 classical tenets of Islām in the light of his philosophical theories. Sadrā found a critical  
18 philosophy that melted peripatetic, Illuminationist and gnostic ideas in one whole and  
19 brought it in consonance with the theology of Islām especially in its Shiite version.  
20 According to the Islamic cycle of prophesy, and the importance of Muhammad as the  
21 Prophetic Seal characterized his hermeneutic ventures. The Qurān even served as the  
22 foundation for Mullā Sadrā’s rational speculation. This comparative study also affords us the  
23 opportunity to make observations on metaphysical ideas that mixed with religious mysticism  
24 and how certain esoteric ways of thinking functioning within their surrounding religious  
25 environments still generated fundamental similarities amidst the disagreements of detail.

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Discussing about these two philosophical systems allow for useful insights into each of them and may also provide a better understanding of the nature of mysticism and mystical ontology in general, as well as methodological issues faced in the scholarly study of these subjects. One should in general recognize that the conceptual systems constructed by the two schools are not perfectly new creations derived from the core of their respective mystical traditions. Rather, they contain fundamental pre-existing principles, concepts, and teachings that are accepted across the cultures and the systematic philosophy constructed on their foundation has always shared themes and theses. In this sense Upanishads and Mullā Sadrā are only two representative schools that partake in this universal thematic. Certain ideas in Upanishads and Mullā Sadrā's body of work have however fundamental importance in their uniqueness which can be comprehended only from the perspective of their respective systems of thought. A few of these, in particular, will serve as our focal points. Finally comparison does not intend categorically to suggest that Sadrā was influenced by Upanishads directly or indirectly as Neoplatonism affected Sadrā more. The former possibility is however not completely ruled out given the substantial similarities between the two systems of thought.

## **2. Upanishads and Mullā Sadrā: Juxtaposition**

### **2.1. Brahman and necessary existence as absolute**

The most important point in this comparative study is the concept of ultimate reality that is considered as One. Both of them believe the ultimate reality is indefinable. Mullā Sadrā says that it is not possible to define something which has genes and differentia but ultimate reality or necessary existence is free from them. Necessary existence cannot be defined because definition causes limitation but He is unlimited. Necessary existence is indefinable as well as simple. In this stage, for Upanishads also ultimate reality or Brahman is simple and indefinable.

1 “The origin of being of all things that exist is pure truth of existence, untainted by  
2 anything other than existence. Such a truth is not limited by any description, limitation,  
3 imperfection, essence and any generality, whether of genus, species, nor with any accident  
4 whether specific...” (Mullā Sadrā, 1962, p. 220).  
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6 According to Mullā Sadrā ultimate reality is simple because it is explained as being  
7 which is non-composite and unique. It is simple because it is described as pure oneness. He  
8 believes that necessary existence does not have essence or quiddity, because quiddity needs  
9 attributes and qualification that ultimate reality is free from them such as imperfection,  
10 limitation, attributes, plurality and qualification. In this sense, Upanishads say:  
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20 “In the beginning,' my dear, 'there was that only which is (to on), one only, without a  
21 second. Others say, in the beginning there was that only which is not (to me on), one only,  
22 without a second; and from that which is not, that which is was born. 'But how could it be  
23 thus, my dear?' the father continued. 'How could that which is, be born of that which is not?  
24 No, my dear only that which is, was in the beginning, one only, without a second” (Max  
25 Muller, F, Chān Up, 1965, 6. 2. 1-2).  
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30 Similarly Mullā Sadrā says:  
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33 “The truth of existence, by the advantage of its being a simple affair, that does not  
34 have an essence and also not have a delimiter, is the essential itself, having a need toward  
35 become perfect, infinite in its power, And shortage and exclusion afflict the seconds in their  
36 capacity as seconds, and the First is the perfection without limits; in respect to that, it is not  
37 possible to imagine of anything more perfect than itself...” (Mullā Sadrā, Vol. VI, 1981, p.  
38 24).  
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43 According to above the theory of absolutism can be realised in both philosophers. For  
44 absolutism it is essential to discuss about the dependence of the relative on the absolute in  
45 such a way that the absoluteness of One is not affected in the least. In this system, relative is  
46 in dependent of absolute that is free from any dependency and it is full of independent. It  
47 means that the things which are in dependency do not really come out of relative, or in other  
48 word the oneness or absolute is only epistemic and not ontological. Then relative things only  
49 appear to be there but in real sense they are not there. To realise the relative is derived from  
50 ignorance about ultimate reality. If so, then it is essential for all absolutism that has a  
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perspective of ignorance that leads the appearance of the relative possible, otherwise the relative will remain as puzzle. According to absolutism it is essential to recognise two levels of truth and knowledge, the empirical and the ultimate that called in Upanishads as the Vyāvahārika and the Paramārthika. The meaning of these phrases is to recognise the presence of physical world at practical level when rejecting its ultimate ontological value. Here some question exists that can man assert something as absolute with the help of reason? In its perfect way reason may only speculate about the possibility. Even if we recognise possibility, then reason is unable to affirm that the absolute is really there positively. As well can reason show the path of understanding the absolute experientially? The answer is negative because reason is confined to concepts only. Then how is it possible to be sure that the absolute is there? According to both philosophers it is possible to realise the reality of absolute by intuition and scripture whose message is based on intuitive experience which can categorically affirm the absolute and can not only assure us of the possibility of knowing of the absolute but can also tell us the way the absolute can be experienced. Our readiness to depend on the scripture not only suggests the limits of reason but also of our earnestness to seek the absolute.

“All this is Brahman (n.) Let a man meditate on that (visible world) as beginning, ending, and breathing in it (the Brahman)” (Max Muller, F, Chān Up, 1965, 3. 14. 1-3).

## 2.2. Role of intellect

Both Mullā Sadrā and Upanishads believe that intellect is unable to achieve ultimate reality that can be realised only by intuition and revelation. According to Mullā Sadrā:

“Certainly mere intuition without intellectual ratification is not sufficient for wayfaring, inasmuch as mere discourse without divine vision is a great fault in wayfaring...” (Mullā Sadrā, Vol. VII, 1981, p. 326).

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According to two systems philosophy is considered as some way or light of life rather than mere speculation. However, they gave principality to contemplation as against action. Actually Mullā Sadrā used to experience ecstasy that it is named as Samādhi in Indian philosophy. Both of them accepted the divine teaching as something secret and sacred and are therefore to be imparted to the chosen few, i.e. those who had the necessary cathartic virtues. Although they try to prove ontological issues with the help of reason but finally they recognises philosophy in secondary position while giving primary important to intuition and gnostic realization. Evidently while they want to discuss about two diverse philosophical-theological backgrounds, actually they had their meeting ground in mysticism. There is common endeavour to transcend the boundaries of rationality and ontological positivity. The intellect as a source of knowledge is replaced with intuition and the ultimate reality is seen to belong to a realm beyond and beyond. Absolute is without attributes and content that although is imperfectly cognized as a existence with the feature of intelligence and bliss that put later as basis for the emergence of multiplicity or objective world that consist of human world of divine and soul.

### 36 **2.3. Levels of Reality**

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Firstly for Sadrā necessary existence is considered as one or absolute and the levels of being are emanation of absolute, the one-in-dispersion and in ascendance. Secondly, the nature of one requires that it be beyond even the spiritual intellect of nous. The absolute or one is ever-present source infinitely productive of acts of intelligence. However productive activity is intelligence nous, not the one, which is the base of this activity. The true version of one is not in nous further nous is oriented toward the one; it is suspended-from and turns toward the one or Allah. This suspension-from and turning-toward is the first moment of manifestation from the one, resulting in a manifested intelligence, always grounded in the power of the one, with



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unity as its principle of operation. In this sense nous is the stage in the realization of that which generates intelligence.

“First effusion is unit in its essence because it is manifested from One, it is many in accident without any ontological becoming independent effect” (Mulla Sadra, 2012, p. 150).

Thirdly, with the absolute transcendence of the one, and the soul’s power to ascend to union with the one, the soul ultimately relinquishes its individuality. The role of soul is that when soul is to raise itself to spiritual intelligibility, it must become nous. But here Mullā Sadrā says that this surrender of individuality is not to be regretted. It is the soul’s very nature to transcend itself; it finds its true reality in union with the help of substance in motion. Thus according to Mullā Sadrā reality is emanation and return to one. (Mullā Sadrā, 2003, p. 223)

The idea of a quasi-creator God thus emerges in Mullā Sadrā within his emanationist scheme. This is more or less similar to the scheme of descent found in Upanishads. Brahman in relation to the world is *Ívara* but between these two we come across the notion of a world-soul, called *Brahma* or *Hiranyagarbha*, which seems to represent the nous of Mullā Sadrā. This world-soul is not sharply distinguished from *Ívara* in the Upanishads, but is rather intimately grounded in *Ívara* and Brahman. These three principles, Brahman, *Ívara*, and *Hiranyagarbha* (as intermediate being) are continually referred to, in various contexts, as the basis of the manifested world. But each is subtly distinct in meaning, and we must therefore rank them in their proper place.

“He indeed is the god who pervades all regions: he is the first-born (as *Hiranyagarbha*), and he is in the womb. He has been born, and he will be born. He stands behind all persons, looking everywhere. The god who is in the fire, the god who is in the water, the god who has entered into the whole world, the god who is in plants, the god who is in trees, adoration be to that god, adoration!” (Max Muller, F, *Svet Up*, 1965, II.16).

Brahman is the unity of all, while the world-soul is subject to the changes of the world and is therefore its effect. Brahman is distinct from *Ívara* or cause-Brahman. Brahman

1 is eternally transcendent and is not subject to world changes. The world-soul arises at the  
2 beginning of the world and dissolves at the end. Muṇḍaka Upanishad says Brahman to have  
3 four quarters which can be regarded as four levels of being: a transcendence prior to any  
4 concrete reality, i.e. the absolute Brahman, a causal foundation of all differentiation, Ísvara or  
5 cause Brahman and Ísvara as Prajñā, a supreme intelligence which holds all things in an  
6 undifferentiated condition, a divine wisdom that sees all things as a primordial whole, unlike  
7 human reason which sees things in parts and relations. An interior essence of the world, a  
8 world-soul emanates from Ísvara the creator.  
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21 “He, the creator and supporter of the gods, Rudra, the great seer, the lord of all, he  
22 who formerly gave birth to Hiranyagarbha, may he endow us with good thoughts” (Max  
23 Muller, F, Svet Up, 1965, III. 4).  
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26 Plurality in the manifestation of the world is called Virāj. These are four coexistent  
27 sides of one reality. The absolute is not the sum of these, or an elimination of any. It means  
28 that there is some distinction between Brahman and the other three. Brahman has strict  
29 distinctions but only phenomenally.  
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36 Now if we go back over these four aspects of reality and compare them with the  
37 Mullā Sadrā’s four stages of descent, we find the two schemes not essentially very different  
38 from each other. In Sadrā the four levels of reality are as follows:  
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- 43 1. One reality that is called necessary existence, absolute, undifferentiated, formless  
44 source.  
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- 46 2. Nous, the divines names, principle of creation.  
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- 48 3. World-soul, the agent of creation.  
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- 50 4. The sense-world where we find a remarkable similarity of structure and intensity of  
51 being.  
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57 These levels can further be seen to correspond in reverse to the following scheme of  
58 Mullā Sadrā:  
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1. Sense world and the individual soul immersed in its externality;
2. World-soul or unity of beings creating the world from within itself;
3. Nous, the creative principle, unity of divine ideals;
4. Absolute, undifferentiated source of all.

The Upanishads also tell that to reach the absolute, one must penetrate to the formless Brahman. This is accomplished by the self- journeying within its innermost depths where it is one with the absolute. In the Upanishads there is a kinship between Brahman and that which seeks Brahman, the self of man. This kinship is explained through the notion of Atman, the principle of grounding individual consciousness. In the early Upanishads, Atman was the ground of individuality as distinguished from Brahman, the supra-personal ground of the cosmos. Soon however this distinction diminished and the two were identified. Brahman is the transcendent other and also the spirit residing within man. This idea of absolute identity between Brahman and Atman was later developed by the great Vedantin thinker Shankara in his famous philosophy of Advaitavada or absolute non-dualism.

#### **2.4. God as personal and impersonal**

According to Upanishads there are two types of Brahman to be of two kinds: Parā and Aparā that lead to a higher and a lower Brahman. The former is a-cosmic, quality-less, indeterminate, and indescribable (Niṣprapañca, Nirguṇa, Nirviśeṣa and Anirvacanīya). The lower Brahman, on the other hand, is cosmic, all comprehensive and full of all good qualities (Saprapañca, Saguṇa and Saviśeṣa). The first is the Absolute being and the second is what may be called the Ívara or the theistic God. The absolute Brahman, moreover, is the real existence while the Ívara is either conceived as an imagined being or a descent from the higher Brahman.

“There are two forms of Brahman, the material (effect) and the immaterial (cause). The material is false, the immaterial is true. That which is true is Brahman, that which is Brahman is light, and that which is light is the Sun. and this Sun become the Self of that Om.

1 He divided himself threefold, for Om consists of three letters, a+u+m. Through them all this  
2 is contained in him as warp and woof. For thus it is said: ‘O Satyakama, the syllable Om is  
3 the high and the low Brahman’” (Max Muller, F, Maitrāyana Up, 1965, 6. 3-6).  
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5 According to Śvetāśvatara Upanishad (I.1) also Brahman is the cause of all things.  
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7 But Brahman in its unmanifested nature cannot be considered as cause. So Brahman as cause  
8 is Brahman and as Íśvara is the creator working through the power of Māyā. In this sense  
9 Brahman in relation to the multiplicity is viewed as Íśvara; but Brahman’s absolute nature  
10 transcends Íśvara. According to above this corresponds to but is not exactly same as what  
11 Mullā Sadrā thinks about absolute or necessary existence in relation to the God as creator of  
12 universe. The ‘nous’ or first intellect is not the creator God with personal attributes but the  
13 first emanation from his being (like Puruṣa).  
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26 “...Nous is the first emanant that is effused from God, it is essential because God is  
27 real unit, then His first emanant must be unit existent that has been simple by existence and it  
28 is effective by matter, then first emanation is nothing just Nous” (Mullā Sadrā, 2012, p. 149).  
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31 Mullā Sadrā accepts it as first effect of God. This first effect is identical with God that  
32 is the pure existence but as being the result of God’s self-reflection, it is something different  
33 as well. But it is not to be known as existence that is apart from him. We could not say that it  
34 is a real emanation, but rather an act or one act of self-reflection so far as God is concerned  
35 (Fazlur Rahmān, 1975, p. 85). According to Mullā Sadrā nous is both identical and separate  
36 from necessary being, is both eternal and non-eternal, both necessary and contingent. The  
37 nous as the witness of God is in all things. It is the shadow of God in everything.  
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6 “He indeed is the god who pervades all regions: he is the first-born (as  
7 Hiranyagarbha), and he is in the womb. He has been born, and he will be born. He stands  
8 behind all persons, looking everywhere. The god who is in the fire, the god who is in the  
9 water, the god who has entered into the whole world, the god who is in plants, the god who is  
10 in trees, adoration be to that god, adoration!” (Max Muller, F, Svet Up, 1965, II-16).  
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14 In Upanishads the personal God or Saguṇa Brahman is recognized in the realm of  
15 plurality, impersonal God or Nirguṇa Brahman in the realm of unity. Similarly, Mullā Sadrā  
16 accepts personal God in the state of Tasbīh or immanence and impersonal God in the state of  
17 Tanzīh or transcendence. It is obvious that it is the belief that necessary existence Wājib Al-  
18 Wujūd (God) consists of all things and nothing is out of His nature that leads to belief in  
19 Tasbīh. Allah is considered to be everything and the composition of all things, thus similar to  
20 Tasbīh. Allah is considered to be everything and the composition of all things, thus similar to  
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39 Tasbīh. Allah is considered to be everything and the composition of all things, thus similar to  
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50 Tasbīh. Allah is considered to be everything and the composition of all things, thus similar to  
51 in Shawāhid:

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53  
54 “Necessary existence’s attributes are not to be added to its quiddity, but the being of  
55 him that is its very quiddity, in its truth is a repository of all the attributes in the state of their  
56 perfection does not thereby imply plurality, passivity, acceptance and activity in his quiddity.  
57 The distinction between the quiddity of necessary being and its attributes is similar to the  
58 distinction between being and the quiddity of the entities which comprehends quiddity...  
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1 Similarly, the spiritual attributes and divine names that in themselves and in their necessary  
2 concepts are non-existent, but rather exist in the state of simplicity...” (Mullā Sadrā, 2003, pp.  
3 38-39).

4  
5 Sadrā recognizes seven attributes of God namely, life, knowledge, power, will,  
6  
7 hearing, sight and speech. Of these, three attributes, viz. life, knowledge, and power are the  
8  
9 positive attributes of the Essence, and the other three i.e. hearing, sight, and speech, are the  
10  
11 attributes of act. In addition, he has propounded the attribute of God’s will to love for his  
12  
13 creation too, both in the *Asfār* and the *Shawāhid*. According to him:  
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17  
18 “The necessary being has the power to effect the emanation of the entities from his  
19 quiddity by sheer will. This will is his very quiddity, and not something added to quiddity”  
20 (Ibid. p. 39).  
21  
22

23  
24 The above account of Mullā Sadrā’s views on the attributes of God shows that his  
25  
26 views are similar to those of Rāmānuja who, too, believes in God’s attributes but only as part  
27  
28 of Brahman’s essence.  
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### 31 32 **2.5. Unity of existence** 33

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35 According to Mullā Sadrā there are two kinds of unity: gradational unity and individual unity  
36  
37 of existence. According to gradational unity, existence is considered as one truth that has its  
38  
39 presence in various degrees that began from lowest level of pure matter to highest level of  
40  
41 ultimate reality that is called necessary existence. He says that phenomena world is made by  
42  
43 the intensity of existence. Thus we could see in this formulation of Mullā Sadrā both unity  
44  
45 and multiplicity as real. According to him the presence of existence in God and man are  
46  
47 same; the difference is only in intensity not in substance (*Ubūdiyat*, Vol. 1, 2013, p. 158).  
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52  
53 Mullā Sadrā resembles existence with light and says existence is like light that is  
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55 reflected from sun as its origin or source. The more the light gets far from the origin, the  
56  
57 more it becomes weaker. The existence similarly that is stronger would be closer to Allah. In  
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1 second formulation that called individual unity, Mullā Sadrā recognizes the mystic idea of  
2 Ibn Arabi and believes that there is nothing real except existence. Then according to his  
3  
4 formulation existence is one truth that is the being of the transcendent God. There is nothing  
5  
6 in the realm of existents except existence which is nothing other than the sacred divine  
7  
8 essence. All things in the realm of multiplicity are the manifestations and shadows. Then  
9  
10 existence and existents are therefore essentially unitary and this leads us to the point that only  
11  
12 unity is real. Mullā Sadrā says:  
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18 “Allah led me to a bright argument that existence is only one individual truth that  
19 there is nothing except him and whatever other than him are emanation and manifestation of  
20 its attributes and compassion” (Mullā Sadrā, Vol. 2, 1981, p. 292).  
21  
22

23 According to Upanishads:  
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26  
27 “By the mind alone it is to be perceived, there is in it no diversity. He who perceives  
28 therein any diversity, goes from death to death” (Max Muller, F, Bṛh Up, 1965, 4. 4. 19).  
29  
30

31 In this theory Mullā Sadrā also tries to unity of existence with the help of causality.  
32  
33 For him effect is nothing but manifestation and emanation of the cause; so the real existence  
34 is the existence of the cause; and the existence of the effect is only a ray radiated by it.  
35  
36 However, the unity of existence in this version means that the essential real existence is  
37  
38 specific to the sacred Divine Essence, and all contingent beings, beginning from first  
39 emanation (the primordial matter) are only manifestations and rays of that Unitary Real  
40  
41 Existent. At last according to this formulation the absolute multiplicity is not denied; rather, it  
42  
43 is annihilated in the Real Existence, and attributed to His manifestations and appearances.  
44  
45 Obviously by transferring the multiplicity from existence to manifestation, the  
46  
47 commencement is also transferred from existence to the manifestation. Accordingly, the  
48  
49 nearer the manifestations are to the Real Existence, i.e., the sacred Divine Essence, the more  
50  
51 intensive and powerful they are; and the farther they are from the Real Existent, the weaker  
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1 they are. However the weakness of these appearances does not cause any alteration in the  
2 unity, purity and simple-ness of the Real Essence. A thing by itself does not have any real  
3 existence. In the final section of his discussion of causality Mullā Sadrā in fact insists that,  
4 Existence is one reality which is the very Truth, and the contingent quiddities do not have any  
5 real existence.  
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11 Rather, their being existents are by the light of existence; and their intelligibility is  
12 acquired from a way among the ways of the manifestation of existence and a kind among the  
13 kinds of its appearance. What is seen in all manifestations, quiddities, aspects and  
14 determinations is but the reality of existence; that is, it is the existence of God that is the  
15 Truth while the creation has the differences of His manifestations, the plurality of His  
16 aspects, and the multiplicity of His modes. Similarly, we could see in Upanishads that try to  
17 describe the world of multiplicity as Brahman's own act of going out but yet remaining  
18 within like a spider weaving a web from within itself.  
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31 “As the spider sends forth and draws in its thread, as plants grow on the earth, as  
32 from every man hairs spring forth on the head and the body, thus does everything arise here  
33 from the Indestructible.' The Brahman swells by means of brooding (penance); hence is  
34 produced matter (food); from matter breath, mind, the true, the worlds (seven), and from the  
35 works (performed by men in the worlds), the immortal (the eternal effects, rewards, and  
36 punishments of works)” (Max Muller, F, Muṇḍaka Up, 1965, I. I.7-8).  
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42 Mullā Sadrā says:  
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46 “All contingent beings and relational entities are unreal. They are aspects of necessary  
47 existence, rays and shadow of everlasting light. In their identity they have no independence.  
48 They cannot be considered discrete essences and independent entities” (Mullā Sadrā, Vol. 1,  
49 1981, p. 47).  
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53 In this stage Mullā Sadrā, like Upanishads, recognizes the pure unity of existence that  
54 captures the entire universe, the multiplicity being seen in dependence state. But the  
55 significant point is that Mullā Sadrā tries to explain multiplicity with the help of unity and  
56 accepts both of them in real state with one vital difference that the reality of unity is  
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1 independent while the reality of multiplicity is in dependency. On the other hand, Upanishads  
2 try to remove multiplicity by the formulation of Māyā or cosmic illusion and achieve pure  
3  
4 unity by making the Brahman identical with Ātman. Brahman is known through Ātman. This  
5  
6 whole world is Brahman and this self within me is Brahman, too. Both of them then accept  
7  
8 there is one unity in the world that is hidden by veil that is called Māyā in Upanishads and  
9  
10 quiddity or essence in philosophy of Mullā Sadrā. We could see in Chāndogya Upanishad:  
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16 “All this is Brahman. Let a man meditate on that (visible world) as beginning, ending,  
17 and breathing in it (the Brahman). He is myself within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice,  
18 smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a canary seed or the  
19 kernel of a canary seed. He also is myself within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than  
20 the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds. He from whom all works all  
21 desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed, who embraces all this, who never speaks and  
22 who is never surprised, he, myself within the heart, is that Brahman. When I shall have  
23 departed from hence, I shall obtain him (that Self). He who has this faith has no doubt” (Max  
24 Muller, F, 1965, III. 14.1. 4).  
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29 According to above Ātman and Brahman are two aspects of one reality that achieve  
30  
31 the intimate unity of the self of man and Brahman.  
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36 “He is the one ruler of many who (seem to act, but really do) not act; he makes the  
37 one seed manifold. The wise who perceive him within their self to them belongs eternal  
38 happiness, not to others” (Max Muller, F, Svet Up, 1965, VI. 12).  
39  
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41 Here Upanishads like Mullā Sadrā believe the unity of known and knower.  
42  
43 Upanishads say that the knower of Brahman becomes merged with Brahman.  
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47 “He who knows the Supreme Brahman verily becomes Brahman” (Max Muller, F,  
48 Muṇḍaka Up, 1965, III. 2. 9).  
49  
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51 “Those who know It (Brahman) become immortal” (Max Muller, F. Katha Up, 1965,  
52 II. 2).  
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55 We could see also in school of Sadrā that ultimate reality or necessary existence  
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57 knows of his essence and since he is the necessary existence whose essence is identical with  
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1 his being, knowledge in God implies a unity between the subject who knows, the object that  
2 is known and the act of knowing (Mullā Sadrā, Vol. 1, 1981, p. 277).  
3

4  
5 Similarly Upanishads believe that the individual self sees its true reality as the source  
6 of all (Max Muller, F. Kaivalya Up, 1965, 20-23). It is the task of individual self to become  
7 the universal self, and this is not attainable through the Vedas, intellectual knowledge, and  
8 discipline or brain power but only through the union. Every individual self has the power to  
9 break the veil of separateness and achieve unity, become the Absolute self. Liberation,  
10 Mokṣa, is different from the life in paradise, Svarga, which is still a part of the manifest, is  
11 still an individual existence in time. Liberation is not a departure to another 'world', nor an  
12 expectation of a future state, but the experience of timeless, placeless presence of Brahman.  
13  
14 This union is the transformation of the soul, the absorption in the divine, seeing one's self in  
15 all beings and all beings in one self (Max Muller, F. Isa Up, 1965, 6). One who realizes this is  
16 released from sorrow, as all sorrow results from duality. The self loses itself, casting off all  
17 name and form to enter into the unmanifest such is release from the cycle of birth and death,  
18 the wheel of time and change, the achieving of the state of Kaivalya, aloneness. All of this of  
19 course corresponds to Mullā Sadrā's flight of the alone to the alone. In its initial condition,  
20 sometimes the soul is depicted as wandering about, thinking itself different from Brahman,  
21 looking on multiplicity as its sole reality. According to Upanishads:  
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45 "Having well ascertained the object of the knowledge of the Vedanta, and having  
46 purified their nature by the Yoga of renunciation, all anchorites, enjoying the highest  
47 immortality, become free at the time of the great end (death) in the worlds of Brahma" (Max  
48 Muller, F, Svet Up, 1965, I. 6).  
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51 We could see the same idea in Mullā Sadrā's image of the soul wandering through the  
52 sense world and achievement of soul to ideal level by the substance in motion.  
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57 "Man is constituted of an intellect, a soul and a body. Thus, all the possibilities of  
58 cosmic existence are contained in a synthetic manner in his being. It is through his unitive  
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1 and ontologically synthetic being that the ascent of the lower level of being, namely matter,  
2 can ascend to the higher levels of being: soul and spirit to return to God. In Mulla Sadra's  
3 perspective, it is by the process of transubstantial motion that the human soul can achieve  
4 separation and complete independence (tajrid) from matter. Through the being of man,  
5 material creation which is the lowest development or the most limited and weakest  
6 determination of Being can ascend or return (ma'ad) to its origin. Man is the crowning  
7 achievement of material creation and his being marks the beginning as well as the end of the  
8 process of ascent or return to Being" (Zailan, M, 2013, p. 99).  
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11  
12 In Upanishads union with Brahman cures the soul of its ignorance, or the individuality  
13 seen in itself as independent of its ground; it brings about Vidyā, or awareness of Brahman.  
14 This Avidyā-Vidyā scheme is somewhat comparable to Mullā Sadrā's fall-return imagery. In  
15 Upanishads sorrow is seen as the helplessness resulting from being lost in the objective  
16 world; salvation involves getting beyond object-thinking to the realm of pure being (Max  
17 Muller, F, Svet Up, 1965, IV. 7).  
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## 28 **2.6. Theory of Causality**

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30 There is no systematic theory of causation in Upanishads but we could see some dialog in  
31 Chāndogya Upanishad (6.1.4-6) that sage Aruni expressed about working of causality to his  
32 son, Svetaketu. He gave some example of the relation between clay and pot that all the  
33 schools of Vedanta, especially Shankara, referred to it.  
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41 "“What is that instruction, Sir?’ he asked. The father replied: 'My dear, as by one clod  
42 of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name, arising from  
43 speech, but the truth being that all is clay; 'And as, my dear, by one nugget of gold all that is  
44 made of gold is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth  
45 being that all is gold? 'And as, my dear, by one pair of nail-scissors all that is made of iron  
46 (karshnayasam) is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the  
47 truth being that all is iron,--thus, my dear, is that instruction”" (Max Muller, F, Chānd Up,  
48 1965, 6.1.4-6).  
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54 We could see in above dialog that for Upanishads the effect is pre-existent in the  
55 cause in other words they endorse the theory of Satkāryavāda. But Shankara's view was  
56 different since he altogether denied the possibility of causation. Radhakrishnan says:  
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1 “Samkara adopts the theory that cause and effect are not different. He reduces the  
2 transitions from causes to effects, which underlie the entire dynamic evolution of reality to a  
3 static relation of sequence characteristic of certain types of logical and theoretic connection”  
4 (Radhakrishnan, Vol. II, 2008, p. 494).  
5

6 Mullā Sadrā believes that effect is not different from cause in so far as it keeps the  
7 existence within itself. Effect is the quiddity which is a psychological event having no reality  
8 of its own. It is one and same reality one side of which is real (cause) and another side unreal  
9 (effect). The relation between the two also, therefore, cannot be recognized as real relation.  
10 For him nothing can come into existence without the cause. The realm of multiplicity is  
11 certainly contingent upon the first act for causation. But the cause in this act of causation  
12 cannot remove itself from what it produces. It remains in the effect; the effect is, in fact,  
13 nothing but the cause itself. Mullā Sadrā says:  
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27 “The effect in itself is as simple as the cause in itself so the attention is bound to them.  
28 It is made clear then that which is named as effect does not have truth except the truth of its  
29 originating cause. It is for this reason that the intellect cannot take recourse to the effect’s  
30 entity without referring to the entity of its originator. Thus, we can accept effect as real not in  
31 its causedness but in the state of its dependency only...” (Mullā Sadrā, Vol. II, 1981, pp. 299-  
32 230).  
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37 Similarly we could see Brahman in school of Shankara that encompasses all other  
38 causes. According to Shankara the ultimate reality that is known as Brahman is the only  
39 cause. Any other causes in the realm of multiplicity are reducible to Brahman because  
40 ontologically Brahman or absolute is identical with all things. Then in the phenomenal world  
41 Brahman encompasses all causation.  
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50 “The effect is this manifold world consisting of ether and so on; the cause is the  
51 highest Brahman. Of the effect it is understood that in reality it is non-different from the  
52 cause, i.e., has no existence apart from the cause” (Prabhu Dutt Shastri, 1911, p. 100).  
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56 There are two types of causes in Upanishads; first is Nimitta kārana or the  
57 instrumental cause. For example, a pot is the instrumental cause when the potter makes a pot.  
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1 The second is Upādāna karana that means material cause, for example, the clay is the  
2 material cause of the pot. We could see in Taittiriya Aranyaka Upanishad (3.12.7) that  
3  
4 Brahman is the instrumental cause of existence although in another place it says that  
5  
6 Brahman is material cause.  
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10  
11 “What is that instruction, Sir?” he asked. The father replied: 'My dear, as by one clod  
12 of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name, arising from  
13 speech, but the truth being that all is clay...’ (Max Muller, F, Chānd Up, 1965, 6.1.4).  
14  
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16 Similarly Mullā Sadrā explains about one kind of material cause that is the original  
17 material cause and that lasts forever. The second kind of material cause is the effect of  
18 original material cause that can be regained even if the object undergoes vast changes (called  
19 Parināma). Shankara also speaks about two kinds of material change, which he tries to  
20 distinguish without an ontological distinction. In another word his ontological system only  
21 Brahman ultimately remains, the difference in phenomena being rendered unreal and illusory.  
22 It also means there is no real distinction between the cause and effect. The difference between  
23 them is only notional or in name, in reality they being no different from each other. In this  
24 sense Mullā Sadrā also accepts that effect is dependent on cause. Effect is just the quiddity  
25 that is a psychological event and it is not real. So the relation in which one side of it is real  
26 (Cause) and another side is unreal (Effect) cannot be recognized as real relation. The relation  
27 of causation is therefore not real.  
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46 “The principle of causality expresses the need of the caused for a cause the caused  
47 cannot exist without a cause” (Ayatollahi, A. R, 2005, p. 71).  
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50 Thus we could see that two systems try to show first cause as ultimate reality and try  
51 to prove unity of existence with the help of their respective theories of causality.  
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## 56 **2.7. Theory of Creation**

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Corresponding to Brahman of Upanishads and Advaitism we have in Sadrā the conception of necessary existence, the ultimate reality from which proceeds the Nous or First Intelligence that in its turn, gives rise to world-soul and souls. Vedas similarly speak of Hiranyagarbha and Puruṣa as intermediary beings between the Brahman and the multiplex world (Dasgupta, S, Vol. 1, 1957, p. 19).

“He, the creator and supporter of the gods, Rudra, the great seer, the lord of all, he who formerly gave birth to Hiranyagarbha, may he endow us with good thoughts” (Max Muller, F, Svet Up, 1965, III. 4).

Creation for Sadrā is a kind of radiation or emanation while for the Upanishads it is rather in the nature of manifestation or inherence as Rāmānuja later said. The one alone being real, the world of multiplicity and change is unreal, matter being a principle of non-being or darkness. Man too is essentially one with One but the realization of this unity comes only at the end of one’s spiritual journey. This unity with the One is of the nature of identity; in other words, man has only to discover his real nature to find that he is one with Brahman. This discovery is not merely intellectual; it is a kind of awakening, it is intuitive. Not only moral virtues but also cathartic virtue, especially freedom from desire for enjoyment and the practice of dialectic those are necessary for intuitive wisdom or illumination. Most of the features of absolutism as pointed out above are shared by Sadrā. The necessary existence is infinite and unchangeable. As transcendent it is beyond thought but as the ground of everything it is also immanent. And though transcendent, it is intuitively knowable as it is one with our real self. The world of plurality and change, though dependent on the One, is not unreal. It is same for Rāmānuja though for Shankara ‘Brahman is real, the world is false, and Brahman and the self are one and not different’. It is not mere monism as there is definite denial of change and plurality (Sharma, C, 1952, pp. 365-366).

Mullā Sadrā says that the necessary existence only lends reality to or allows itself to be the ground of appearance.

1 “...this principle is of the principles that make what we are in the process of  
2 ratifying; and the truth is that all the [contingent] entities in angle of their nature of being are  
3 the emanations and flakes of the spiritual existence and they are the manifestations and  
4 ultimate reality” (Mullā Sadrā, Vol. I, 1981, p. 380).  
5

6 According to Mullā Sadrā the world of multiplicity is known as a real manifestation  
7 but for the Upanishads the position is not unambiguously so. However the philosophy of  
8 Mullā Sadrā is quite close to Upanishads and Advaitism on many onto-cosmological issues  
9 yet some differences are there. Mullā Sadrā no doubt regards the world as appearance and  
10 also talks of the fall of man as a result of ignorance of his real self, but he does not elaborate  
11 any theory of ignorance of his real self as is done in Advaitism. Thus there seems to be no  
12 doubt that Sadrā does not regard ignorance as mere absence of knowledge and takes it to be  
13 the source of evil.  
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25 For Mullā Sadrā, the creation of world happened in two steps of generation (Ibdā) and  
26 formation (Takvin). The step of generation is called non-external step, too. It began from  
27 intellect and soul and achieved finally to the prime matter. We could call this formation step  
28 as external step because in this step world is created by prime matter and goes through the  
29 different higher beings such as the levels of plants, animal and man. Here beings (at different  
30 levels) belong to the realm of generation because they are independent of matter and form  
31 (Moris, Z, 2003, p. 99).  
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44 “Like the Sufīs, Mullā Sadrā views the two processes involved in creation: the descent  
45 of Being in successive stages of intensity or perfection and ascent of being in cosmic  
46 existence are often represented by one side of the circle and the ascending arc by the  
47 corresponding side. The terminal point of the descending arc is the beginning point of the  
48 ascending arc. In the two processes of descent and ascent of being in cosmic existence, man  
49 plays a central role. This is due to the fact of his creation as the qualitative synthesis of the  
50 various levels of cosmic reality” (Ibid. p. 99).  
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55 Deussen says that there are four aspects to the theory of creation in Upanishads. These  
56 are as follows: the first is that matter gets its existence from God. He fashions the world but  
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doesn't create it. The second, the universe is formed by God from nothing. The third, the universe is generated by way of God transforming himself into it. The fourth is that the reality is of God and other than him there is no reality. According to Upanishads the universe that is limited in space and time, is a reflection of God.

“For the fundamental thought, that is held fast at least as a principle at all stages, even at the lowest which maintains the independent existence of matter, is the conviction of the sole reality of the atman; only that side by side with and in spite of this conviction more or less far-reaching concessions were made to the empirical consciousness of the reality of the universe, that could never be entirely cast off; and thus universe disowned by the fundamental idealistic view of the sole reality of the atman was yet again partially rehabilitated” (Deussen, P, 1906, pp. 161-162).

According to above the manifestation of existence happens in circle of which the one side is the descending order of existence and the other side the ascending order. In this stage the idea of Mullā Sadrā is similar to Upanishads where the circular conception of origination and destruction of the universe in Brahman is categorically maintained. At the end all creation is absorbed in Brahman but this absorption also turns into a point of fresh beginning and of emergence of the world.

At last Upanishads and Mullā Sadrā consider creation as manifestation of absolute or ultimate reality that is called Brahman or necessary existence. Here we could see that the cause of creation in Upanishads is the creative process of Māyā (an idea endorsed by Shankara but not by Rāmanujā) but in Mullā Sadrā it is real and due to love.

According to both Mullā Sadrā and Upanishads we see the soul initially trapped in a fallen awareness, attending to multiplicity and change as if they are real. The task of the soul is to purify and deepen its awareness to reveal the absolute, formless source behind these manifestations. And this awareness is not external but internal, found at the depth of the soul. The soul is absolute at its depth level. Individuality as an ultimate principle, in other words, is transcended. The world is an emanation (Immanence) of a formless ground (Transcendence);



1 form is not the ultimate reality, it must ultimately deny itself, transcend itself, and return to its  
2 ground. This is the procession of reality, with both emanation and return, which is reflected in  
3 the thought systems of both Mullā Sadrā and the Upanishads. Creation in the philosophy of  
4 Upanishads means the process of becoming but in the school of Mullā Sadrā, it is both being  
5 and becoming. It means that it is the stableness that is in substantial motion. Mullā Sadrā like  
6 Rāmānuja recognizes creation as real process but Shankara rejected it.  
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### 16 **3. Conclusion**

17 This paper considered the concept of ultimate reality and ontological issues that espoused by  
18 Upanishads and Mullā Sadrā. As has been demonstrated, there are some points of comparison  
19 between these two philosophical systems in concept of ultimate reality. Consideration of the  
20 concept of Absolute as of primary importance to both systems is at the center of whole  
21 discussion. The Brahman of Upanishads and the Existence of Mullā Sadrā are both absolute  
22 and inconceivable by intellect and indescribable through language and both systems in their  
23 respective ways identify it with true and expanded nature of human self. The journey of self-  
24 expansion is a mystical journey that requires enlightenment and realization. Further, in both  
25 of them this Absolute or One is hidden by veil that is known as Māyā in Upanishads.  
26 Upanishads however recognize world as Māyā or cosmic illusion in opposition of Mullā  
27 Sadrā who accepts world as a downward and upward intermingling of existence into non-  
28 being in an evolutionary/involutionary circle. In theory of emanation we have found the two  
29 schemes not essentially very different from each other, these two schemes are four aspects of  
30 reality in Upanishads and four stages of descent in school of Mullā Sadrā that can be  
31 compared as follow: 1. One reality that is called necessary existence, and that is absolute,  
32 undifferentiated, formless source. 2. Nous, the divines names, principle of creation. 3. World-  
33 soul, the agent of creation. 4. The sense-world where we find a remarkable similarity of  
34 structure and intensity of being.  
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1 Similarly the different levels of being in Upanishads are as follow: 1. Absolute,  
2 undifferentiated source of all; 2. Puruṣa, the creative principle, unity of divine ideas; 3.  
3 World-soul or unity of beings creating the world from within itself; 4. Sense world and the  
4 individual soul immersed in its externality.  
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9 According to Upanishads and Mullā Sadrā that only cause is recognized as real and  
10 they used the principle of causation to prove the unity of existence. For the Upanishads and  
11 the later Vedanta there is only one reality that is Brahman and the realm of multiplicity being  
12 either a pure illusion (Shankara) or having its locus in Brahman (Rāmanujā). But in this sense  
13 Sadrā believes that the realm of multiplicity or world comes into existence as a result of  
14 Existence's descent into non-existence. The world in itself is therefore non-being but it exists  
15 by virtue of its receiving existence into itself. This position is more akin to Rāmānuja than  
16 Shankara. Although Sadrā, comes close to Shankara in his belief that the quiddity as veil  
17 upon ultimate reality, i.e. the Absolute but we could see some difference that the philosophy  
18 of Mullā Sadrā is based on the multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity but the  
19 philosophy of Upanishads is focused only on pure unity. But according to some  
20 interpretations Upanishads also do not completely reject multiplicity. Another difference is  
21 that Upanishads accept only impersonal God or Nirguna Brahman as real but Mullā Sadrā  
22 accepts the reality of both personal and impersonal God. Moreover, while Upanishads  
23 emphasize the theory of transmigration of soul Mullā Sadrā is in opposite side.  
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