



Illuminating the Logic of Altruistic Spirit through the Lens of Relative and Independent Existence

Fateme Naderi Parizi^{1*}, Gholamreza Azimi Raviz²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Sciences, Vali-e-Asr University of Rafsanjan, Rafsanjan, Iran
(Corresponding Author).

²Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Sciences, Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences, Rafsanjan, Iran.

Abstract

Altruism stands as a paramount moral virtue, manifesting in interpersonal relations to gratify the Divine. This paper employs the philosophical concept of relative and independent existence to analytically explore the underpinnings of the altruistic spirit. The ensuing philosophical explanation underscores the rational basis of Shia Islamic beliefs. It posits that within the realm of transcendent wisdom, God is characterized by self-sufficiency and independence, while all else is inherently deficient, lacking autonomy, and fundamentally reliant. Following this exposition, the paper suggests that only those who, through rational contemplation, acknowledge their complete existence as belonging to God and their perpetual reliance on the Divine due to inherent deficiency, can truly embody altruism and prioritize others above self. This recognition instills the belief that individuals are, in essence, possessions of God, and no dependent entity has the right to claim ownership or bestow a fitting reward upon the altruistic. Consequently, a devout individual, recognizing all existence as God's, willingly and passionately dedicates their existence to sincerity, aspiring for divine proximity, favor, and recompense.

319

Keywords: Altruism, Independent Existence, Relative Existence, Pleasure

DOI Number: 10.48047/nq.2024.22.2.NQ24033

NeuroQuantology 2024; 22(2):319-329

Introduction

Problem Statement

The selfless dedication of one's life and possessions is a moral excellence that Islam has both advocated and underscored. Such acts of altruism are exemplified in the Holy Quran and throughout Islamic history. Nonetheless, a persistent query emerges: How can jeopardizing one's life and possessions be deemed a rational decision? Mulla Sadra, the harmonizer of Sharia with mysticism and philosophy, and the architect of transcendent wisdom within Islamic philosophy, asserts: "The teachings of the Quran and the Hadith are substantiated by rational evidence" (Mulla Sadra, 1975, 5). In his view, any philosophy that contravenes the Quran and the Hadith is bereft of life force (ibid, 1990, 8, 303). Furthermore, he regards mystical insights and visions unsupported by incontrovertible evidence

as lacking in authority (ibid, 1990, 9, 234). Mulla Sadra posits that a true sage consults the Quran and the Hadith, is adept at mystical insights and visions, and can elucidate and render the divine mysteries comprehensible through the application of reason (ibid, 1975, 382).

Mulla Sadra, on the contrary, enhances the discourse on cause and effect to the domain of the independent and the relative. He perceives the active cause as an independent existence and the effect as a relative existence; the relative existence he envisions transcends mere dependency. It is characterized by an inherent need that is essential to its being, rather than a relative existence that has not fully relinquished its independence. As individuals mature intellectually, they come to recognize their status as dependent beings yearning for an independent existence, one that is inherently stable. This



intrinsic deficiency of humanity, coupled with its ceaseless needs, cultivates faith and affection for the one true God, prompting an unwavering quest for the beloved's satisfaction, even at the expense of one's life. This article employs an analytical approach to illuminate the rationality of altruism, utilizing the framework of relative and independent existences. What sets this article apart is its explication of the rational essence of altruism, grounded in the belief in relative and independent existences. The article commences by defining these existences and subsequently elucidates the rational essence of altruism through this lens.

Existence: Independent and Relational

The concept of existence encompasses various philosophical categories. Islamic scholars have categorized existence into necessary and contingent, actual and potential, external and mental, as well as independent and relational. The philosopher's focus on independent existence lies in it being the ultimate cause, as it stands alone in independence while we exist in a state of contingency and dependency upon it. Consequently, the philosopher argues that existence is fundamentally either independent or relational.

True independent existence represents the very essence of the necessary being, whose existence is intrinsic and indispensable. The term "independent" serves to differentiate the self-existing from the self-reliant and the dependent. The self-existent nature pertains solely to the core of the necessary being, characterized by absolute independence and devoid of any vestiges of need. Subsequently, the self-reliant existence follows, detached from anything beyond the essence of the necessary being, such as diverse potential forms. Lastly, comes the relational existence, wherein autonomy is confined to its relationship with others, necessitating both a subject and a locus of dependency, devoid of intrinsic independence (Ebrahimi Dinani, 2014, p. 180).

Mulla Sadra views independent existence as the primary source, the sole entity, the reality, and the essence of all entities (Mulla Sadra, 1981, 2, 300). This type of existence is essentially basic and uncomplicated; simplicity is set in opposition to complexity. Independent existence is not a compound entity because any composite structure is subordinate to its constituent parts and relies on them. Independent existence can be

characterized as lacking a makeup of external physical and conceptual elements or a combination of measurable components. Furthermore, independent existence is considered impossible to be formed from a mixture of existence and essence, or existence and non-existence. This notion arises from the understanding that "each possible being is a fusion of existence and essence," and that "essence is synonymous with nothingness," while existence persists as enduring and boundless. Thus, the core nature of independent existence lies precisely in its existence, embodying a simple and self-sufficient essence devoid of non-being and abstract qualities. In this scenario, an individual inevitably proclaims: He is a singular and exclusive existence (Mulla Sadra, 1992, 240).

The conclusion is that an independent existence is not poor; in this sense, it is free from composition and multiplicity and is without need, thus it is simple in essence and the totality of all things. Of course, the existence of the One means an infinite existence that has left no room for another independent existence; if there were an essentially independent existence other than Him, that existence would be essentially separate from the Presence of Truth, and this is a false consequence; for all existential perfections return to Him; that is, any claimant to perfection other than Him is imperfect, and any claimant to wealth other than Him is essentially poor and inherently in need of that wealthy and independent essence. Therefore, the Presence of Truth is the only existence that is essentially wealthy and independent in every respect, and we, other than Him, from the kingdom to the kingdom of heaven, are essentially dependent and poor and belong to Him. In the works of Muslim philosophers, there are two terms: relative existence and dependent existence. The reason for the existence of these two terms is the presence of two different perspectives in the works of philosophers.

Relative existence is characterized as a form of dependency that, although separate from its cause, maintains a connection to it. In other words, the effect, despite its autonomy, cannot sever its ties to the cause. This interpretation aligns with the Peripatetic school's understanding of causality. However, Mulla Sadra, grounding his analysis in his philosophical tenets—the primacy of existence and the notion that creation is attributed to existence—finds this perspective on



the effect lacking in depth (Mulla Sadra, 1975, 32-33). In his view, the effect is devoid of any true independence and is thus labeled as relative existence.

The presence of a causal relationship is such that the effect is completely reliant on the cause, and it is impossible to view the effect's existence as distinct from that of the cause. The effect cannot be presented as merely associated with the cause or as possessing an inherent connection. Instead, the effect is an extension of the cause, not something that the cause itself adds. Holding an autonomous perspective of the effect and believing in such autonomy is contrary to the principles of monotheism and rational thought.

The self-sufficient existence of the fundamental principle is the aspect of interconnected existence that reveals linked existence through its light and brilliance. In the framework of differentiation and the primacy of existence within the sublime wisdom of Sadra, the particular existence of the effect is entirely conferred by the active cause, lacking any independent existence. Consequently, the active cause is designated as the independent existence, while its effect is termed as linked existence. This linked existence is the essence of the connection and encompasses every entity within the realm of possibility, spanning from the material to the spiritual. Thus, God is the ultimate reality and an infinite singularity that allows for nothing else to exist alongside it, neither in extension nor in dimension. Beyond God, one observes the continuous and contingent manifestations of an independent, singular, and infinite existence, with the realm of possibility being regarded as an additional radiance stemming from the true existence.

Altruism

Within the realm of religious texts, altruism is characterized as the act of prioritizing the welfare, health, and lives of others above one's own, to earn divine favor. The Holy Quran endorses the selfless deed of Imam Ali during the night of Laylat al-Mabit¹, acknowledging his pursuit of God's pleasure (Surah Al-Baqarah, 207). Furthermore, it references his generosity and the preservation of his reward with God (Surah Al-Baqarah, 274). Altruism is a hallmark of

the Ahl al-Bayt, the family of Prophet Muhammad, who are commended for their successive acts of charity, providing their Iftar meals to the needy, the orphaned, and the captive, while enduring their hunger (Surah Al-Insan, 8 and 9). The Quran also highlights the unadulterated altruism of the Ansar towards the Muhajirun:

"And [also for] those who were settled in the Home [i.e., al-Madīnah] and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what they [i.e., the emigrants] were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be successful." (Surah Al-Hashr, 9). Moreover, historical accounts elevate altruism to the zenith of virtuous qualities, as Imam Ali proclaims: "The pinnacle of virtue is altruism." (al-Amidi, 2005, 1, 28).

Intellect

Philosophers consider intellect to be a distinctive perceptive capability of the human soul, categorizing it into theoretical and practical intellect. Theoretical intellect grasps universal concepts such as existence and non-existence, as well as moral imperatives. Practical intellect, on the other hand, is the ability to understand specific matters pertinent to human behavior (Mulla Sadra, 1981, 200). The pinnacle of theoretical intellect is achieved through an individual's connection to the active intellect, comprehension of pure intellectual ideas, and gaining insight into the principles of existence and the afterlife, similar to the realm of reality (ibid, 199-207 and 1975, 260). The zenith of practical intellect is reached by refining one's character, both outwardly and inwardly, and reaching the state of self-effacement or annihilation (fana). In this state, the rational individual perceives themselves as an essential link and necessity, with their entire attention focused on independent existence. At this juncture in the quest for truth, the ultimate objectives of theoretical and practical intellect converge as one (ibid, 1975, 276).

The Relationship Between Rationality and the Spirit of Altruism

Altruism embodies the willingness to endanger one's life and to donate wealth to those in need, surpassing base desires, the pursuit of profit, and

¹ The night on which Imam Ali slept in the bed of the Prophet was because the polytheists of Quraysh had plotted to assassinate him.

physical pleasure. From a materialistic perspective, the relinquishment of one's life is viewed as the ultimate sacrifice. Were altruism linked to the material and bestial facets of human nature, individuals would never willingly forfeit their lives. Consequently, altruism is a manifestation of the supra-material and divine dimension of humanity, reaching beyond social engagement to forge a bond with the divine. The moral conduct of others is also rooted in their relationship with God. Morteza Motahhari posits that such ethical behaviors are inherent in all individuals, representing an unconscious form of devotion that defies our animalistic instincts. He asserts, "Every human being holds those actions in reverence and acclaim, deeming them noble, humane, and superior to natural behaviors" (Motahhari, 1989, 117). If altruism is indeed a trait exclusive to humans, its origins must be traced to the qualities that set us apart from animals; broadly speaking, the invaluable faculty of reason is the distinguishing feature that separates humans from the animal kingdom.

Mulla Sadra devoted a part of his life to interpreting and clarifying the hadiths from the treatise "Intellect and Ignorance" within *Kitab al-Kafi*. He believed that the gap between belief and disbelief is intimately tied to the robustness or frailty of the intellect, with authentic faith emerging from the intellect's culmination and vigor (Mulla Sadra, 2004, 1, 590). This faith, born of rationality, is sincerely embraced (ibid, 2004, 2, 191). An intellect substantiated by demonstration grasps the divine edict; such an intellect serves as an inner prophetic mentor (al-Kulayni, 1407 AH, 10). Should a ruling in the realms of jurisprudence, law, ethics, politics, or similar fields be established through irrefutable rational evidence, it would be erroneous to assert that this ruling is of human origin, standing in contrast to the divine. This is because God communicates His commandments not only through revealed knowledge, epitomized by The Fourteen Infallibles but also through the intellect that is validated by demonstration. Both avenues—intellect and revelation—are expressive of the divine will (Javadi-Amoli, 2007, 41).

The validity of rational evidence is intrinsically and unequivocally present in all areas of jurisprudence, morality, law, politics, and other human disciplines (ibid, 40). The advancement of intellect and the utilization of logical reasoning guide individuals to acknowledge their existential

deficiency. Through the enlightenment of intellectual progress, one becomes aware of their essential connection and reliance on an autonomous existence that is self-sustaining in its essence; that is, within the sphere of its grandeur, no flaw or necessity can be detected, and neither alteration nor dissolution can ever breach its hallowed space. Consequently, the inherent richness of an autonomous existence is the wellspring of its enduring benevolence. Conversely, the recognition of human existential need cultivates belief and affection for the sacred divine realm, and it is this profound divine love that impels one to pursue the beloved's contentment, even if such contentment necessitates the ultimate altruistic offering of one's life.

Intellect discerns the requirements of humanity and the abundance of the Divine, and it takes on the mantle of responsibility; in the absence of intellect, humans are bereft of duty. Some individuals regard the altruism of others as a commendable act, yet they fall short of embodying such altruism. The fervor and frailty of the altruistic spirit are intertwined with the robustness or deficiency, and the level of maturation, of the intellect; holding the altruism of others in high esteem is a mark of rationality. Nonetheless, those who laud the altruism of others but refrain from engaging in altruistic endeavors ought to recognize that the luminosity of their intellect has yet to match the brilliance of the intellect possessed by altruists; it is in the radiance of intellect that altruists venture into peril. The consummation of intellect uplifts humans to the pinnacle of their existence. The offering of one's life for the sake of divine favor is the paramount expression of moral excellence, eclipsing all other deeds. Prophet Muhammad proclaims, "Beyond every virtue lies a greater virtue, culminating in the martyrdom of the righteous in the path of God, for which there is no superior rank." (Al-Hurr al-Amili, 1414 AH, vol. 11, p. 10). The acceptance of God's summons is a testament to the jewel of intellect; intellect compels the servant to adhere to the will of God, ultimately paving the way to exalted stations.

Imam Kazim declares:

"God dispatched prophets and messengers to His servants solely to recognize Him. Consequently, those who excel in acceptance are those who are superior in knowledge, and those who are most informed about God's decrees are the most

intellectually advanced, with those who are most perfect in intellect holding the highest rank, both in this world and the hereafter." (al-Kulayni, 1407 AH, 1, 16)

Should sacrificing one's life be deemed the pinnacle of rank, and this pinnacle be the preserve of the most rational believers, then such a sacrifice becomes a hallmark of the most rational believers. The most intellectually endowed believer views themselves as an indispensable connection and as having a greater need for an autonomous existence compared to others. In this context, sacrificing one's life and martyrdom emerge as the most intellectually grounded expressions of virtue and benevolence. Humans are perpetually called upon by the Architect of Intellect, who inquires, "Do they not reason?" Reasoning not only impels humans to reflect on their ultimate destiny and to progress but also enlightens them about the source, objective, and aspiration of altruists.

The Genesis and Fount of Altruistic Spirit

The complete understanding of an independent existence in its true essence eludes us; nonetheless, God has not deprived humanity of the ability to perceive independent existence. Humans can engage with independent existence through intellectual discernment. Knowledge initiates with reasoning, yet the apprehension of the truth of existence is attainable through immediate, present awareness. Mulla Sadra has encapsulated this truth, stating, "Knowledge thereof is either through immediate, present awareness or through reasoning from its signs and necessities, with no alternative path leading to a feeble comprehension of it" (Mulla Sadra, 1981, 1, 53). The witnessing of independent existence is a singular boon that admits no other, thereby warranting gratitude, as its presence transforms hardships into delights and embitters into sweets. One who basks in the presence of such a beloved becomes enraptured by their splendor, finding solace in their heart, for they are untouched by the fear of hell or the longing for heaven. In their estimation, both heaven and hell serve as essential connections, whereas the independent and inherently affluent existence stands as the genesis and culmination of the arc of existence; "He is the First and the Last" (Surah Yusuf, 106).

God, the Alpha without a Beta, is an infinite independent entity that brooks no other, with every possibility in the world serving as a channel

of His benevolence (Javadi-Amoli, 1999, 233). Every perfection flows from Him, for He is the wellspring of all virtue and excellence, manifesting either as an independent existence or as a relational existence. Yet, a relational existence, which is fundamentally neediness, is incapable of conferring any virtue or excellence; hence, virtue and excellence are His to bestow independently. Even the altruistic individual in want is reliant on divine grace and consideration.

Concentration on the Autonomous Objective and Intention

The preservation of life stands as the objective and responsibility of every rational individual. Humans universally endeavor to safeguard their lives; when afflicted by illness, they are prepared to expend all their resources to rescue their lives from the grasp of death. Yet, what motivates altruists, akin to warriors on the path of God, to jeopardize their lives for the salvation of others? Those altruists who achieve the benediction of martyrdom are reassured by God of their enduring vitality, as He proclaims, "And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision" (Surah Al Imran, 169). Altruists who venture into the domain of altruism likewise reflect on their mission; were their purpose obscure, they would be unable to tread this path, rife with trepidation and hazard. The objective of the altruist crystallizes upon the acknowledgment of autonomous existence; they become cognizant of an existence that is inherently primary, affluent, and vibrant, with the contentment and encounter of the everlasting existence—whose essence is the epitome of life—representing the zenith of aspiration for altruistic sages.

Everyone who is separated from their source longs for the time when they were one with it (Masnavi, 1996, 5).

The genesis and culmination of the arc of existence is the revered divine presence. Progression along the ascendant arc represents a pilgrimage toward flawlessness; as the voyager approaches the terminus, an increasing array of perfections are conferred upon them. A combatant who relinquishes their life in pursuit of divine favor approaches the zenith, which embodies the quintessence of life, and their vitality is amplified in the luminescence of divine nearness to such a degree that the Almighty ratifies their existence and nourishment in His

sanctity.

According to the dictates of rational judgment, should an individual forfeit their life and wealth for a transient entity and seek its favor, they will incur nothing but detriment in both the present life and the hereafter. Any pursuit that is not directed toward the sacred divine essence is devoid of autonomy, imperfect, circumscribed, and prone to dissolution—it is fundamentally a relational entity. Those who become engrossed in matters other than God have succumbed to vanity, as they have cultivated a predilection for relational entities and inherent destitution. Consequently, individuals who have selected objectives other than the singular and self-sufficient Deity have, in effect, forsaken their selves. In this context, Imam Husayn poses a query to God: "O God, what does the individual who has not discovered You possess? And what does the individual who has found You lack?"

Independent being is boundless and exclusive, rendering it unique, with the sole avenue to attain it being the straight path. Hence, there exists no independent objective beyond God. The rationale behind the tendency of the unenlightened to pursue transient entities as their goals lies in the fact that creation obscures the truth, and plurality impedes the realization of unity. The path to intellectual illumination is to follow the example of Muhammad, the Prophet, who has been acclaimed as the supreme paradigm. He discerns unity within diversity and diversity within unity. Those who adhere to the behavior of Muhammad, the Prophet, can achieve a state of excellence through the fulfillment of ethical virtues, thereby enabling them to perceive the light of truth in all existence.

From this viewpoint, it is remarked concerning a dedicated adherent of Muhammad, the Prophet: "Such an individual does not discern their specificities. This is the state of obliteration after endurance. It is within this state that they behold the luminescence of God in all that they perceive." (Razi Shirazi, 2004, 2, 2012)

Consequently, a devout and sensible individual, emulating Muhammad, the Prophet, endeavors to attain divine nearness in their interactions with relational entities, acknowledging no existence as autonomous to pursue other than Him. Reason mandates that the human aspiration, akin to their source, encompasses all perfection and

wholeness, eclipsing every allure and splendor. Should the aspiration mirror the allure and splendor of the source, no existence apart from that of the source subsists; for dichotomy emerges when each of the two (source and aspiration) holds a perfection absent in the other. Hence, God unequivocally proclaims: "To God we belong, and to Him is our return." If the inception and culmination of the arc of existence is sovereign existence, none but God is the veritable proprietor, and none ascends to absolute sovereignty.

The Spiritual Foundations of Altruism

Upon learning that another individual has chosen to give away their possessions and demonstrate selflessness by offering their life, one does not experience envy or discontent, nor do they assert the authority to hinder such generosity or self-sacrifice. This is because they are not the proprietor of the wealth being donated, nor are they the masters of the life that another is willing to lay down. Despite the exalted status of human beings among creation, they remain within the realm of interdependence; a being whose existence is inherently reliant and in a state of need is, in essence, subservient to an autonomous existence and is devoid of any intrinsic right to ownership, even over their own life. Consequently, one who does not own their own life has no authority to oppose the decisions of the true owner. According to the teachings of Imam Sadiq, a genuine devotee of God is one who does not claim ownership over anything and ascribes all goodness to God, rather than to oneself (Majlesi, 2003, 1, 225).

For a sincere devotee of God who does not view themselves as the owner of anything, including their own life, the act of relinquishing wealth or life appears to be a more straightforward endeavor. This is grounded in the philosophical doctrine that distinguishes between interdependent and independent existences, wherein true ownership is vested in the latter, and humans, as interdependent beings, are acknowledged as having no claim to ownership. Therefore, the capacity for humans to engage in actions within the universe is subject to the consent of the ultimate proprietor.

Proof of the Non-Ownership of Humans

In contemplating the ownership of an object by God and His servants, various scenarios present themselves:



a: God and His servants are joint owners of the object.

b: God and His servants are separate entities, each independently owning the object.

c: God, by His inherent autonomy, is the absolute owner, while His servants, due to their inherent neediness and dependence, possess no true ownership of anything.

The first scenario is only plausible in the context of interdependent entities, and the Divine Essence is beyond any form of composite or partnership; the second scenario is inconsistent with the Divine Nature and the principle of monotheism; the third scenario alone is congruent with rational thought and the monotheistic worldview. Human ownership over something is established when one removes the influence and control of others over it. This is feasible in the realm of interdependent and peer entities, but it is not feasible in an autonomous entity. God is the ultimate owner, yet humans are merely granted the authority to interact with interdependent entities at the behest of the autonomous owner. In his exegesis *Tafsir al-Mizan*, Ayatollah Tabataba'i posits that human ownership is confined to the extent of permission to act (Tabataba'i, 2011, 1, 94).

It is evident that in the absence of permission from the owner, an individual lacks the authority to meddle with or exert influence over the owner's possessions. The entirety of existence, encompassing both the material and the spiritual realms, is the dominion of God. Devoid of God's consent, humanity is bereft of the right to engage with any facet of the cosmos; as a being reliant on others, such as a human, is devoid of inherent self-determination. Furthermore, humans are not endowed with the freedom to defy God's will, even within the confines of their being.

"This fleeting trust is but in our hands; In truth, its Master is God, the Grand."

A true owner never surrenders their possession; hence, human ownership is contingent and subject to alteration by divine will, whereas the divine essence transcends change. Whether change implies perfection—which God embodies—or imperfection, from which God is exempt, no being surpasses God to impose weakness, alteration, or diminishment upon Him. Thus, the proof of human non-ownership and dependence negates their authority over all existence. Given human dependency and need,

the minimal expectation is to dedicate their lives to sincerity and prepare for sacrifice to please God.

Furthermore, a life of utter poverty and need can only be fulfilled by an independent existence. Recognizing this deepens the yearning for divine favor and fortifies the altruistic spirit within humanity. We will explore the needs that, when acknowledged, bolster this altruistic spirit.

The Fundamental Need of Humans for an Autonomous Existence in (the Earthly Realm, the Intermediate State, and the Afterlife)

Given that humans are inherently reliant and in a state of need, their fundamental requirement extends beyond the confines of this world; it is, in fact, everlasting. This essential need persists with them throughout their earthly existence, the intermediate state, and into the afterlife. While humans are adept at recognizing and pursuing their material needs in this life, the wise also acknowledge the existence of the afterlife. Should humans continue to exist post-mortem, they will have needs that align with that existence; the wise strive to identify and procure the necessities that are appropriate for the afterlife and the hereafter.

The mystics profess: "Upon leaving this world, the sustenance of humans becomes knowledge and action. In that domain, which serves as the gateway to the afterlife and a precinct of the Resurrection, the righteous are nourished by the fragrant streams of Paradise, the rivers of delectable and unalterable milk, the rejuvenating wines, the springs of pure honey, and other divine offerings, all enveloped in the mercy of God. Without a doubt, these spiritual rewards are the culmination of the earthly journey and the virtuous acts of the human sojourner and the righteous, who, by divine decree, have sought knowledge and wisdom, and have practiced equity and justice, thereby becoming exemplars of righteousness." (Javadi-Amoli, 2000, 261)

In the transient realm, the martyrs, who are alive and sustained by their Lord, contrary to the misconceptions of the uninformed, reap the greatest rewards. An intrinsic human need, being perpetual, logically implies that in the afterlife, humans, due to their inherent neediness, will continue to require an autonomous existence. In that realm, God reserves Paradise for the altruistic. Those who have dedicated themselves to the divine education of humanity and have

offered their lives, wealth, and honor—encompassing the learned, the righteous, the martyrs, and the strivers—are not only residents of Paradise through divine favor but are also its rightful recipients.

Ayatollah Javadi-Amoli, alluding to verse 83 of Surah Al-Qasas, elucidates: "The issue is not solely the admission of the righteous and the virtuous into Paradise, as many believers will enter with varying degrees of rank. The essence lies in God's allocation of the afterlife to them and His endowment of it upon them, for they have resisted the temptation of excess, mental afflictions, spiritual contaminations, and satanic vices throughout their lives." (Javadi-Amoli, *ibid*, 269)

While this form of ownership remains contingent and reliant, it does not confer independent ownership of Paradise upon anyone. The wise individual remains ever cognizant of their transient state and the hereafter, acknowledging that no dependent being can satisfy their needs; the profound human need for a fulfiller of those needs drives the wise into a contemplative struggle. The initial conclusion of this intellectual quest is the conviction that such a fulfiller cannot be needy or dependent. Upon acknowledging the existence of an inherently self-sufficient being, the wise have no recourse but to ally with that supreme being and pursue its favor and acknowledgment. To secure the attention of the Divine, there is no other means than to heed His words and adhere to His directives, the sole path to that unique presence. Consequently, the selfless offering of one's life in pursuit of divine approval and recognition is a logical endeavor.

The Necessity of Worshipping an Independent Existence

The factors that obstruct the rule of intellect over the domain of human existence similarly impede the strengthening of altruistic tendencies within individuals. Apart from the intellect, various other human perceptive abilities contend for control over the person; Mulla Sadra asserts: "The rational, the apprehensive, the imaginative, and the sensory faculties each asserts dominion over humans and resist yielding to another's authority" (Mulla Sadra, 1985, 2, 328). Desires, anger, and extensive worldly ambitions are significant barriers to the intellect's governance. These entrap the intellect. In this context, Imam Ali observes: "Countless intellects are ensnared by the claws of desires and caprices that hold

sway over them" (Sharif Radhi, 2018, Hadith 211, 480).

An individual habituated to lustfulness and nurturing expansive desires is incapable of focusing on the welfare or salvation of others. Mastery over desires and anger paves the way for the intellect to assume control. Mulla Sadra perceives the intent behind the establishment of laws and the imperative of compliance as ensuring that desires are subservient to the intellect, that the fragment rejoins the whole, and that the world serves as a prologue to the afterlife, rather than the other way around (Mulla Sadra, 1975, 568). The principal objective of striving is to put believers to the test, to reinforce within them the spirit of altruism, the willingness to sacrifice, and the resolve to oppose oppression and combat injustice (Javadi-Amoli, 2005, 4, 124).

Imam Ali presents prayer as a pathway to achieving nearness to the divine (Sharif Radhi, 2018, 298) and regards the most insightful individuals as those most intimate with God (al-Amidi, 2005, 2, 146). This intellectual condition transcends conventional reasoning. "Intellect suffused with authentic love; in that, a human, ensnared by the love for the sacred essence of God and His beloved, no longer displays the customary markers of wisdom and intelligence, and certain traits emerge that elude the grasp of ordinary intellect; such as the selfless love, the informed sacrifice, and the tender self-sacrifice mirrored by Imam Husayn" (Javadi-Amoli, 2005, 4, 514).

The veneration of an autonomous being and spiritual exercises are among the methods for fortifying the rational capacity; the augmentation of intellect necessitates the support of the autonomous being through prayer and worship. Once the rational capacity is fortified, it can oversee the other faculties and bolster the spirit of altruism.

The Necessity of Divine Attention

Among the enduring spiritual requirements of humanity is the craving for attention; should this need remain unfulfilled, the moral virtues of individuals will fail to blossom fully. The infant's yearning for maternal attention, the mother's longing for paternal attention, the pauper's plea for royal attention, and the desire of all, including the divine prophets, for God's attention, all underscore the perpetual human requirement for empathetic attention; these needs arise from the

intrinsic destitution of humans, striving to sate their parched desert. While prophets and imams grasp the necessity of divine attention more profoundly due to their superior intellectual acumen, it is this fervent and relentless need that drives them to pursue a passionate and unwavering devotion to the only self-sufficient beloved. A devotee earns the highest regard from the Lord when they can selflessly transcend their entire existence for the love of their unique beloved.

The Necessity of Sincerity in Action

Sincerity endows human endeavors with worth; indeed, some engage in virtuous acts, yet their efforts are not favored by God due to an absence of sincerity. Sincerity encompasses two tiers; the superior tier is an innate sincerity reserved for prophets and imams; the allusion to the "sincere ones" within the Holy Quran refers to these esteemed figures. The inferior tier is cultivated sincerity; the avenue to cultivating sincerity is for an individual to embrace the belief that "No influence in existence except through God."

As long as an individual maintains the belief that all entities, save for the independent existence, are fundamentally destitute and in a state of need, they will refrain from dedicating their actions to them; instead, their sole focus will be on appeasing the inherently affluent. Sincerity is conferred upon humans either through the facet of the independent existence or through the facet of the intermediary existence. The intermediary existence, being fundamentally impoverished and naturally deficient in perfection, is unequivocally incapable of bestowing perfection; thus, sincerity is furnished to humans as a provision and sustenance from independent existence.

Tabataba'i proclaims: "Every possession a human holds is a divine bestowal, and whatever God has granted to a human, He has never surrendered ownership thereof." (Tabataba'i, 2011, 11, 255)

An individual aspiring to purify themselves for God must recognize that it is, in fact, God who responds affirmatively to their plea and purifies them; for the intermediary existence is inherently bereft of substance and consequence. As long as a believer pursues sincerity, the singular independent existence reigns in their heart as the sole efficacious presence in existence.

"I said, with heart and faith, I've set to your task; Every possession of mine, I've made your ask.

You asked, "Who are you to do or not to do?"; It was I who made you my steadfast view." (Rumi)

Consequently, my altruistic sincerity does not stem from an inherently interconnected source, nor can any inherently interconnected source become the target of an altruist's longing.

The Necessity of Heartfelt Assurance

Upon contemplating entry into a perilous domain, an individual evaluates the degree of risk. Should the danger be surmountable and no injury be foreseen, they proceed with valor into the hazardous field. In the face of substantial peril, particularly a menace to their life, they seek counsel from their intellect. The intellect's initial directive is to evade possible danger. Yet, when enlightened by the radiance of revelation and the intellect perceives the perilous domain as a divine trial, it counsels: "Repose your trust in the One endowed with sovereign power, whose wisdom is infinite, who is everlastingly alive, and who holds dominion over all interconnected existences. Ponder His favor, for He never forsakes His trust; the keys to life and death are in His grasp, and He is the sovereign of all existence."

Thus, the altruist comprehends that should they offer their life for divine pleasure and embark as a voyager to the afterlife, there is no space for trepidation or sorrow. A traveler experiences unease when uncertain of their destination or the presence of a friend or acquaintance to receive them. Should the traveler be assured that the attendants of the munificent sovereign await to greet them with tranquility and hospitality, and to conduct them into the presence of the benevolent and tender sovereign, there is no room for apprehension or disquiet. When the munificent sovereign ardently calls a sage supplicant to His presence, there is no reason for alarm.

"Should the beloved's shadow fall upon the lover, what gain?; We needed them, they yearned for us, a bond unfeigned."

The discerning servant perceives these virtues as divine blessings and feels compelled to express gratitude.

The Necessity of Gratitude

A person of faith, guided by the principles of sound reasoning, persistently seeks the benevolence of the Almighty to elevate their soul to a divine state. They believe that nurturing and fortifying an altruistic disposition is achievable solely through divine intervention. Those blessed

with the faculty of reason comprehend that as the seed of altruism germinates within them, illuminated by the light of divine benevolence, they are compelled to express gratitude to the munificent God, proclaiming: "This blessing is from my Lord" (Surah An-Naml: 40). They must realize that their gratitude is not a necessity for the generous God, and should they exhibit ingratitude, they spurn this divine attribute and gift of their own volition. Indeed, gratitude serves as a companion on the path to the pinnacle of excellence, whereas ingratitude and unappreciativeness hinder the progress of the ungrateful. Nevertheless, the sovereign existence neither seeks a servant's gratitude for personal gain nor suffers from anyone's lack of appreciation or ingratitude. God declares:

"And We had certainly given Luqman wisdom [and said], 'Be grateful to Allah.' And whoever is grateful is grateful for [the benefit of] himself. And whoever denies [His favor] - then indeed, Allah is Free of need and Praiseworthy." (Surah Luqman: 12)

He who offers thanks does so to his advantage; the benefit is his, not the Lord's. And he who disregards the favor, the detriment is also his, for the Lord is Self-Sufficient and Bountiful (Tabataba'i, 2011, 15, 519). Consequently, the munificent God, from a stance of autonomy and self-sufficiency, channels the reward of gratitude towards the appreciative and inherently interconnected individual. The altruist's recognition of the affluent and laudable God, for instilling the spirit of altruism within them, strengthens and amplifies their altruistic nature.

Result

The essence of altruism is not a primal or bestial characteristic; instead, it stems from the advanced intellect and sagacity of humankind. This intellect, having matured through its communion with the divine and liberated from the traps of desire and ire, is capable of asserting the unconditional sovereignty of the independent existence and the absence of sovereignty over inherently interconnected existences. The doctrine of human non-ownership and their ceaseless reliance on the ultimate sovereign instills the belief that no individual is innately the proprietor of their life or belongings. Consequently, human existence is a sacred trust that brooks no negligence in its upkeep and no miserliness when sacrifice is warranted.

Contemplation of humanity's innate destitution and their ceaseless dependence on an autonomously existing entity, a product of intellectual advancement, fosters belief and affection for the unique Deity. This affection impels them toward selfless acts to please their adored. Altruism, a child of love and the unselfish gift of the enlightened is a logical deed that the common intellect finds challenging to grasp. The sacrifice of one's life is a privilege for the most astute believers; scriptures declare that such sacrifice is the pinnacle of virtue, reserved for the most astute believers. Intellect reveals the fundamental human reliance on an independent existence in this life, the transitional realm, and the afterlife, steering them toward the zenith of virtue.

The sage is convinced of the inevitability of surrendering to mortality and, aware of their profound need in the transitional realm and the afterlife, opt to appear before the divine with a demeanor that warrants an enthusiastic welcome and is ensconced in limitless divine favor. Hence, any chance to offer their life to the Creator for immortality is embraced with the utmost fervor.

References

- Holy Quran.
- Al-Amidi, 2005, Ghurar al-hikam wa Durar al-Kalim, translated and explained by Seyyed Rasoul Hashimi Mahallati, Tehran, Daftar Nashr Publications.
- Ebrahimi Dinani, Gholamhossein, 2014, The Concept of Relative and Independent Existence in Islamic Philosophy, Tehran, Institute for Research in Hikmat and Iranian Philosophy.
- Javadi-Amoli, Abdollah, 2000, Thematic Interpretation of the Holy Quran, The Image and Conduct of Man in the Quran, Qom, Asra Publications.
- Javadi-Amoli, Abdollah, 2007, Philosophy of Human Rights, Qom, Asra Publications.
- Javadi-Amoli, Abdollah, 1999, Stages of Ethics in the Quran, edited by Ali Eslami, Qom, Asra Publications.
- Al-Hurr al-Amili, Muhammad bin al-Hasan, AH 1414, Wasa'il al-Shia, Qom, Al al-Bayt.
- Sharif Radhi, 2018, Nahj al-balagha, translated by Mohammad Dashti, Qom, Amir al-Mo'menin Research Institute.
- Shirazi, Sharif Radhi, 1383, Lessons in Explaining the Hakim Sabzevari's System, vol. 2, edited and organized by F. Fana, Tehran, Hekmat



Publications.

Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn, 2011, *Al-Meezan fee Tafseer al-Qur'an*, Qom, Esmaeilian.

al-Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub, 1407 AH, *Kitab al-Kafi*, corrected by Aliakbar Ghafari and Akhondi, Tehran, Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyah.

Majlesi, Mohammad-Baqer, 2003, *Bihar al-Anwar*, Tehran, Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyah.

Mulla Sadra, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, 1990, *Asfar (The Transcendent Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys)*, Beirut, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi.

Mulla Sadra, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, 1985, *Interpretation of the Holy Quran*, vol. 2, Qom, Bidar.

Mulla Sadra, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, 2004, *Kitab al-Kafi*, translated and annotated by Mohammad Khajavi, Tehran, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.

Mulla Sadra, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, 1981, *Al-Shawahid al-Ruboobiyah fi al-Manaahij al-Sulukiyah*, Mashhad, University Publication Center.

Mulla Sadra, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, 1975, *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, with the efforts of Sayyed Jalal-ed-Din Ashtiani, Tehran, Iranian Hikmat and Philosophy Society.

Mulla Sadra, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, 1992, *Mafateeh al-Ghayb*, Tehran, Mowla Publications.

Motahhari, Morteza, 1989, *Philosophy of Ethics*, Tehran, Sadra.

Molavi, Jalal al-Din Muhammad, 1999, *Collection of Poems of Shams Tabrizi*, Tehran, Faradid.

Molavi, Jalal al-Din Muhammad, 1996, *Masnavi*, Tehran, Pazhouhesh Publications.