



Rethinking the Concept of Existential Freedom in the Thought of Mulla Sadra and Heidegger: From the Primacy of Existence to Liberation from Determinations*



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Abstract

The concept of "freedom" is one of the most fundamental issues in various philosophical traditions; however, its perception differs fundamentally in modern Western philosophy and Islamic wisdom. In modern philosophy, freedom is primarily understood in relation to the subject, will, and the right to choose, whereas in Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom as well as in Martin Heidegger's ontological thought, freedom has an ontological status rather than being a psychological or political matter. Relying on the principles of "primacy of

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existence", "gradation of existence" , and "substantial motion" , Mulla Sadra interprets freedom as the process of human existential transcendence and his gradual liberation from the lower levels of being; a process that ultimately leads to abstraction, intensity of existence, and divine proximity. In contrast, Heidegger understands freedom not as voluntary agency, but as a mode of Dasein's openness to the truth of Being; an openness that liberates man from falling into everydayness and the reification of beings. The present study, using an analytical-comparative method, seeks to re-read the relationship between the "primacy of existence" in Sadrian wisdom and "authentic freedom" in Heideggerian philosophy, and to demonstrate that despite fundamental metaphysical and theological differences, both thinkers interpret freedom in connection with the human mode of relation to the truth of Being. The innovation of this article lies in analyzing freedom as an ontological structure in two different philosophical traditions and demonstrating the capacity for dialogue between Islamic wisdom and contemporary Western philosophy.

Keywords

Existential Freedom, Mulla Sadra, Heidegger, Primacy of Existence, Ontology, Substantial Motion, Openness to Being.

1. Problem Statement

Freedom is one of the most fundamental and enduring issues in the history of human thought; an issue whose interpretation has always been subject to the philosophers' conception of the truth of human beings and their relationship with existence (Being). In modern Western philosophy—particularly since Kant—freedom has been primarily understood within the framework of the subject's autonomy, independent will, conscious choice, and the right to self-determination. In contrast, in the Islamic philosophical and wisdom tradition, freedom is often interpreted within an ontological horizon and in relation to the levels of existence, the perfection of the soul, and the human journey toward the Absolute Truth.

Among Muslim philosophers, Mulla Sadra, by establishing Transcendent Wisdom (Hikmat-e Muta'aliyah) and proposing principles such as the "primacy of existence" (Asalat al-Wujud) and "substantial motion" (Harakat-e Jawhari), offers a dynamic and gradational understanding of existence. Based on this intellectual framework, human beings are not static creatures with a fixed essence; rather, their truth is formed within the context of existential motion and the intensification of Being. From this perspective, freedom is not merely a legal or psychological state, but a level of existential transcendence; that is, the process of the human's gradual liberation from the determinations of the lower levels of existence, carnal attachments, and material limitations, and the movement toward abstraction and divine proximity (Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi, 1380, Vol. 9, p. 154; Motahhari, 1384, p. 230).

On the other side, Martin Heidegger, by criticizing the Western subject-centered metaphysical tradition, questions the common conception of freedom as mere voluntary agency. In his thought, freedom is not a psychological characteristic of humans, but a

fundamental mode of Dasein's being; a mode in which, through openness to the truth of Being, man finds the possibility of an authentic encounter with his own existence. Authentic freedom, in this sense, is liberation from falling into the level of beings, everydayness, and the dominance of others, and it drives Dasein toward an authentic confrontation with the truth of Being (Heidegger, 1962, p. 220).

Despite the fundamental differences between Transcendent Wisdom and Heidegger's ontological philosophy, both intellectual systems share a crucial point: the conception of freedom as an ontological matter, rather than merely psychological or political. Therefore, the main problem of this research is how the relationship between the "primacy of existence" and "existential freedom" in the thought of Mulla Sadra and Heidegger can be explained, and whether it is possible to find a kind of philosophical overlap or commonality in the ontological foundation between the Sadrian conception of freedom as existential transcendence and the Heideggerian conception of freedom as openness to the truth of Being.

The innovation of this research lies in analyzing freedom not from the perspective of ethics, politics, or psychology, but as an ontological structure in two different philosophical traditions, and through this, demonstrating the possibility of a new dialogue between Transcendent Wisdom and contemporary philosophy.

2. Research Background and Necessity

Research on the relationship between Islamic philosophy and Western philosophy, particularly in the realm of comparative ontology, has received increasing attention in recent decades. However, most of these studies have either explored ontological concepts within their respective traditions or have been limited to general comparisons of

metaphysical concepts. In the meantime, the issue of "existential freedom" and its relationship with the "primacy of existence" in Transcendent Wisdom and "openness to the truth of Being" in Heideggerian philosophy has not yet been independently and systematically researched. The background of this field can be categorized into several main axes:

3. Studies on the Existential and Mystical Dimensions of Sadrian Wisdom

A significant portion of studies related to Mulla Sadra has focused on explaining the mystical, existential, and itinerant dimensions of Transcendent Wisdom. In his book *Three Muslim Sages*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, by analyzing the link between Sadrian philosophy and the Islamic mystical tradition, interprets the human being within the horizon of existential journey and spiritual transcendence, demonstrating that Transcendent Wisdom is not merely a conceptual system but pertains to the existential transformation of the human being (Nasr, 1980, pp. 187-225). Similarly, Morteza Motahhari, in *Motion and Time in Islamic Philosophy*, explains the dynamism of the levels of existence and its role in the perfection of the human soul by expounding the theory of substantial motion (Motahhari, 1984, Vol. 2, pp. 221-245). Furthermore, Sadr al-Muta'allihin in *al-Asfar al-Arba'ah*, particularly in the discussions on the soul and intensive motion, introduces human existential transcendence as a gradual process based on the intensification of the levels of existence (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1980, Vol. 9, pp. 148-162). Despite the importance of these works, the issue of freedom is often addressed implicitly within them, within the framework of discussions on the soul, spiritual journey, and abstraction (tajarrud), and has rarely been analyzed comparatively as an independent ontological issue.

4. Comparative Studies in the Domain of Ontological Concepts

In some studies, attempts have been made to compare fundamental concepts of Islamic philosophy and modern Western philosophy. Karim Mojtahedi, in his book *Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, while examining the evolution of the concept of existence in Islamic philosophy, considers the potential for dialogue between Islamic philosophy and modern thought (Mojtahedi, 2006, pp. 107-124). Also, Reza Davari Ardakani, in *Philosophy in the Modern World*, by criticizing the foundations of modern metaphysics, points to the crisis of human meaning and his relationship with existence in the contemporary world (Davari Ardakani, 2013, pp. 55-78). However, these works primarily focus on generalities regarding the relationship between tradition and modernity or the comparison of metaphysical concepts, and have addressed the direct analysis of the concept of freedom in relation to the primacy of existence and ontology to a lesser extent.

5. Interpretive Studies on Freedom and Ontology in Heideggerian Philosophy

In the field of Heideggerian studies, the concept of freedom has been one of the most significant interpretive issues. In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger analyzes freedom in connection with Dasein's openness to the truth of Being and liberation from falling into everydayness (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 219–223). In his book *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, Otto Pöggeler traces the evolution of the meaning of freedom from the early period of Heidegger's thought to his later works, demonstrating that freedom in his thought gradually shifts from an existential level to the horizon of the manifestation (unconcealment) of the truth of Being (Pöggeler, 1999, pp. 210–235).

Hubert Dreyfus, in his commentary on *Being and Time*, explains

authentic freedom in relation to Dasein's exit from the state of falling and the attainment of an authentic mode of being (Dreyfus, 1991, pp. 301–309). Furthermore, Jean-Luc Nancy, in the book *The Experience of Freedom*, interprets freedom not as individual agency, but as an experience of openness and an encounter with the manifestation of Being (Nancy, 1993, pp. 25–41). Additionally, Richard Polt, in the book *Heidegger: An Introduction*, has analyzed the relationship between freedom, truth, and existential openness in Heidegger's thought (Polt, 1999, pp. 140–156).

Despite the richness of these studies, most of them have remained within the framework of the Western philosophical tradition and have not examined the relationship between Heideggerian freedom and the tradition of Islamic wisdom.

6. Comparative Studies in the Persian Academic Sphere

In the Persian research landscape, comparative studies between Mulla Sadra and Heidegger are limited and scattered. Some research has focused on topics such as *knowledge by presence* (ilm-i huduri), the issue of identity, the truth of existence, and the relationship between human and Being. For instance, Reza Akbarian, in the article "Knowledge by Presence in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy and the Issue of Identity in Heidegger's Philosophy," has examined some ontological commonalities between the two thinkers (Akbarian, 2016, pp. 1-24). However, there is no independent and systematic study in Persian academic literature that addresses the comparative analysis of "existential freedom" and its relationship with the "primacy of existence" in the two philosophical systems of Sadrian and Heideggerian thought. A review of the existing background shows that although research has been conducted on Mulla Sadra, Heidegger, and even some comparative aspects between these two thinkers, the issue

of freedom as an ontological category and its relationship with the truth of existence still faces a theoretical gap. This gap becomes more significant in a context where the concept of freedom in the contemporary world is often reduced to political, psychological, or individualistic spheres, and its connection with meaning, truth, and the existential dimension of human beings has faded. The necessity of the present research stems precisely from this point.

This research seeks to demonstrate that, despite the fundamental differences between Transcendent Wisdom and Heidegger's ontological philosophy, both thinkers share a critique of the instrumental and reifying (objectifying) conception of the human and Being. In both intellectual systems, freedom does not mean absolute liberation from all constraints, but rather exiting the inauthentic state and recovering a more authentic relationship with the truth of existence. The main innovation of this article lies in analyzing freedom not within the conventional framework of ethics, politics, or psychology, but as an ontological structure in two different philosophical traditions. Through this, the present research attempts to open a new horizon for the dialogue between Islamic philosophy and contemporary philosophy and to demonstrate the shared capacities of the two traditions for rethinking the meaning of freedom in the contemporary world.

7. Freedom and Substantial Motion in Transcendent Wisdom

In Mulla Sadra's system of thought, freedom is essentially an ontological concept and cannot be understood merely on a moral, psychological, or political level. The foundations of this conception of freedom rest on two fundamental principles of Transcendent Wisdom: "primacy of existence" and "substantial motion". Based on the principle of the primacy of existence, the objective truth of things is not their essence, but their existence, and essence is merely a mental

construct in the conceptual analysis of things (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1980, Vol. 1, pp. 38-52). Existence in this philosophical system is a single, gradational, and hierarchical reality—a reality that varies in intensity and weakness across different levels, and all beings are considered its different manifestations. From this perspective, freedom is also a gradational matter, possessing levels, and bears a direct relationship with the human's existential intensity and perfection. The more complete and intense the human's existential level becomes, the more liberated he is from the limitations of the lower levels of existence, achieving a higher level of agency and consciousness.

The principle of substantial motion explains the dynamism of this process. Unlike the Aristotelian conception, which accepted motion only in accidents, Mulla Sadra believes that the substance of the natural world, including the human soul, is in the process of motion, becoming, and perfection within the depths of its own essence (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1980, Vol. 3, pp. 61-95). In this process, the human begins from the material and natural level and gradually, along the path of existential intensification, approaches rational and abstract levels. This existential journey is, in truth, a type of gradual liberation from the limitations of deficiency, carnal attachments, and material dependencies. Therefore, freedom in Transcendent Wisdom does not mean the negation of causality or a rupture from the generative system of the world, but rather existential transcendence and a gradual exit from the captivity of the lower levels of existence (Motahhari, 1984, Vol. 2, pp. 247-250).

In *al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah*, Mulla Sadra distinguishes his conception of freedom from common interpretations based on mere liberation from natural constraints; he believes that freedom does not mean being released from natural causes, but rather an act that originates from a rational essence aware of the causes and purposes of

affairs (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1980, Vol. 6, p. 321). Accordingly, freedom in Transcendent Wisdom is not the self-foundation of will in the Kantian sense, but the conscious alignment of the human will with the wise order of existence. Since the entire system of existence is considered the manifestation and grace of the Absolute Divine Existence, true freedom also finds meaning in relation to existential proximity to the Source of Being (Nasr, 1980, pp. 210-215).

From this perspective, freedom in Transcendent Wisdom possesses gradational levels. Its lowest level is natural freedom, the ability to act within the framework of instincts and the requirements of nature; however, the higher level is rational and spiritual freedom, in which human beings transcend the dominance of desires, attachments, and carnal compulsions, attaining a level of awareness and abstraction where their will is harmonized with intellect and the truth of existence. At this level, freedom is linked to divine proximity and existential intensity.

In Transcendent Wisdom, the human is not a separate part of the system of existence, but a level among the gradational levels of Being. Therefore, the intensification of human existence means a decrease in one's dependence on the limits of deficiency, potentiality, and lower existential determinations. Allameh Tabatabaei also, in *Nihayat al-Hikmah*, by analyzing the inherent poverty (faqr) of contingent beings, demonstrates that every level of contingent existence is inherently dependent and limited, and the closer a being moves toward a more intense level of existence, the further it moves away from the limitations of existential poverty (Tabatabaei, 1991, pp. 287-289). Consequently, freedom in this intellectual system is synonymous with the intensification of existence and the transcendence of the human's level of Being.

The climax of this existential transcendence is revealed in the

theory of the *unity of the knower and the known* ; where the human, in the process of rational perfection, reaches a level where the world, knowledge, and the known achieve a type of existential unity. In such a horizon, freedom is understood as the gradual arrival at the Absolute Truth of existence and liberation from the limitations of essential determinations (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1980, Vol. 3, pp. 313-325). Thus, the further the human advances on the path of abstraction and existential perfection, the further they distance themselves from the determinism of nature and the captivity of carnal attachments (Mojtahedi, 2006, pp. 131-135).

The connection between knowledge and freedom in Transcendent Wisdom is also explained through *knowledge by presence*. Knowledge by presence is immediate and intuitive knowledge in which the knower and the known are not separated. Mulla Sadra believes that through knowledge by presence, the human first gains awareness of the truth of their own soul and then of the Source of existence. Therefore, true freedom is not realized in the rupture from external causes, but in conscious and intuitive presence within the fabric of existence. Haeri Yazdi also, in *Kavosh-haye Aql-e Amali* (Inquiries into Practical Reason), by analyzing the relationship between knowledge, will, and agency, shows that an increase in the human's existential level is concomitant with an increase in their knowledge and agency (Haeri Yazdi, 1981, pp. 170-176).

Accordingly, freedom in Transcendent Wisdom can be defined as "the gradual liberation from ignorance, deficiency, and limiting existential determinations," not the negation of the system of causality and the law-governed nature of existence. Mulla Sadra, in *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, also considers true freedom to be liberation from the captivity of passions and material attachments (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2003, p. 155). Therefore, Sadrian freedom is essentially liberation

from limiting determinations and the lower levels of existence, not liberation from the truth of existence or the generative order of the world. More precisely, freedom in Transcendent Wisdom is freedom within the horizon of Being and through the intensification of existence, not freedom in opposition to Being.

8. Freedom and Openness to Being in the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger

In the thought of Martin Heidegger, the concept of freedom undergoes a fundamental transformation that distances it from the prevailing conception of modern metaphysics. In the tradition of modern philosophy—especially from Descartes to Kant—freedom was often understood as a property of the subject, the will, or practical reason, and was linked to concepts such as autonomy, agency, and conscious decision. But Heidegger, especially in *Being and Time*, attempts to set aside this subject-centered conception and interpret freedom at a more fundamental level, namely, in relation to the mode of Dasein's being. Hence, freedom in his thought is not a psychological or moral attribute, but a fundamental mode of human being (Heidegger, 2006, pp. 182–183). In other words, freedom is the condition of the possibility of any choice or agency, not their result.

The key to understanding this conception of freedom is Heidegger's analysis of the existential structure of Dasein. Dasein is a being that is questioning regarding its own Being and is always situated in a state of "Being-in-the-world." Dasein is not a subject detached from the world, but a being that is essentially realized in the horizon of the world and in relation to its own existential possibilities. Therefore, one of the most fundamental characteristics of Dasein is "openness" (*Erschlossenheit*); that is, being open to the world, to itself, and to the possibilities of its own Being (Heidegger, 2006, pp. 169–173).

This openness is realized in structures such as *understanding* (*Verstehen*), *attunement*, and *discourse*. Through these structures, human beings not only perceive the world but also understand the possibilities of their own Being. Freedom finds its meaning precisely in this horizon: freedom is Dasein's capacity to be open to the possibilities of its own Being. Heidegger states in *Pathmarks* that freedom is that which allows understanding to operate in the openness of beings (Heidegger, 1998, p. 145). Therefore, freedom in its foundation is the possibility of unconcealment and openness.

Freedom in Heidegger's thought has two intertwined aspects: the elective aspect and the receptive aspect. On one hand, freedom requires authentic decision; a decision in which Dasein exits the state of falling into everydayness, conformity with others, and drowning in superficial discourse. In the state of falling, Dasein understands itself as just one of the ordinary beings in the world and forgets the authentic possibilities of its own Being. However, when it encounters the fundamental possibility of death, it emerges from this negligence and becomes aware of its existential responsibility (Heidegger, 2006, pp. 298–307). Here, freedom means responsibly accepting one's own existential possibilities.

Nevertheless, freedom in Heidegger's thought does not mean merely active and voluntaristic decision. The second aspect of freedom is a kind of openness and letting-be (*Gelassenheit*) toward the truth of Being. This aspect becomes especially prominent in Heidegger's later works. At this stage, freedom is no longer just Dasein's decision, but a mode of letting oneself go for the unconcealment of Being. In the essay *On the Essence of Truth*, by rereading the Greek concept, Heidegger interprets truth as *aletheia* or "unconcealment" (Heidegger, 1998, pp. 136–154). The condition of the possibility of this unconcealment is openness, and the condition of the

possibility of openness is freedom. Therefore, Heidegger asserts that "the essence of truth is freedom" (Heidegger, 1998, p. 146).

In this horizon, freedom no longer means the subject's dominance over the world, but means letting beings reveal themselves in their own truth. The free human is not someone who brings the world under their own will, but someone who places themselves in the exposure to the mysterious unconcealment of Being. Hence, in his later works, Heidegger considers freedom a kind of "dwelling in the truth of Being"; a dwelling in which the human distances themselves from metaphysical self-foundation and stands in a receptive mode before Being (Heidegger, 1998, pp. 145–146).

One of the most important existential experiences that provides the possibility of transitioning from inauthentic freedom to authentic freedom is "anxiety" (*Angst*). In Heidegger's thought, anxiety is fundamentally different from fear. Fear is always directed toward something definite in the world, but anxiety lacks a specific object, and in it, the totality of the world becomes meaningless and slippery for Dasein. In this situation, the human faces "Nothing" and the pure possibility of their own Being (Heidegger, 2006, pp. 184–190). This experience detaches Dasein from dependence on the judgments of others and daily preoccupation with beings, and confronts them with their own fundamental freedom. Therefore, anxiety in Heidegger's philosophy is not a psychological disorder, but a condition of ontological awakening and the possibility of authentic openness to Being. Based on this, freedom in Heidegger's thought can be considered a kind of existential liberation: liberation not from the law-governed nature of the world, but from the human's incorrect self-conception as merely a being among other beings. Authentic freedom is a mode of Being in which Dasein both responsibly chooses its own possibilities and opens itself to the unconcealment of the truth of

Being. This conception places Heidegger in direct opposition to modern humanism; because here, freedom is realized not in the emphasis on the self-founding subject, but in transcending self-foundation and opening oneself to that which transcends the human; namely, the truth of Being.

9. Comparative Analysis and Inter-understanding of Existential Freedom

Mulla Sadra and Martin Heidegger, despite their profound historical, linguistic, and cultural distances, have both founded their philosophical projects on the axis of rethinking the issue of "Being." However, their conceptions of the truth of Being and the human mode of relation to it differ fundamentally, which directly reflects in their understanding of freedom. In Transcendent Wisdom, Being is a singular, gradational, and hierarchical reality, which is essentially relational to the Absolute Source; a reality of which all beings are levels and manifestations, ultimately culminating in the Absolute Being and the Necessary Existent (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1980, Vol. 1, pp. 35-55). Conversely, Heidegger, by re-posing the question of Being, seeks to criticize the Western metaphysical tradition which, in his view, has forgotten the truth of Being in favor of mere concern for beings (Heidegger, 2006, pp. 1-6). For Heidegger, Being is neither a superior being nor a metaphysical reality in the traditional sense, but a mode of unconcealment and appearing that manifests itself in the horizon of the emergence of beings, without being reduced to any particular being.

This difference in ontological foundation gives rise to two different models of freedom; nevertheless, both thinkers share a fundamental point: they conceive of freedom not as a merely

psychological or political matter, but as a mode of the human's existential relation to the fundamental truth of Being.

Fundamental Similarities

1. Ontological Interpretation: Freedom Beyond Individual

Will The first and most important point of convergence between Mulla Sadra and Heidegger is the transcendence of a will-centered conception of freedom. In Transcendent Wisdom, freedom is the product of the intensification of existence, the perfection of the soul, and the human's epistemic transcendence, rather than merely a choice between several external possibilities. Human beings possess more freedom to the extent that they achieve existential intensification and liberation from the lower levels of the soul (Haeri Yazdi, 1981, pp. 170-176). Hence, in Sadrian thought, freedom is dependent on the human's existential level rather than momentary will. In Heidegger's philosophy, too, freedom precedes any choice or decision. Freedom is the same fundamental openness of Dasein to the possibilities of its own Being and to the truth of Being; an openness that makes possible any kind of understanding, decision, and choice (Heidegger, 1998, pp. 144-146). Therefore, in both intellectual systems, freedom is an ontological matter and not merely an act of will or a psychological state.

2. Freedom as Liberation from Inauthentic States In both philosophical systems, the primary captivity of the human is not external, but a kind of existential ensnarement. In Transcendent Wisdom, this ensnarement is realized in the soul's dependence on material attachments, the dominance of passions, and ignorance of its own truth. As long as the

human remains at the lower level of the soul, they are deprived of true freedom because they remain bound by limiting existential determinations (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1980, Vol. 9, pp. 148-156). In Heidegger's thought as well, Dasein is lost in the state of "falling" (*Verfallen*) into everydayness, conformity with "the Others" (*das Man*), and superficial preoccupation with beings, forgetting its authentic relation to Being (Heidegger, 2006, pp. 211-220). Authentic freedom is realized when Dasein distances itself from this state of oblivion and recovers its existential relation to the truth of Being. Consequently, in both philosophical traditions, freedom is accompanied by a type of return to the authentic self and liberation from inauthentic determinations; although these determinations are explained within two different conceptual systems.

- 3. The Fundamental Role of Death in the Realization of Freedom** Another significant point of convergence is the decisive role of the encounter with death in achieving authentic freedom. Mulla Sadra views death not as annihilation, but as the transition of the soul from a deficient level to a more perfect level of existence. Death in Transcendent Wisdom is a stage of the soul's intensive motion (*harakat-e ishtidadi*) and a step along the path of abstraction and existential perfection (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1982, Vol. 9, pp. 205-212). In Heidegger's philosophy, too, death plays a fundamental role in the revelation of authentic freedom. Dasein can achieve authentic Being only when it accepts the definitive possibility of death as the possibility of its own impossibility. This encounter detaches the human from everyday illusions and existential negligence, confronting

them with the authentic responsibility for their own Being (Heidegger, 2006, pp. 294-307). In both systems, awareness of death releases the human from superficiality and dependence on the everyday state, providing the possibility of a type of existential awakening.

Structural Differences

1. Difference in Orientation: Freedom and Liberation

Despite the aforementioned similarities, freedom in the philosophical systems of Mulla Sadra and Heidegger has a different orientation. In Transcendent Wisdom, freedom has an ascending, gradational (*tashkiki*), and teleological nature. Through the process of substantial motion, the human ascends from the level of nature and matter toward rational and abstract levels, and their freedom is contingent upon this longitudinal transcendence and proximity to the Absolute Being (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1980, Vol. 3, pp. 61-95). Conversely, freedom in Heidegger's thought is not a movement toward a transcendent level of existence, but a kind of horizontal openness toward the truth of Being. Dasein understands its existential possibilities and is opened to the truth of Being within the heart of the world itself and in the context of its own historical situatedness. Therefore, freedom here has an existential and possibility-oriented nature rather than a teleological and metaphysical movement.

2. **Difference in the Goal (Telos) of Freedom** This difference in orientation leads to a difference in the goal of freedom. In Transcendent Wisdom, freedom ultimately results in divine proximity and the attainment of the truth of the Absolute Being. True freedom in this horizon is synonymous with the

intensification of existence and proximity to the Transcendent Source (Nasr, 1980, pp. 218-222). However, in Heidegger's thought, freedom has no theological or metaphysical goal. Freedom here means dwelling in the truth of Being and accepting the mysteriousness of the unconcealment of existence. The free human is the guardian of the truth of Being, not a being that reaches unity with the Transcendent Source (Heidegger, 1998, pp. 145–146).

3. Difference in Language and Conceptual Framework

Another difference lies in the philosophical language and the conceptualization framework of the two thinkers. Mulla Sadra speaks within the framework of the Islamic metaphysical tradition using concepts such as *gradation of existence*, *grace*, *abstraction*, *substantial motion*, and *divine proximity*. In contrast, Heidegger chooses the language of ontological phenomenology and utilizes concepts such as *Dasein*, *being-in-the-world*, *falling (Verfallen)*, *openness*, and *authentic decision*. This linguistic difference is not merely a difference in terminology, but a reflection of the difference in the intellectual horizon and ontological foundations of the two thinkers.

Comparative Summary A comparative study of the thought of Mulla Sadra and Heidegger shows that despite fundamental differences in metaphysical, theological, and methodological foundations, both thinkers share a critique of the superficial, instrumental, and subject-centered conception of the human and freedom. In both systems, authentic freedom means neither dominance over the world nor absolute liberation from all constraints, but the recovery of a more authentic relationship with the fundamental truth of Being. In Transcendent Wisdom, this fundamental truth is the

Absolute Being and the Divine Source, and freedom finds meaning along the path of existential intensification and proximity to it. In Heideggerian philosophy, the fundamental truth is Being itself and its mysterious unconcealment, and freedom is realized in openness toward this unconcealment. In either case, freedom transcends the level of a merely moral or political concept and becomes a deeply ontological category. Hence, a comparative dialogue between Transcendent Wisdom and Heidegger's philosophy can open a new horizon for rethinking the concept of freedom in the contemporary world; a horizon in which freedom is not merely an individual right to choose, but a quality of Being and a mode of human existence in relation to the truth of Being.

Conclusion

The present research, with an analytical-comparative approach, reread the concept of "existential freedom" in the two philosophical systems of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom and Martin Heidegger's ontological philosophy, demonstrating that despite fundamental differences in metaphysical foundations, philosophical language, and theological horizons, one can identify a convergence in their understanding of freedom. This convergence is observable not at a superficial conceptual level, but at the fundamental level of understanding the human's relation to the truth of Being. In Transcendent Wisdom, freedom is explained within an ontological system based on principles such as the primacy of existence, the gradation of existence, and substantial motion. In this system, the human is not a static and essential being, but a fluid reality in a state of existential intensification who, on the path to perfection, distances themselves from the lower levels of nature and carnal attachments, approaching higher levels of abstraction and rationality. In this horizon, freedom means gradual liberation from deficiency, ignorance,

and existential limitations, not liberation from the law-governed nature of existence. Conversely, in Heidegger's philosophy, freedom leaves behind the traditional frameworks based on will, agency, or subject autonomy and is understood as a mode of Dasein's openness toward the truth of Being. In this view, the human is a being always situated in the horizon of the world and in relation to its own existential possibilities. Authentic freedom is realized when Dasein distances itself from the inauthentic state of everydayness, negligence, and conformity, and opens itself to its fundamental possibilities. In this sense, freedom is not dominance over the world, but dwelling in the horizon of the unconcealment of Being and accepting its truth. Comparing these two traditions shows that both thinkers provide a common critique of reductionist conceptions of the human and freedom. In both systems, authentic freedom is contingent upon crossing from the inauthentic state; in Transcendent Wisdom, crossing from material attachments, ignorance, and the limitations of the soul, and in Heidegger's philosophy, crossing from falling into everydayness and the forgetting of Being. Also, in both approaches, the encounter with death plays a vital role in existential awakening and authentic openness, although the interpretation of the goal of this encounter differs between the two systems. Despite these fundamental commonalities, the structural differences are entirely clear. Freedom in Transcendent Wisdom has a teleological, ascending, and metaphysical nature, and its end is proximity to the Source of Being and attainment of the Absolute Being, whereas freedom in Heidegger's thought has an open, non-teleological, and ontological horizon, signifying dwelling in the truth of Being and living in the horizon of its unconcealment. Nevertheless, an important result of this research is that freedom in both philosophical systems transcends the level of psychological, moral, or political concepts and becomes a fundamental ontological category. In both conceptions, freedom is

defined not by a rupture from the truth of Being, but by the mode of establishing an authentic, conscious, and responsible relationship with it. Based on this, one can say that the dialogue between Transcendent Wisdom and Heidegger's philosophy provides the possibility of formulating a shared horizon in the understanding of freedom—a horizon in which freedom is considered not merely a right to choose, but a quality of Being and a mode of the realization of human existence in relation to the truth of Being. Such a re-reading can contribute to the enrichment of comparative philosophy and the rethinking of the concept of freedom in the contemporary world; a world in which this concept has often distanced itself from its existential and spiritual foundations.

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