

## The Infinite Existence of God in the View of Master Mesbah and Its Evaluation Based on the Ultimate Perspective of Mulla Sadra

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### Abstract

Master Mesbah considers the existence of God as "unlimited intensity." Emphasizing the gradation and longitudinal plurality of existence, he holds a hierarchical gradation to the extent that each level possesses perfections superior to and without deficiencies of the lower ranks. Therefore, the divine existence, being at the highest level of this hierarchical system, has infinite perfections and intensity of existence. He perceives, for the contingent beings, an existence beyond the cause. Consequently, the expansive essence of God's existence, as the cause of all causes, is limited by its contingent effects. He attributes his perspective to Mulla Sadra. However, this perspective has shortcomings: 1. Contingent beings do not have an existence beyond the cause, and nothing other than the will of the causal existence defines them. They cannot limit the expansive existence of the first cause, and God is the "unlimited intensity." 2. This perspective does not align with the explicit statements of Sadra al-Muta'allihin and the mystics. Mulla Sadra emphasizes that discussing the gradation and longitudinal plurality of existence is a preliminary framework that prepares the mind for the ultimate perspective. This research employs an analytical-critical method to elucidate Master Mesbah's perspective and evaluates it based on the ultimate viewpoint of Mulla Sadra.

**Keywords:** Causal Relation, God's Expansive Infinite, God's Intensive Infinite, Mesbah Yazdi, Mulla Sadra.

### Introduction

Most Muslim scholars and some Western theologians acknowledge the existence of God as unlimited. However, there are significant differences in interpreting this infinity. Some consider it exclusive to divine actions, while others attribute it to divine attributes and essence. Additionally, some believe only in the "unlimited essence," and others speak of the "unlimited will." This article analyzes and compares the perspectives of two Muslim philosophers on this matter: 1. Mulla Sadra (1571-1640 CE), the founder of one of the most important philosophical schools in the Islamic world, Transcendent Philosophy. 2. Mesbah Yazdi (1934-2020 CE), recognized as a prominent contemporary philosopher. Both scholars view the relation of divine infinity to the divine essence, but they differ in their interpretation. This article employs an analytical-critical method to elucidate and compare their views, critiquing Mesbah's perspective based on Mulla Sadra's final viewpoint.



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## Research Findings

Mulla Sadra provides two interpretations of divine infinity in the divine essence. According to him, the first interpretation is a middle ground presented merely to prepare the audience's minds. According to this perspective, existence is a skeptical matter with various levels, each of which surpasses the perfections of lower ranks without any deficiencies. Following this, the highest ranks of this skeptical system constitute a being that possesses all perfections without any flaws, and its existential intensity is unlimited, known as the "unlimited essence." The unlimited essence, by casting its perfections downward, creates the lower ranks and essentially is their creator. Knowing God as the unlimited essence implies that His perfections and existential intensity are infinite, but nevertheless, His existence is specially designated (the highest ranks) and does not encompass the lower ranks. In other words, the fact that other levels exist within Him means that the extent of His existence is limited by the existence of the lower levels.

In his final perspective, Mulla Sadra considers the extent of God's existence as unlimited. When he turns causality into contingency and replaces existence with appearance, he attributes the divine essence with an existence of infinite scope that will not be realized in any other existence throughout its length and breadth. In this interpretation, the divine existence does not fit into a particular rank and will fill all existential positions. This reading of the divine essence is referred to as "unlimited will" by the current research. Mulla Sadra emphasizes that the second reading (unlimited will) is his final perspective, and the initial perspective is a tolerant view that is preliminarily introduced to pave the way for accepting the second perspective.

Most Muslim philosophers have followed this perspective, but some, like Mesbah, refrain from accepting the final viewpoint of the Transcendent Philosophers to avoid the apparent consequence of personal unity of existence. He endeavors to maintain skepticism about the existence and regards the divine essence within the realm of the "unlimited essence," avoiding association with the "unlimited will." The main root of the differences between Mulla Sadra and Mesbah lies in their interpretation of the principle of causality. Mesbah, for the contingent, sees an existence beyond the cause that limits the extent of the causal existence. Consequently, God is restricted by His contingent beings and is placed in the skeptical system. Based on this, God is the "unlimited essence" but not the "unlimited will." However, in Mulla Sadra's final perspective, the contingent is considered an extension of the causal existence, added to it without an additional existence. Therefore, the extent of God's existence will not be limited by His contingent beings, and in addition to the "unlimited essence," the "unlimited will" is also present.

## Conclusion

The judgment between these two perspectives depends on their judgment of the truth of contingency. Misinterpreting the truth of the contingent and limiting its extent of existence is one of the most significant drawbacks of Mesbah's perspective. Another drawback is associating their perspective with Mulla Sadra and the mystics, which contradicts their explicit statements.

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