

Artículo de investigación

## Comparative psychological and philosophical study of relationship between the ego and body

Estudio psicológico y filosófico comparativo de la relación entre el ego y el cuerpo

Estudo psicológico e filosófico comparativo da relação entre o ego e o corpo

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to achieve a comprehensive and adaptable theory about the relationship between the ego and the body. Since, achieving a more comprehensive and beautiful theory is the property of comparative studies, we proceed to comparative approach of the philosophy, wisdom and psychology in this field. "What and how is the relationship between the ego and the body" is described from the point of view of the philosophy and psychology. The results indicate that the approach of contemporary psychology, which has one-dimensional look to human and put aside concepts such as incorporeal ego and the soul for not being experimentally investigated, using the sciences and the teachings of the philosophy can choose a valid basis for itself and consider all aspects of human existential such as material, immaterial or physical and soulful. Otherwise, philosophers and commentators should use empirical research results in their later works.

**Keywords:** psychology, philosophy, ego, body.

### Resumen

El propósito de este estudio es lograr una teoría integral y adaptable sobre la relación entre el ego y el cuerpo. Dado que, lograr una teoría más completa y bella es propiedad de los estudios comparativos, pasamos al enfoque comparativo de la filosofía, la sabiduría y la psicología en este campo. "Qué y cómo es la relación entre el ego y el cuerpo" se describe desde el punto de vista de la filosofía y la psicología. Los resultados indican que el enfoque de la psicología contemporánea, que tiene un aspecto unidimensional para el ser humano y deja de lado conceptos como ego incorpóreo y alma para no ser investigado experimentalmente, utilizando las ciencias y las enseñanzas de la filosofía, puede elegir una base válida en sí y considerar todos los aspectos de la existencia humana, tales como material, inmaterial o físico y espiritual. De lo contrario, los filósofos y los comentaristas deberían usar los resultados de la investigación empírica en sus trabajos posteriores.

**Palabras claves:** psicología, filosofía, ego, cuerpo.

### Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo é alcançar uma teoria abrangente e adaptável sobre a relação entre o ego e o corpo. Desde então, alcançar uma teoria mais abrangente e bonita é a propriedade de estudos comparativos, procedemos à abordagem comparativa da filosofia, sabedoria e psicologia neste campo. "O que e como é a relação entre o ego e o corpo" é descrita do ponto de vista da filosofia e da psicologia. Os resultados indicam que a abordagem da psicologia contemporânea, que tem um olhar unidimensional ao humano e deixa de lado conceitos como ego incorpóreo e alma para não ser investigada experimentalmente, usando as ciências e os ensinamentos da filosofia pode escolher uma base válida para em si e considerar todos os aspectos do humano existencial, como material, imaterial ou físico e espiritual. Caso contrário, filósofos e comentaristas devem usar resultados de pesquisa empírica em seus trabalhos posteriores.

**Palabras-chave:** psicología, filosofía, ego, corpo.

## Introduction

Since achieving a theory with greater and better comprehensiveness is impossible without comparing and examining different theories, comparative studies are the most important studies in the humanities (Ghaffari, 2009). So researchers are attracted to such researches. They believe that comparing the various theories in different domains and examining their similarities and differences, makes it possible to achieve more comprehensive and beautiful theory (Bagheri, 2010). There are two main approaches in this regard:

- a) **Reductionism approach:** In this approach, the researcher considers one of the domains or sides of the comparison as the principle and re-examines the other ideas based on it, such as a philosopher who considers his philosophical theory as the main principle and tries to refer the comparative scientific theories to it (his own opinion). The idea behind followers of this approach is that valid and strong theories are not rejected or denied, but grows to cover the broader realm or to Put under another theory (Inscribed theory) (Lazi, 1998; Telings, 2001; Telings, 2011).
- b) **Complementary approach:** In this approach, it is assumed that each theory has a contribution in the study of a phenomenon and theories complement each other. In the final result, the contribution of an approach may be less than that of the other approach, but it is important that the final result is obtained from all approaches (Telings, 2001; Telings, 2011, Bagheri, 2010).

In this research, the purpose of the comparative study is a multilateral and convergent research that investigates a topic from a variety of aspects and achieves an appropriate and consistent result from these studies. In this comparative study, the complementary approach is used to fully examine a subject.

One of the most important issues in the field of science and philosophy is the ego and its relation

with the body. Self-esteem has always attracted the human mind and has forced him to think (Amidi, 1994). So that, during the history, lack of the self-awareness has been the greatest ignorance of the human and self-awareness has been the best knowledge. Because the human's self-awareness can be seen in all of the human's precious reactions and has important effects on his thoughts, feelings, wishes, values and aims. In fact, self-awareness is the key of the human's conscious behavior. It is necessary for this field to be examined in different aspects such as scientific, philosophical. For this reason, we investigate this important subject in philosophy and psychology. Therefore, according to the mentioned content, our aim is to achieve a consistent theory about the ego and its relationship with the body. We want to present a comprehensive comment that is the result of the philosophical, scientific views, accepted by the author. For this reason, at first, we examine the relationship between the ego and the body from the point of view of the philosophy and wisdom approaches. Also, we will briefly mention the dominant approach in psychology. Finally, we will discuss and conclude and try to achieve a comprehensive and consistent approach according to the positive points of the approaches.

## Theoretical framework

### The Ego and Body from the Perspective of Philosophy and Wisdom

In the field of the soul and body, many philosophers such as plato, Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Sheikh Ishraq, Mulla Sadra and ... have been theorists, but it is not possible to review all these views here, so we will outline the most important approaches in this field.

The most famous viewpoint in the Greek philosophy surrounding the ego is Plato's dualism, which emphasizes that the human being is composed of two independent essences called the ego and body and also emphasizes that the ego exists before the body and it joins the body when the body is born. According to this view, before the attachment of the ego to the body, not the biological states of the human body, such as nutrition, reproduction and development appeared, nor mental states such as sensory

perception, thinking and feeling (plato, 2016). Aristotle recognized the ego as the body's form, in the sense of the functions (aristotle, 1999). Due to this thinking, the body is considered some part of the ego in form of ability and capability and the ego cannot exist before the body. Although in Islamic philosophy Aristotelian view had the fundamental position, it was possible that Plato's interpretation could be found, perhaps due to Aristotle's emphasis on the immateriality of reason and its survival after death, the Aristotelian relation between the ego and the body, which was considered to be the relation between the form and the matter. Most Muslim philosophers believed in the combination of man from two distinct essences of the single ego and the material body, which established the relation between the two substances between the form and the material (Ibn Sina, 1973). During the evolution and development of the philosophical thoughts of the Islamic world, Sadr al-Din Shirazi tried to present a new perspective on the interaction of the ego and body, which also brought psychophysical outcomes. In Mulla Sadra's view, the matter is the lowest level of the existence and its benefits from the existence are low. Because of its very small benefit from the existence, it has some kind of awareness (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2005). Due to this awareness, it has the purpose and desire.

Existence from the lowest level to the highest level is an interconnected chain reflected in rational, imaginative, and natural levels. The ego or mind at the beginning of its worldly creation is physically at the level of the body, and its dominant power is the constitution of material nature which requires matter and body (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2005). The human ego at the beginning of existence is an intrinsic and dependent entity, in this case the intrinsic, needs the body, and in the sense of its natural and sensory powers it is vertigo to the body. The human ego at the very beginning of its time, when it comes to the body, is not a rational form, but rather a sensual and imaginative one. This ego is dependent upon existence as long as it is an ego, and as it becomes complete in terms of being and becomes a mixed intellect, its mode of being changes. Therefore, the human ego, albeit in its essence, is material. But it is soulful in terms of survival and possession in the bodies and material and in the wisdom of its essence and its propagator.

In the philosophical psychology of Mulla Sadra, when the human ego enters its body, the body is

activated as the human body, in other words, the human body is in the ego and ego in reason. In this theory, the existence of a human being consists of three basic levels: the physical level, the sensual level and the rational level.

The human ego is physical in nature, and has a body, matter, and body organs. Also, human ego is sensual in the sensual level, and it has the body and the organs of the ego, from which it is referred to the transitional body. Finally, the human ego has a rational body with rational senses in the rational level. The ego, in nature, moves through different senses to the transition levels and through the transition levels to imaginative levels. This is contrary to the views that believe in the stability and lack of change and the development of the ego which has been referred in the speech of Sadr al-Din Shirazi:

The disagreement of deniers of the ego evolution and its changes in sensual, imaginative and rational aspects are due to this issue that they believe the human ego, from the beginning of belonging to the body to the highest degree of immateriality, is the single object and the essence which is subjected to human nature (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1919).

The sensual qualities obtained in the ego, are manifested in the soul and reduced to the body through the soul. Such states and affairs will have the effect when transcending and reaching through the soul to the ego. Accordingly, the ego and body are similar due to the causal relationship between them. It is necessary to pay attention to this matter in the thought of Mulla Sadra, although both the ego and the body move and change, which are similar, but are different from this point that they have no connection, unity and stability in the previous movements and the later movements of the body and with the emergence of each component, the former component is lost.

But the movement of the ego is connected and continuous, and each component through abstraction level is added to the prior component and the density is established. Based on this difference, the initial perceptions and feelings of the ego at the beginning of human creation are interconnected and condensed, and at each stage becomes more intense and more powerful. With the birth and bringing the man to the world, sensory perceptions gain new aspects and various senses for the ego are achieved, and more perceptual and sensual forms are realized,

and the material movement of the ego is exposed by more intensity. Imaginative perceptions arise through sensual perceptions in the path of the ego, with plurality and abundance of sensory perceptions. Due to the less dependence of imaginary forms on objects in comparison with sensory forms and higher abstraction level of fictitious forms compared the sensory forms of the ego, they achieve the higher degree of abstraction than sensory forms of the ego, and due their perception, they gain relative independence to objects, so that they can perceive the perceptions without being stimulated by objects around them. In the next step, by increasing the intensity of sensory and imaginative perceptions of the ego, the readiness of the perception of the partial meanings and the new strong form interpreted as the fantasy, the ego perceives more intensity through substantial motion in terms of the perception of the partial meanings and is prone to comprehend general meanings. At this level, the ego becomes so intense and strong that wisdom appears in it (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2005).

As mentioned before, Mulla Sadra believes that the ego perceives the appearance, actuality and intensity step by step in the body in order to gain more secession. However, it is necessary to pay attention to this important fact that the relationship between ego and the body is not similar to relationship between other objects, because the ego and the body are considered a single fact and as a truth. All the forces that the ego has to meet in its substantial motion are united in it. The ego is present in the function of all its forces, not as it is in the wisdom of the belief that the ego is self-sufficient in its own power, and this duty is responsible for dealing with minor matters, but the ego is responsible for general affairs. Mulla Sadra's theory within itself promotes a kind of interactive interaction between the mind and body and the ego and matter; on the other hand, when the sensual quality achieves in the ego, it puts itself in the body, and on the other hand, when a physical occurrence occurs, its effect will be transferred to the ego. Whenever sensual quality develops in the ego, mentally or rationally, cerebral passivity will be created, followed by proportional body motivation resulted the joy of the soul, the expansion and vitality of the body, the purity of the blood, and the flare up of the face, as reducing the sadness and contraction of the ego and the weakness of the body (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2005).

This influence, especially in the area of supernatural perception, has the more view. Mulla Sadra reminds us:

The Almighty has adorned the human ego with an analogy of His essence, attributes and actions ... and possessed it with power, science, will, life, ears and eyes, and gave it power and as its creator. In the light of this power, the ego will be able to create whatever it wants and choose whatever it chooses (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1919).

In the light of this ability and with the ability to increase and reinforce the power of imagination, the ego will be able to transform the body under the influence of its mental imaginations and to change its physical temperament. The human ego can accomplish things without mediating the physical means:

The man finds himself in the ego that whenever he imagines a good and fine issue who wants to achieve it, his face is excited and his limb is excitable and excited, and when he is concerned about something, he imagines a delusional thing, the color of his face is yellowish, anxiety and defect in the limb will occur. However, none of these desirable and despicable things are actually present. The same person who normally passing through a piece of board easily and calmly and going on without any anxiety; if the same board is placed in height or on a valley as a bridge, the imaginary power affects the ego and, consequently, the organs. He imagines his fall and the ability to do anything will be discouraged from him (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1919).

In another place, he writes:

If a sick person has a strong imagination, especially in relation to his or her health, he may be able to achieve health, just as a healthy person sometimes becomes sick as a result of receiving a strong suspicion of suffering and sickness" (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1919).

The mentioned cases and the similar examples are evidences in Sadra's thought about the effect of mental and emotional impressions on the body and human organization, and the two-way and reciprocal relation between positive and negative mental imaginations with physical and physiological manifestations and phenomena. The process does not have any mental and emotional effects on the brain pneuma of the psychosomatic domain of the internal and physical affairs of humans; it also affects the

events and externals of human existence. In its existential perfection, the ego is capable to influence the lower levels of existence, can affect the material and the body of the universe by changing the face and creating new faces. The human ego can make serious changes in nature and put animal beings under its power. In the light of the intentional intent, the inner will and the power of prayer; healing the patients in the realms of property and kingdom, heals the people, to raise the lands. Heavier objects lift down light bodies, because their bodies are influenced by minds and egos (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1919).

If human temperament is exposed to imaginations and fantasies, with the plurality and strength of those imaginations and fantasies that have come about through repetition and deep order of unity and density, it will not be surprising that a rare egos perceive the divine power, as found are effective on their bodies and influencing in other elements as well. If the separation of the ego from the body increases looking as the supreme origins, its power and influence will be more intensified on the lower levels of existence. As it is relevant in relation to the angels, prophets, and parents (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2001).

In return, a human being with the devil's ego, to the extent that he has an evil power, can affect other people and the other egos, in the light of strong imaginations and force them to be active or passive. Satanic egos can penetrate in weaker minds of the existence in order to manifest the deprivation of other human lives and the destruction of individuals provoking it all the way in this path (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2001).

Such a person goes beyond the animal, causing the destruction of other human beings and animals and beings.

Sadra's view has clearly rejected the psychologies based on philosophical dilemma, which considers the ego and mind an independent existence unrelated to the body with unrelated effects to the body as well as physical and material psychology that deny the ego and the mind considering all physical phenomena as mental phenomena.

### **The Ego and the Body in Psychology**

The ego is one of the major discussions and the ultimate goal of the all searches in psychology

that is about the human being. Speaking about the ego and its relation to the body, although is a philosophical argument, but surely, no theory in psychology can begin the scientific explanation without taking a position in this regard (Siasi, 2002).

Here, the examination of the view of all of the psychologists is not possible, but the result of the important approaches is that the psychologists do not confess that there is an incorporeal being, called the ego, in the body. In terms of the psychological explanation, there has been such a difficulty for psychologists that by assuming the body and the ego, there will be a dual being that provides two sources for human behavior and actions. The behaviors and acts can be related to physical origins, or to emotional sources such as the desire and self-will. This relation seems to be justified to some extent, because the philosophical basis of the duality of the ego and the body, is not a solid basis, and as it has philosophical problems, it also presents scientific problems and scientific explanations (Misyak and Virginia, 1997).

In the twentieth century, the psychology attempted to consider a human being without non-empirical aspects (the ego and its incorporeity), and with an active aspect (in opposite of the actingness of incorporeal ego and the material body in philosophy). So, the psychology denied all the philosophical theories about the ego and its incorporeity. Also, the psychology examined a human being by experimental methods and material approaches. Therefore, we can not be found a psychology that has clearly spoken in this field (Hojjati and Shrqavi, 1986).

The psychology has entered into the natural sciences in nineteenth century. Therefore, the psychologists believe that the study of the factors beyond the material aspects of the human being is not related to this science and is out of this science. So, the issues such as the ego and the soul are not experimental studies and are out of the psychology science.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to present a comprehensive and adaptable theory about the relationship between the ego and the body from the point of views of philosophy, wisdom and psychology. So, we discussed about the ego and its relation in brief. Then, we examined the

approach of the philosophers, specially the sadraei's theory, about this regard, in details. Finally, we briefly explained the general approach of the current psychology, which refuses to accept an incorporeal being, called ego.

The results show that, an incorporeal being is mentioned in the advices and Sadraei philosophy, called ego, that has significant effects on the human behaviour and actions. In general, commentators and Sadraei's philosophy tries to prove the existence of the ego and its relation with the body in the human, in many ways. But opposite of the advices and Sadraei philosophy, the current psychology does not discuss about the existence of the ego, because it is not experimentally searchable. So, according to the statements of these three approaches, the following comparative discussion can be presented.

The study of the advices and the views of philosophers such as Mulla Sadra on the relationship between the ego and the body shows that the human is a truth composed of the ego and the body, the soul, the material and the meaning, that are unite in spite of this duality. In these two approaches, the soul and the ego are divine and immortal. According to the advices and the Sadra's philosophical approach, the unity of the ego and the body provides an opportunity for new psychological studies, to apply physiological and neurophysiological findings for better and accurate knowing of the ego. Psychology based on the advices and the Sadraei's philosophy is a middle way; does not go towards the pure mundaneness that considers every thing in the incorporeal ego and is stranger with the body; not the direction of the pure materialism that considers all of the mental, psychological and soulful phenomena of the human as the physical and material events and neurological of the body. Therefore, according to the psychology based on the advices and the Sadraei's philosophy, it is possible to consider a psychological plan to examine all of the dimensions and aspects of the human being, contrary to the conventional psychology which examines the human beings only through the scientific and experimental methods and does not study the immaterial aspects.

The psychology based on the advices and Sadraei's philosophy, does not provide a sectional prescription for the psychic illnesses, but its aim is to influence on the complex and mysterious psyche of the human and to guide him towards

the divine nature. Also, it increases the human power and ability to deal with the problems, to think about the God and to remember the God. Consequently, the current psychology based on experimental science, instead of the one-dimensional attention to the human, must to focus on the reality of the human and its behavior according to the advices; and to describe about the human nature, character and psyche; and to examine different aspects of the ego.

On the other hand, this comprehensive psychology, with a philosophical basis, describes the relation between the ego and the body and does not refer anything to the observable and measurable science. This description becomes more important when we know that the beginning of philosophy and the psychological researches were simultaneously. From the era of ancient Greek philosophy to the late nineteenth century, psychological thought has been a part of philosophy and has grown in its midst. Maybe, for this reason that we can not find a famous psychologist, regardless of his positive or negative attitude to philosophy, do not believe in a type of philosophy and philosophical theory. Also, there is not a psychological school that does not presuppose some philosophical principles.

In fact, philosophers have been discussed the various topics surrounding human functions in a branch of philosophy called Psychology. Thus, psychology, entitled, has long been regarded as one of the main branches of philosophy, and fewer philosophers and thinkers can be found that have not addressed issues such as feeling, perception, thought, and mental abilities. Although in these discussions, however, they were sometimes judged by quasi-experimental methods, but in this period, they have tried to identify human mental life with philosophical methods. Accordingly, it can be stated that philosophy over the centuries has shaped the views and theories that form the basis of the philosophy of modern psychology, and it is desirable to consider philosophers as the initiators of psychology, since for the first time the discussions on the fundamental issues of psychology have been discussed in philosophy and the evolution of psychology schools can be traced back to the hidden and obvious presuppositions rooted in philosophical doctrines. It is not unreasonable to claim that psychological theories are often influenced or inspired by past or contemporary philosophical thoughts, or by considering the philosophical infrastructure of schools, they cannot be traced



back to the philosophical teachings of the past and even classified according to their philosophical basics. Of course, the extent of the influence of philosophical thinking on modern psychology varies from country to country, and it can be said, in general, European psychology has been more philosophical and compared to philosophical trends, it has been more sensitive to American psychology (Hatami, 2003).

The efforts made by philosophers in the field of human studies in the past provided a good basis for the development of studies in relation to psyche and behavior, and psychological schools formed one after another in less than two centuries. This idea, that psychology is both the experimental and objective knowledge and also the non-experimental and non-objective knowledge has the advocates (Kharazi and Ramadan, 1996). It is non-objective knowledge because it discusses mental phenomena and their relationships, and it is objective knowledge because it examines psychological and mental moods. Accordingly, if psychology pays more attention to the theoretical foundations and psychological phenomena and their relations with the body, it is closer to philosophy, and is closer to psychology only whenever it focuses on biological orientation and physiological principles. Psychology, therefore, cannot be regarded as fully experimental knowledge, because, according to Jung, if psychology is considered as just one of the brain activities, it loses its specific value and intrinsic quality in real time and it is the result of the functioning of the internal glands and as one of the branches of physiology. And according to Eric Forem: Psychology becomes a knowledge that lacks its main subject, that is, the human soul (Hooper et al, 1993).

Thus, psychology, whether or not, should substitute the Philosophical Issues of mind as the main subject of the movement with full realism, and it should not be thought that it is possible to break the psychology's relation from philosophy and religion by denying the question of the ego and body because the nature of this issue is confessing to the relation and influence of philosophy in psychology. On this basis, it seems that the issue of "the relationship between the ego and body" or "the unity and multiplicity" of them, is the first and most important discipline and linkage between philosophy and psychology, and although the psychologist speaks about the inherent complications of psychosis, and considers the moods, activities, backgrounds and

material factors and manifestations of psychological behavior and explains their rules through empirical methods; but the valid knowledge of psychology must be based on valid philosophical and foundations and principles, and should start its scientific efforts with confirmation of the existence of ego and mind.

Another point is that some findings of psychological researches lead to hypotheses that seem to conflict with certain philosophical and hypotheses, which themselves make it necessary to point out that philosophers and commentators also need psychologists to provide solid and credible opinions about legitimate and reasonable findings because all material and physiological actions achieved by science are the introduction to psychological affairs, and when a theorist presents his theories on complex mental-minded acts, the philosopher's and commentator's duties begin. In the field of psychology, whether they can be considered materialistic or not? It is agreed that with purely philosophical and discussions, without any regard to the brain's neurological activities and psychological data, one cannot justify and explain general human behavior, as it is not possible to focus on purely neural mechanisms and cannot relate the nature and relation of the ego with body regardless of philosophical and findings.

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