



## Virtue-Oriented Ethics in the Thought of Plato and Mulla Sadra

Fahimeh Ahmadi Gazazi<sup>1</sup> Isa Mousazadeh<sup>2</sup>

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### Abstract

Moral virtue is a concept that has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy and refers to characteristics or habits considered good and ethical behaviors. Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle extensively discussed moral virtue. Aristotle defines virtue as a "golden mean" between two vices; for example, courage is the middle ground between recklessness and cowardice. Plato considers the soul to be composed of three parts: **rational**, **spirited(or irascible)**, and **appetitive**. He believes that only the rational part is simple and immortal, while the other two parts are added when the soul attaches to the body, making them material and perishable. Mulla Sadra, on the other hand, views the soul as possessing **faculties**, which are the soul's degrees and stations. Due to its inherent simplicity, the soul encompasses all of these faculties. Both Plato and Mulla Sadra consider

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1. M.A. in Islamic Philosophy and Kalam, University of Qom, Qom, Iran (Corresponding Author). [fahimeh.ahmadi84@gmail.com](mailto:fahimeh.ahmadi84@gmail.com)
  2. Official Researcher, Research Institute of Islamic Culture and Sciences, Qom, Iran. Email: [mousazadeh@isca.ac.ir](mailto:mousazadeh@isca.ac.ir)

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the **principal virtues of the soul** to be the four cardinal virtues: **wisdom, courage, temperance (self-control), and justice**. This article employs a descriptive-comparative method to examine and contrast the viewpoints of Plato and Mulla Sadra regarding virtue and moral dispositions, and their role in human happiness. It demonstrates that both philosophers, firstly, view the soul as having parts or faculties and enumerate wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice as the soul's main virtues. Secondly, it shows that Mulla Sadra's ideas concerning the soul and ethics are influenced by Plato's views.

### **Keywords**

Plato, Mulla Sadra, Ethics, Virtue.

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## Introduction

**Moral virtue** is a concept rooted in **ancient Greek philosophy**, referring to characteristics or habits considered good and ethical behaviors. Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle extensively discussed moral virtue. Aristotle defines virtue as a "**golden mean**" between two vices—for example, courage is the middle ground between recklessness and cowardice. This concept spread through ancient Rome and then during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, being adopted by Christian thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. Moral virtues primarily include qualities like justice, courage, temperance, generosity, honesty, and kindness. Moral virtues are regarded as a guide for right conduct and for achieving a **good life** (eudaimonia).

A comparative study of the works of Plato and Mulla Sadra reveals that Mulla Sadra, throughout his writings, defended many of Plato's philosophical stances, referring to him as a divine sage and the leader of philosophers. He considered himself a reviver of Platonic thought. Based on this, it's worth examining whether, despite these similarities in their views, Mulla Sadra's theories on ethics, including the definition and types of virtues and moral dispositions, are truly innovative or many of them are rooted in Plato's ideas. The present research aims to find an appropriate answer by analyzing and comparing the ethical theories of Mulla Sadra and Plato.

### 1. Virtue-Oriented Ethics

**Virtue ethics** is a normative theory that, unlike utilitarianism and deontology, emphasizes **virtues** and **moral character** rather than the outcomes of actions or moral duties and rules (Khazaei, 2010, p. 11). Ethics based on virtue primarily deals with individuals, and this focus isn't limited to judging people but also extends to guiding their conduct.

While the guiding principle in action-based ethics is to "do what is right," the defining principle in virtue-based ethics is simply to "be a good person." Since virtue-based ethics, unlike a general theory of virtue, seeks to provide a form of moral guidance, it addresses virtues that are acquired and whose designation as "moral" is justified (Holmes, 2006, pp. 78-79).

Virtue ethics possesses distinct characteristics that set it apart from other theories. Each of these features will be explained in the following sections.

### 1.1. Characteristics of Virtue Ethics

#### 1.1.1. Teleological Nature

Virtue ethics is a type of **teleological normative theory**. According to this theory, all beings, including humans, have an ultimate goal or end toward which they are moving. They organize all their actions to achieve this end, which Aristotle refers to as "the good" (Khazaei, 2001, p. 50). In this theory, happiness (or flourishing) is the ultimate goal of human behavior, and **virtues** are the only way to achieve it.

#### 1.1.2. The Importance of the Moral Exemplar

In **virtue ethics**, the primary focus is on cultivating exalted individuals who possess the ability to discern and act according to moral precepts. However, because not all individuals can reach this level of transcendence, virtue ethics identifies and recommends moral exemplars to guide them. It suggests that ordinary people should follow these moral role models before achieving the pinnacle of wisdom. These moral exemplars and role models have thoroughly cultivated their inner dispositions, and their actions stem from their intrinsic virtues (Khazaei, 2010, pp. 44-46). In essence, the presence of moral exemplars in society helps us achieve a moral life.

### 1.1.3. Emphasis on Being Over Action

Virtue ethics is a theory about moral values that emphasizes being rather than Action. Instead of asking "what action should I take?", it asks "how should I be?" and "how should I live?". This theory sees the primary goal of ethics as human flourishing. Specifically, through the definition of *disposition (khulq)* as an innate psychic quality, it becomes **agent-centered** and **virtue-focused**. It determines the rightness or wrongness, and goodness or badness, of actions based on the agent's good or bad character.

### 1.1.4. The Role of Intention and Motivation

In **virtue ethics**, the motivation for a moral act to originate from a human being is neither the concept of duty nor the pursuit of greater benefit. Instead, it is the achievement of the **ultimate good**, which is **happiness (or flourishing)**.

### 1.1.5. Intrinsic Value of Virtue

Although the presence of **virtue** is essential and necessary for achieving **happiness** in virtue-oriented ethics, this doesn't mean that actions and virtues lack intrinsic value, or that only the ultimate goal of happiness matters, with virtue merely serving as a tool to reach it. On the contrary, in this theory, **virtues possess intrinsic value** and are praiseworthy in themselves. This contrasts with utilitarian and deontological perspectives, where virtues are often viewed and defined as means to gain greater benefit or achieve happiness—understood as pleasure and the avoidance of pain (Khazaei, 2010, p. 44).

## 2. Virtue from the Perspective of Plato and Mulla Sadra

Ethical propositions consistently describe the goodness or badness of actions and deeds. Ethics, aiming for a sublime goal, states that what must be observed in human actions are precisely good qualities and **virtues**. The question that arises here is: What is virtue?

### 2.1. Defining Virtue

Plato doesn't offer a single, precise definition of virtue in his works. However, by studying his writings, we can generally conclude that, considering its functional role and ultimate purpose, he views **virtue as a psychic disposition** that enables a person to be good and live well (Khazaei, 2010, p. 71). More broadly, Plato states that the **virtue of any object is what enables that object to perform its specific function well**. For instance, according to Plato, the virtue of the eye is **sight**. If the cornea, lens, and retina of the eye don't function properly, a person's vision weakens or they can't see anything at all. These parts must work in harmony to adjust light; if they fail to perform their function well, a person can't see (Holmes, 2006, p. 81).

From Plato's perspective, to live a good (virtuous) life or to be good, we need to **gain knowledge of the Form of the Good**. Emphasizing the role of knowledge in acquiring virtues, Plato considers knowledge a **ray of light** that emerges through light itself (Pinkas, 2003, p. 26). In fact, the knowledge that leads to acquiring virtues comes into existence through the Form of the Good. Therefore, Plato believes that the closer we get to the Form of the Good and the more knowledge we gain of it, the more virtuously we can act. In *The Republic* (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, pp. 1047-1054, section 507 onwards), he argues that it's genuinely impossible to gain knowledge of any particular and limited good unless we have knowledge of **Goodness itself**—that is, of the **Forms**, which are the source of the goodness of all limited and

particular goods. In essence, **knowledge of the Form of the Good** empowers us to judge the goodness of anything without error. Therefore, if someone has truly recognized the nature of the Good, it's impossible for them to fail to recognize and distinguish good and virtuous actions. In fact, anyone who chooses and undertakes a good action definitely possesses **knowledge and understanding of what the true Good is**.

Like his teacher Socrates, Plato believed that **knowledge is virtue**, but he didn't consider knowledge the *sole* condition for becoming virtuous. Socrates held that **no one knowingly and willingly commits evil**. If someone chooses evil or wrongdoing, they do so under the assumption that it is good (Copleston, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 253). This means that if a person performs a good act, it's because they have knowledge and understanding of its goodness and rightness. If they commit a bad act, it's because they don't know that the act is bad or evil; at the moment of performing it, they perceive it as good. Otherwise, they would not do it at all. There's no doubt that all humans desire goodness and well-being for themselves, as it's the ultimate goal of existence and universally sought after. It's also certain that every action an individual performs is for their own happiness, joy, and success. Therefore, if they act badly, it's because they haven't recognized the bad as bad, but have mistaken it for good. In fact, it's impossible for a person to know and recognize a good act but fail to perform it. The reason for not performing good acts, as well as for performing bad and evil acts, is **ignorance and lack of knowledge**. Consequently, Socrates considered virtue to be *only* knowledge—specifically, knowledge of the Form of the Good, not just any knowledge. So, from Socrates' perspective, to perform a virtuous act, we must act according to the dictates of reason.

Based on this, Socrates believed the **origin of action** lies

solely in **rational deliberations**. That is, he thought a rational person, if their reason dictates an action is good, will certainly perform it. Conversely, if they deem an action bad, they will never do it. Plato also held this belief. However, because he posited the existence of **three faculties or parts of the soul**, he included **emotions, desires, and appetites**—which are causes of voluntary human actions—as factors in performing deeds, in addition to rational deliberations. This means that reason might dictate an action is good, but appetite might desire the opposite, and the person might then follow the command of their appetites. Therefore, it's possible for someone whose reason has identified an action as good to act contrary to it because their appetites prevented them from performing that good action.

In reality, for Plato, **virtue** isn't merely a state of mind where a person constantly contemplates the truth of what they should do. Beyond that, acquiring virtue requires that **emotions and appetites also be properly controlled under the command of reason** (Khazaei, 2010, p. 73).

Given this, it's clear that a **virtuous person** isn't just a rational one; this individual must also control their other faculties under the guidance of reason.

In Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, concepts such as **virtue, good, and goodness** are all explained in a **metaphysical** way. Mulla Sadra believes that nothing exists apart from **existence itself**, and he links the reality of all concepts and things to either existence or non-existence. He posits that every **existential attribute**, simply by being an existential attribute, is considered a **perfection**, regardless of whether it's labeled a virtue or a vice in common understanding or religious law. However, in his view, some of these existential attributes lead to the **decay of certain specific perfections** in pure and noble souls, while others **enhance their nobility and value**. Essentially, the attributes that

elevate the perfection and nobility of the soul when it possesses them are the **psychic virtues**, and vices are their opposite attributes (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 116). According to Mulla Sadra, every **virtue is a disposition (*khulq*)**. This means it's a type of quality that has become deeply ingrained and stable within the soul, " a **settled disposition** " (**malakeh**). Consequently, a person performs actions consistent with that virtue easily, without conscious thought or deliberation. He defines *khulq* as a **disposition (malakeh)** by which the soul performs actions easily and without deliberation. *a disposition(khulq)* is not merely the power to act, because power is equally related to opposites (e.g., the power to write or not write). Nor is *a disposition(khulq)* the action itself, as *a disposition(khulq)* is a state of the soul. Possessing this state allows a person to perform actions without deliberation, much like someone who writes but doesn't consciously focus on each individual letter as they write (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 114).

Given that every **virtue** is a good *disposition (khulq)* and, according to Mulla Sadra, every *khulq* is a **settled disposition (malakeh)** for the soul, the genus of virtue is identified as " a **settled disposition.**" Now that the genus of virtue is clear, its differentia must be stated to complete the definition. According to Mulla Sadra, the virtue that results from each of a person's existential faculties is the **moderation of the psychic faculties** or the **observance of the middle ground and mean in their actions**. In this regard, he states: "And it is to be in the middle between conflicting dispositions; justice is achieved through moderation between opposing dispositions" (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, p. 127). Indeed, he considers **good disposition** to be a middle ground between excess and deficiency in qualities (Shirazi, 1981, p. 192). Therefore, for every virtue, there is a **definite limit**; exceeding this limit, whether through excess or deficiency, leads to vice. So, **virtues act as the mean, and vices as the extremes**. The opposition between excess and deficiency is a form of **essential**

**contradiction (taddad bi'l-dhat).** A contradictory opposition also exists between the mean and each of the extremes (excess and deficiency). The reason for this **accidental contradiction** is that essential contradiction exists between virtue and vice itself, because virtue is associated with the mean, and vice with excess and deficiency. Through them, an accidental contradiction arises between the mean and the two extremes. Based on this, it can be said that an accidental contradiction exists between courage and cowardice (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 3, p. 203; Akbari et al., 2007, pp. 191-192).

The question that now arises is: **What is the criterion for determining virtue as the mean?** From Mulla Sadra's perspective, human perfection lies in their **incorporeal (transcendent) aspect**, and their happiness (sa'adah) is achieved by strengthening this aspect. Therefore, the freer a person can operate from their bodily faculties and not be bound by them, the closer they will be to happiness and perfection. This freedom from bodily faculties is achieved by attaining the **mean**. Since these faculties impede complete transcendence, and a person cannot achieve full liberation from them as long as they are in this world, striving to maintain these faculties at the mean is considered a form of liberation from them. In this state, they serve the human being and cannot dominate them or hinder their progress towards perfection and happiness (Mesbah, 2007, p. 123). Therefore, acquiring virtues allows a person to draw closer to their perfection, and any indulgence in excess or deficiency prevents them from achieving their full potential.

## 2.2. Types of Virtue

Many philosophers, including Plato and Mulla Sadra, name four virtues as the principal **and foundational virtues**, from which other virtues derive. These virtues are **wisdom, courage, temperance (self-control), and justice.**

### 2.2.1. The Virtue of Wisdom

According to Plato, **wisdom** is the virtue of the **rational part of the soul**. When reason effectively carries out its specific function as the master of the other parts, it demonstrates its proper virtue, which is wisdom.

In *The Republic* (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 956, section 442), he states that an individual's wisdom comes from that small part of the soul which holds the reins of governance, and only this part of the soul knows what is beneficial or harmful for each of the other parts, as well as for the entire soul. Therefore, Plato believes that if reason governs and masters the other parts of the soul, effectively performing its duty, the virtue of **wisdom** is attained.

Mulla Sadra also believes that the **virtue of wisdom** arises when the **rational faculty** is in a state of moderation. For him, this faculty is in moderation when the soul can discern the truth and falsehood of statements, their benefit or harm, and the beauty or ugliness of actions, as well as the correctness or incorrectness of beliefs (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 421).

The excess of the rational faculty, which is blameworthy, is called **cunning (jarbazah)**. This occurs when a person strives to acquire any kind of knowledge, even if it's knowledge of dance, music, magic, or, in general, misleading sciences. In short, a person must bring this faculty to a state of moderation to attain the virtue of wisdom and understand that they cannot learn every single branch of knowledge. The deficiency of this faculty is **foolishness (balaahat)**, meaning a person doesn't pursue knowledge at all, believing only action is necessary. Such individuals fail to grasp that action without knowledge has no true value (Ardabili, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 357-358).

According to Mulla Sadra, when the soul transcends excess

and deficiency and achieves **moderation**, the **virtue of wisdom** is attained. This wisdom is considered the source of all good and the pinnacle of the soul's virtues (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, p. 89). It is at this point that a person can discern which knowledge is beneficial for them to acquire. Of course, once this faculty within a person reaches equilibrium and they desire a particular branch of knowledge, understanding that they must learn it, then the more they learn, the better. **Excess in theoretical wisdom** is desirable; in this state, the truths of things are discussed as they exist in reality, to the extent of human power and ability. Thus, the subject of theoretical wisdom is objects existing outside the mind, and its benefit and ultimate goal are to attain perfections in this world, and salvation and felicity in the afterlife. In the Quran, God says: "And whoever is given wisdom has certainly been given much good" (Al-Baqarah, 2:269). A narration from Imam Ali (peace be upon him) states: "The pinnacle of virtues is knowledge" (Rey Shahri, 2000, Vol. 3, p. 1258). Therefore, we can say that theoretical wisdom is the result and fruit of practical wisdom, which is one of the four cardinal virtues of the soul. This is because once an individual gains the ability to discern which knowledge is superior and nobler, and which knowledge they should acquire, the more they learn and study, the better and more excellent they become. Indeed, **theoretical wisdom** has no limit of moderation. **Practical wisdom** is not the same as **moral wisdom (hikmah khuluqi)**, which is a type of virtue. The wisdom that is considered a virtue is a **psychic disposition**, in which excess and deficiency are vices. However, practical wisdom, which is one of the two branches of philosophy (the other being theoretical philosophy), refers to a person's **knowledge of moral dispositions**, their number and definitions, and an understanding of how to acquire good character traits and eliminate blameworthy ones. It also includes knowledge of household

management and civic governance (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 116). Therefore, based on these explanations, **moral wisdom** itself *is* the disposition, where excess and deficiency lead to vice. But **practical wisdom**, which is the counterpart to theoretical wisdom, is the **knowledge about dispositions**.

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, with the acquisition of wisdom and the moderation of the rational faculty, other types of virtues also emerge, falling under the genus of wisdom. These include **good judgment, quick understanding, mental clarity, and ease of learning** (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, p. 78).

### 2.2.2. Courage

According to Plato, **courage** is the virtue of the **spirited part of the soul**. Courage is the opposite of **cowardice**. It's important to note that cowardice is different from fear. Fear is a temporary state of the soul that comes and goes; it's not a permanent condition. Cowardice, however, is a **settled disposition** in the soul that doesn't disappear. Furthermore, cowardice may have an unknown cause, meaning the person might not even know what they are afraid of, whereas fear is not like this; it never has an unknown cause. If such a person is asked what they are afraid of, they can answer and identify the object of their fear.

Plato believes that when the **spirited or volitional part of the soul** carries out its duties within the boundaries set by **reason**, the virtue of **courage** is achieved. In his view, the function of the spirited part is to be a friend and assistant to the rational part (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 964, section 441). He holds that a person is called **courageous** if, whether in joy or in suffering, they steadfastly uphold the concept that reason has given them about what is dangerous and what is not. This means they fear what reason considers dangerous and do not fear what reason

considers harmless. Essentially, through the sovereignty of reason, they maintain **equilibrium** in pleasure and pain (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 964, section 442). In his dialogue *Laches* (Plato, 2003, p. 37), Plato notes that some people are fearless out of ignorance, like children and foolish individuals. In his opinion, these individuals cannot be called courageous, because he believes a distinction must be made between **courage and recklessness**. True courage, he asserts, must be accompanied by **wisdom**. Thus, for Plato, courage that is not coupled with wisdom is called recklessness and is not a virtue.

Based on these explanations, it becomes clear that someone is called **courageous** when their **spirited part** is under the command and support of their **rational part**. Such a person avoids what the rational part deems harmful and dangerous for the soul and body, and performs what the rational part considers beneficial for them.

According to Mulla Sadra, the virtue of **courage** arises from the **moderation of the spirited (or irascible) faculty**. This faculty is in moderation when its preservation and execution are in accordance with the dictates of **wisdom and religious law** (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 99, p. 90). This means the spirited faculty must be under the command of reason, performing what reason orders and avoiding what it forbids. If a person's spirited faculty is in moderation, they will express anger appropriately and at the right time, and this anger will be in line with wisdom and religious law. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) states: «الشجاعة نصره حاضرة و فضيلة ظاهرة؛» "**Courage** is an immediate victory and a manifest virtue" (Rey Shahri, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 2676).

The **excess of this faculty is called recklessness**, and its **deficiency is called cowardice** (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, p. 90; Shirazi, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 284). According to Mulla Sadra, from the virtue of **courage**, which is the mean of the spirited faculty, qualities such as a **warm temperament, manliness, bravery, patience, steadfastness,**

suppressing anger, forgiving the sins of the deprived, dignity, grandeur, and composure emerge. From the excess of courage, which is the vice of recklessness and audacity, qualities like heedlessness, boasting, ambition, cunning, arrogance, and vanity result. From its deficiency, qualities such as laziness, humiliation, baseness, lack of zeal, and failure to protect one's honor are derived (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 422).

A truly **courageous person** is someone whose actions and deeds are in accordance with the dictates of **reason** and are not motivated by worldly factors such as status, position, or wealth. Sometimes, reason dictates caution; in such cases, retreat does not contradict courage (Naraq, 1998, p. 57). Therefore, someone who engages in dangerous acts, like a person who single-handedly attacks an army, unafraid of striking, being struck, or being killed, and does so for the sake of prestige, wealth, or fear, is not considered courageous.

### 2.2.3. Temperance (Self-Control)

According to Plato, **temperance** is the virtue of the **appetitive part of the soul**. When appetite performs its functions and duties appropriately and is under the governance of reason, the virtue of temperance is attained by the soul (Lavin, 2005, p. 84).

**Temperance**, or **chastity**, means that we neither suppress our instincts nor give them such free rein and excessive attention that it leads to unbridled indulgence. The goal is to prevent the appetitive part from commanding the other two parts (rational and spirited) and ruling the soul, instead allowing the **rational part** to govern. We should satisfy our desires according to the dictates of **reason**. In other words, if a person wills and decides to attend to bodily needs only to the extent necessary, they then acquire the quality of **moderation** and **temperance**.

In *The Republic* (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 965, section 442), Plato states that a **temperate person** is one whose ruling part of the soul (reason) and subordinate parts agree that **reason should hold the reins of governance**. This means the other parts are not in conflict with the rational part. In essence, the two lower parts (appetitive and spirited) surrender their authority to reason to determine what should be done, submitting to its command. When the rational part gives these two parts an order, they carry it out. Therefore, when a person gains mastery over their desires and satisfies them under the command of reason, they never become enslaved by pleasure; instead, they move towards a well-ordered life.

According to Mulla Sadra, if the **appetitive faculty** reaches a state of moderation, the virtue of **chastity or temperance** is attained. This occurs when the actions of this faculty are guided by the dictates of **reason and religious law** (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 421). In other words, the appetitive faculty, in its pursuit of bodily pleasures, must obey reason in terms of quantity and quality, and refrain from what reason forbids, thereby freeing itself from the bondage of carnal desires (Mojtabavi, 2000, Vol. 1, p. 21). If a person's appetitive faculty is balanced, they can discern what to desire, when, in what quantity, and how.

The **excess of this faculty is called gluttony** or greed (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 116; Shirazi, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 284). This means becoming engrossed in bodily pleasures without considering what is best according to religious law and the dictates of reason. Its **deficiency is referred to as inertia or dullness** (Shirazi, 1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 116), meaning suppressing the appetitive faculty to such an extent that one abandons or fails to perform what is essential for bodily preservation or the continuation of the species. **Chastity** is the source of many good things for humanity. A narration from Imam Ali (peace be upon him) states: "**Chastity is the head of all good**" (Rey Shahri, 2000, Vol. 8, p. 3822).

According to Mulla Sadra, the virtue of **chastity** gives rise to qualities such as **modesty, patience, courage, piety, moderation of greed, and helpfulness**. Its excess leads to **avarice, impudence, shamelessness, hypocrisy, immodesty, flattery, injustice, and gloating**. Its deficiency, conversely, results in **impatience, weakness, envy, despair, lack of generosity, and belittling the needy** (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 422).

Mulla Sadra believes that the purpose of appetite is neither merely the survival of the individual through eating, nor solely the continuation of the species through pleasure-seeking. Therefore, it is necessary to utilize it only to the required extent and according to the dictates of **reason and religious law** (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 428). Thus, a **chaste person** is one who, despite having healthy faculties, knowing the qualities of pleasures, and having the means and tools available for enjoyment without external hindrance, acts in accordance with reason and religious law in pursuing worldly pleasures.

#### 2.2.4. Justice

When Plato discusses **justice**, he first addresses **social justice** and then, by comparison and based on it, introduces **individual justice**. He explains that if our eyesight isn't sufficient to read small letters shown to us from a distance, and by chance, the same letters are written in larger, bolder script on a bigger tablet, we would undoubtedly read the larger letters first and then compare them to the smaller ones. Therefore, we can better understand the nature of justice within an individual when we first examine it where we can find it on a larger scale. For this reason, it's better to try to understand the emergence of justice and injustice in the soul by understanding their emergence in society (Gomperz, 1996, Vol. 2, p. 1006).

To explain this further, Plato believes that just as the soul has

three parts—the **rational, spirited, and appetitive**—society also has three classes: the **rulers, the guardians, and the workers**. In his view, justice is established in society when each of these three classes effectively performs its specific function. Indeed, for Plato, **justice necessitates proportion and balance**. If everyone attends to their own tasks and refrains from interfering in the affairs of others, justice is achieved (Kern Feibleman, 1996, p. 74). Therefore, based on Plato's definition of individual justice in terms of social justice, it can be said that, in his view, justice is established within a person and among the three parts of the soul when each part effectively and excellently carries out its assigned duty and role.

Now, the question that arises here is: **What does Plato consider to be the function of each part of the soul?** In his view, the function of the **rational and wise part of the soul** is to undertake the **governance and leadership** over the other desires and parts of the soul, which is its rightful position (Rahmani, 2010, p. 528). This is because this part of the soul, through contemplation, constantly strives to ensure the happiness of the entire soul. Indeed, if the governance of the soul is entrusted to the rational part, that soul becomes happy. Thus, it can be said that the rational part is worthy of ruling the soul. The function of the **spirited part of the soul**, or the irascible part, is to be a **friend and assistant to the rational part** (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 964, section 441). It should help and assist the rational part in gaining control over the **appetitive part of the soul**, which is the largest and most insatiable part. It should prevent the appetitive part from indulging in sensual pleasures to such an extent that it daily increases its power, forgetting its specific function—which is to satisfy desires under the supervision of reason—and instead attempts to bring the other two parts under its command and rule over them. Therefore, if these two parts of the soul—the **rational part** and the **spirited part**—

harmonize with each other, they can overcome the **appetitive part** of the soul. This is because commanding is not suitable for the appetitive part, and if the reins of the soul fall into its hands, it will lead the soul to ruin. So, if the spirited part of the soul executes every command given to it by the rational part and remains obedient to the rational part, the human soul and body will remain safe from harm.

Based on these points, Plato concludes that a **just individual** is someone who doesn't allow one part of their soul to interfere with the function of another. Instead, they always strive to ensure that each of the soul's three parts performs its specific work and duty well (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 967, section 443). Indeed, such an individual must be **self-controlled**, establish inner order, and harmonize the three parts of their soul. In performing any action entrusted to them, they must not allow this internal order to be disrupted or compromised. In all circumstances, they consider an action just only if it doesn't disturb their inner order. Thus, such a person possesses the **disposition of justice**. Therefore, according to Plato, justice emerges when a **natural relationship of governance prevails between the ruling and subordinate parts of the soul** (Plato, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 968, section 444). Conversely, if someone cannot create harmony among the parts of their soul, injustice will prevail within them. This is because, in addition to failing to perform their specific duties, the parts of their soul interfere with the functions and affairs of other parts, which leads to injustice within the individual.

According to Mulla Sadra, from the combination of the three faculties and the integration of their moderate states, another faculty emerges whose mean is called **justice**. The excess of this faculty is **tyranny**, and its deficiency is **being subjected to tyranny** (Shirazi, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 284). This faculty keeps the three primary faculties under the

command of **reason** and **religious law**. He believes that just as moderation in the body's temperament, meaning health and well-being, is achieved when all diseases are eliminated, moderation in the soul and heart is realized when spiritual ailments, meaning ugly and blameworthy moral traits, are removed (Shirazi, 2004, Vol. 1, p. 419). Therefore, Mulla Sadra holds that **justice** is established in the soul when the other faculties of the soul are in balance. It can be said that justice results from the summation of the virtues of **wisdom, courage, and temperance**.

### Conclusion

1. Both Plato and Mulla Sadra propose that the **soul** is comprised of distinct faculties, and the harmonious functioning of each leads to the development of specific **virtues**. For **Plato**, the soul has three parts: **rational, spirited, and appetitive**. When the **rational part** functions well, it yields the virtue of **wisdom**. The proper functioning of the **spirited part** results in **courage**. And when the **appetitive part** performs its role correctly, the virtue of **temperance (self-control)** is achieved. When all three parts work in **harmony**, the virtue of **justice** emerges. Similarly, **Mulla Sadra** posits that the soul has three faculties: **intellective, irascible, and appetitive**. When the **intellective faculty** is in **balance**, it produces the virtue of **wisdom**. The balance of the **irascible faculty** leads to **courage**. And the moderation of the **appetitive faculty** results in **temperance (self-control)**. When all three faculties are in **balance**, the virtue of **justice** is attained.
2. In the discussion of the **types of virtues**, despite some

differences, notable similarities emerge, suggesting Mulla Sadra's influence from Plato in this area. Regarding the virtue of **courage**, both philosophers agree that this virtue arises from the soul when the **irascible (spirited) faculty** is under the command of **reason**. This means the soul avoids whatever reason prohibits and acts upon whatever reason commands. Furthermore, in the context of **temperance (self-control)**, both Plato and Mulla Sadra hold that this virtue is attained by the soul when the **appetitive faculty** controls its desires under the guidance of **reason**.

3. Regarding virtue ethics, it can be definitively stated that Mulla Sadra was influenced by Plato, with the distinction that Mulla Sadra also incorporated the influence of Islamic law (Shari'ah) into his theories. We can say that the general principle concerning Mulla Sadra's and Plato's theories on the soul (nafs) is that in some areas, Mulla Sadra was clearly influenced by and benefited from Plato's theories, such as in ethical discussions. In other instances, while similarities exist between Mulla Sadra's discussions and Plato's theories, it cannot be definitively said that he was influenced by Plato's viewpoint; rather, these similarities might stem from the inherent implications of Mulla Sadra's own theories and discourse, such as the simplicity of the soul, the immateriality of the soul (tajarrud), and the substantiality of the soul. However, in some discussions, there is no affinity between the two viewpoints at all, such as in the discussion of the faculties of the soul. Furthermore, Mulla Sadra, based on his religious tradition, sometimes approached his inquiries from a religious perspective, and thus the role of Shari'ah in the formulation of his theories cannot be overlooked.

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