JTI

A Bi-Quarterly Journal of

Theosophia Islamica

Vol. 4, No. 2, 2024 Issue 8

8

Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy

In The Name of God

Address: Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy, Blvd. Daneshgah Pardisan, Qom, Iran.
Tel: +98 25 31156841 ◆ **Web:** http://jti.isca.ac.ir ◆**E-mail:** jti@isca.ac.ir

---

Reviewers of this Volume

Note

The Journal of *Theosophia Islamica* accepts papers on the comparative studies of the Western and Islamic Philosophy. The papers received will be published provided that they are written according to the house style of the journal. The authors will bear responsibility for their own papers.

Aims and Scope:

Journal of *Theosophia Islamica* has a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and international outlook.

The Main Objectives of the Publication

1. Deepening religious understanding and knowledge through theological / philosophical researches;
2. Introducing Islamic intellectual heritage and achievements in various domains of philosophy, theology and mysticism, and presenting the accomplishments, findings, and intellectual productions of Hawzah and academic thinkers and researchers;
3. Propounding rational and scholarly assessments of the views and ideas of thinkers in various fields of theology and philosophy;
4. Making comparative research and providing philosophical and theological responses to problems concerned from a theistic perspective;
5. Appreciating the crucial role of revelation and inspiration embodied in holy Quran and Hadith as precious sources of religious knowledge to reflect upon for innovative solutions to the challenges faced by man in contemporary world **.**

For detailed range of disciplines please go to: http://jti.isca.ac.ir/journal/aim_scope.

Publication Ethics

Journal of Theosophia Islamica and its publisher Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy adhere to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors and the Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers. The Journal also follows recommendations contained in *A Guide for Editors-in-Chief, Associate Editors, and Managing Editors*.

Submission of Contributions

- Contributors are invited to submit their manuscripts by e-mail in Microsoft Word format (e.g. DOC, DOCX).
- Only one font should be used throughout the text, e.g. Arial or Times New Roman, the recent versions of which contain all the Arabic characters and specialist diacritics.
- The full name and postal address of the author should be included with the submission (but not visible anywhere on the manuscript).
- Articles submitted should include an abstract of 150-250.
- Keywords (4-7 keywords)
- Articles should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- The names of all participants of paper must be mentioned according to the idea of all authors.
- The length of the articles should be between 6500-7000 words.

Guidelines on Style

- Manuscripts are accepted in English. Any consistent spelling and punctuation styles may be used.
- Papers that are not written in excellent English will not be considered.
- Words which have not been assimilated into the English language should be italicized, except for proper nouns.
- Long quotations should be fully indented (e.g. quotes longer than 30 words). The first line of a new paragraph should be indented, except the paragraph following a heading. The tab-key may prove helpful here.
- A comma before the final 'and' in a list should be used. For example: 'one, two, and three' rather than 'one two and three'.
- Hijri years should be followed by 'AH,' unless it is clear what calendar is being used from the context. For the modern Iranian calendar use 'AH (solar)' or 'Sh.'

Types of articles:

Original article, Review article*, Case report and Letter to Editor-in-Chief.

*Review articles are accepted from people who have enough experience and a thorough insight of a particular topic, with reference to the acceptable number of published articles by the authors.

Cover letter:

Each manuscript should be accompanied by a covering letter to the Editor in Chief, signed by all authors, stating that the authors want their paper to be evaluated for publication in the *Journal of Theosophia Islamica* . Moreover, no substantial part of the paper should have been published elsewhere before the submission and during the revision time. Covering letter contains:

- Manuscript title (English & Persian) should cover the research and be typed in Bold.
- Author and/or authors' name/s, their highest academic degrees (MD, Ph.D....), academic rank and department/s should be written after the title.
- Affiliations of author/s including Department, School, University or Research Center must be completely mentioned in the submitted paper.
- The complete address of the corresponding author in Persian will be submitted in the first page for scientific contact. This address includes telephone numbers, zip code, e-mail, and fax number.
- The manuscript should contain a running title (maximum 50 characters) at the top of each page.
- If the paper is an approved project of University, the project number, the letters signed by Research Deputy or affiliated institution must be presented to publish the article in this Journal.

Article Body:

- Introduction
- Materials & Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Acknowledgment (if needed)

*All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be covered in the acknowledgment section. It should include persons who have provided technical help, writing assistance and head of the department that has provided general support. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged.

Referencing:

The number of citations at the end of research should coincide with the cited numbers in the text. The number of figures and tables in the text and references should also be the same.

- References should be numbered consecutively with **APA** style.

Editing tips:

- The manuscript should be typed in Microsoft Word 2007 or newer.
- Line spacing across the entire paper is 1 unit.
- Texts should be typed with the Times New Roman font.
- Abbreviated words and phrases should be spelled out when first used.

Contents

Bi-quarterly Journal of
Theosophia Islamica
EISSN: 2783-3240
Vol. 4 ● No. 2 ● 2024 ● Issue 8

The Viewpoints of Some Great Islamic Philosophers and Theologians Regarding the Nature of Practical Reason Propositions

Rahman Ehterami[1]

Received: 2025/06/16 Accepted: 2025/07/20

Abstract

Philosophical inquiry into practical matters, similar to theoretical views, has been a subject of investigation by Islamic thinkers. The viewpoints of Muslim wise men (hakims) regarding the nature of practical reason and propositions based on it have varied. Some of them, like Avicenna, Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, and Allameh Tabataba'i, consider practical reason propositions to be of the type of "mashhurat" (common opinions) and "e'tebariyat" (Conventionalities) among humankind, positing no reality beyond them. Therefore, they deem practical rational insights unusable in demonstrative arguments. Others, such as Mulla Hadi Sabzevari, Lahiji, and Mohammad Baqir Sadr, emphasize the certainty and reality of these propositions and believe that practical reason propositions can be used in demonstration. This article, using a descriptive-analytical method, re-examines the views of some hakims and theologians to contribute to the understanding of the identity of

1. PhD, Philosophy and Kalam, Iranian Institute of Wisdom and Philosophy, Tehran, Iran.

* Ehterami, Rahman. (2024). Investigating Mulla Sadra's Approach in Attributing Aristotelian Moderation to Unity, *TheoSophia Islamica*, *4*(8), pp. 7-32. https://doi.org/10.22081/JTI.2025.72162.1096

practical reason and the philosophy of ethics among Islamic thinkers.

Keywords

Practical Reason, Rational Good and Evil (Husn va Qubh Aqli), Conventionalities (E'tebariyat), Common Opinions (Mashhurat), Ethics.

Introduction

Are propositions such as "justice is good," "injustice is wrong," "unjustly seizing or stealing another's property is reprehensible," "keeping promises is praiseworthy," "betraying a trust is blameworthy and wrong," and similar statements, certain (Yaqini) propositions, or are they merely well-known (Mashhurat) propositions (meaning those types of Mashhurat that are not self-evident)? In other words, are all our judgments of practical reason, and specifically those concerning good and evil (Husn va Qubh), based on Mashhurat? Do they lack a reality separate from the conventional agreements of the rational (bana-ye uqala')?

In response to the above questions, it can be said that Islamic thinkers and philosophers are generally divided into two main categories regarding the nature of Good and Evil propositions, and consequently, the possibility of providing demonstration and using Good and Evil propositions in the premises of a demonstration:

1. Rational Good and Evil Propositions are of the Type of Mashhurat

Many scholars and great philosophers, such as Avicenna and Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, hold that these propositions are Mashhurat rather than Yaqiniyat (certainties).

2. Avicenna's View

Avicenna explicitly states in some of his works that good and evil (Husn va Qubh) are derived from "tā'dībāt-e salāhīyah" (disciplinary principles for well-being) and "ārā'-e mashhūrah" (well-known opinions), and are not self-evident.

In his *An-Najat*, he explains:

> "As for hearsay (shāyi'āt), these are premises and well-known and commendable opinions whose affirmation is due either to the testimony of all human groups, like 'justice is good,' or the testimony of the majority of people, or the testimony and acceptance of scholars, or the majority of scholars, or their prominent figures in cases where scholars' opinions do not contradict the general public. These well-known propositions are never innate (fitriyāt). This is because well-known propositions are not among the primary intellectual principles (awvalīyāt-e aqlīyah). Rather, the reason for their affirmation and their establishment in the human soul is either that people have become accustomed to them since childhood, or it might be due to human expediency (maslahat andīshī); or some psychological traits like modesty, familiarity, and affection towards others lead to their affirmation; or that the well-known proposition is from the customs and traditions of ancestors (or religious commands of past faiths) that have not been abrogated; and finally, their affirmation might be due to widespread agreement."

He further states:

> "If you wish to distinguish between a well-known proposition (qadīyah mashhūrah) and an innate [self-evident rational] proposition, then present the two propositions 'justice is good' and 'lying is reprehensible' to your innate faculty, and resolve to doubt them. You will find that doubt can enter them. Whereas if you do this with the proposition 'the whole is greater than its part,' you will see that doubt cannot enter it" (Avicenna, 1991, p. 80; Tusi, 1994, vol. 1, pp. 213-220; Avicenna, 1984, p. 65).

3. Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi's View

Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, in his explanation of Shaykh al-Ra'is Avicenna's statements, says that the criterion for truth and falsity in well-known (Mashhurat) propositions is not correspondence or non-correspondence with objective reality (unlike necessary, certain propositions). Instead, the criterion for their correctness or incorrectness is their agreement or disagreement with the opinions of the rational (uqala') (Tusi, 1994, Vol. 1, pp. 221). Furthermore, in his *Manṭiq al-Tajrīd*, he explicitly states that Mashhurat propositions, including commendable opinions such as "Justice is good", are in contrast to the self-evident truths of theoretical reason. Therefore, propositions concerning rational good and evil (Husn va Qubh Aqli) should not be considered among the primary principles (awvaliyat), intuitions (wijdaniyat), or innate dispositions (fitriyat) (Hilli, 1994, pp. 198 & 233).

4. Muhaqqiq Isfahani's View

Muhaqqiq Isfahani states that one of the human faculties is the rational faculty (quwva-ye ʿāqli). Its actuality lies in its function of rationality, and there is no "sending" or "deterring" for the rational faculty itself. Rather, its role is to conceptualize what is established by something other than the rational substance.

He then proceeds to explain the difference between theoretical reason and practical reason, writing:

> "Indeed, the difference between theoretical reason and practical reason lies in the difference of their percepts; for a percept can be 'what ought to be known' or 'what ought to be done'. Among the rational percepts that fall under the judgments of practical reason and are derived from the agreement of the rational—sometimes referred to as well-known propositions and sometimes as

> commendable opinions—are the propositions of the good of justice and benevolence, and the evil of injustice and aggression..." (Isfahani, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 312).

From the various meanings discussed concerning good and evil, Muhaqqiq Isfahani chooses the meaning of "the validity of praise and blame" for rational good and evil. He considers Good and evil to be a rational conventional matter ('amr-e ʿuqalā'ī)—meaning it has no reality or truth beyond the opinions of the rational, and real truth and falsehood are meaningless in it. Instead, its truth and falsehood signify its correspondence with the opinions of the rational.

5. Allameh Tabataba'i's View

Allameh Tabataba'i believes that the percepts of practical reason do not possess a reality beyond convention (i'tibār). Therefore, they are not suitable for demonstrative proof and cannot be inferred or produced as real truths through argumentation and demonstration. However, he does accept the universality of these propositions. This is because the criterion for the validity of such propositions is based on human needs, desires, and inner feelings. These inner feelings are of two types:

1. General feelings that are necessary for human nature as a species.
2. Specific feelings that are subject to change and alteration.

Based on general feelings, it's possible to have general and universal conventionalities. His statement on this matter is as follows:

"Since practical conventionalities (i'tibāriyāt-e 'amali) are either born from or contingent upon feelings that are appropriate to the active faculties, and in terms of stability, change, permanence, and

disappearance, they are dependent on those inner feelings. And feelings are also of two kinds: general feelings that are necessary for the species' nature and are dependent on its natural structure, such as absolute will and aversion, and absolute love and hate; and specific feelings that are subject to change and alteration. For this reason, it must be said that practical conventionalities are also of two types:

1. Fixed, unchangeable general conventionalities, such as the conventionality of following knowledge and the conventionality of association and specificity.
2. Changeable specific conventionalities, such as particular notions of ugliness and beauty and various forms of societies.

A person might consider a social style good one day and bad another, but they cannot disregard the principle of society itself or forget the very principle of good and evil.

Thus, practical conventionalities are of two types: fixed conventionalities that humans are compelled to construct, and variable conventionalities" (Mutahhari, 1997, Vol. 6, p. 429).

Allameh Tabataba'i, in his *Usul-e Falsafeh va Ravesh-e Realism* (The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism), discusses the concept of goodness (husn) in objective affairs (umūr-e takvīnī), such as beauty. He explains that it's a sense and relative matter. For example, we might enjoy a certain sound or smell and describe it as "good." In this sense, good and evil (husn va qubh) in sense matters are ultimately about liking and disliking, making them relative and relational. Other people, for instance, might dislike the same sound or smell, or other sense experiences (Mutahhari, 1997, Vol. 6, p. 431). After discussing sense good and evil, Allameh Tabataba'i states: "In previous discussions about actions, we said that every action

issues from its agent with a certain relationship, so naturally, the agent finds this action agreeable to itself. In this way, good and evil will be two conventional attributes (vasf-e i'tibari)" (Mutahhari, 1997, Vol. 6, p. 431). He further asserts that one cannot expect demonstrative proof (burhan) in the realm of conventionalities (i'tibariyāt), "because the subject matter of demonstration is realities, and nothing else" (Mutahhari, 1997, Vol. 6, p. 429).

6. Ayatollah Motahhari's View

Ayatollah Motahhari, similar to his esteemed teacher Allameh Tabataba'i, considers good and evil to be conventional (i'tibari), holding that there's no reality beyond the conventions agreed upon by rational beings. However, this doesn't imply the relativity of "oughts" and "ought-nots," especially ethical ones.

He states on this matter:

> "From the perspective of philosophers, the idea of good and evil in human actions, which forms the basis of human moral conscience, is a conventional idea, not a real one. The value of a conventional idea is practical, not epistemic or revelatory. Its entire value lies in being an intermediary and a tool. The potential agent, to reach their ultimate goal in voluntary actions, is compelled to create and employ such ideas as a means to an end" (Mutahhari, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 77).

In response to the objection regarding the relativity of "oughts" and "ought-nots," he introduces the concept of the "lower self" (man-e sufla) and the "higher self" (man-e ulawi), explaining:

> "We accept the principle of good and evil just as figures like Mr. Tabataba'i and Russell have stated, that the meaning of 'being good or not good,' 'ought and ought not,' is about liking and

> disliking. But which 'self' should like it? The lower self or the higher self? Where the higher self of a person likes something, that becomes morality and value. And the reason a person feels a sublimity in morality stems from this very point. The fact that a person sees one aspect of their existence and the actions related to that aspect as possessing sublimity and elevation is not a convention or a contract, but because they perceive that aspect as stronger and more perfect in their being. All perfections also revert to that existence and its intensification, and all deficiencies revert to its absence."

According to Motahhari's view, truthfulness, righteousness, benevolence, mercy, doing good, and similar matters are a series of meanings that are analogous and suitable to the human "higher self" (man-e ulawi). Philosophers have also stated that practical wisdom relates to voluntary actions from the perspective of what is most excellent and perfect, ultimately aiming to return the matter to the soul itself (Mutahhari, 2008, Vol. 13, pp. 739-740). Martyr Motahhari believes that this theory—which aligns with the words of Islamic ethicists and philosophers in their discussions of the soul—can validate the eternality of good and evil (and ethics. This is achieved by understanding that the "lower self" (man-e sufla) has its own set of conventionalities (conventional good and evil, oughts and ought-nots, virtues and vices), which arise from its egoism and animalistic desires. These are subject to change and relativity. However, the true human self is the "higher self", in which all human beings share a commonality, unlike the "lower self" and its distinct desires. For example, "all humans seek perfection," or "all humans love altruism," and "all humans love justice and shun oppression." Perhaps the "fitra" (innate disposition) that the Quran speaks of refers to this very innate nature (Mutahhari, 2008, Vol. 13, pp. 739-740).

7. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's View

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli discusses good and evil in the introduction to his book *Philosophy of Human Rights*. He posits that Good and evil are considered in two distinct realms: Theological (Kalami) Good and evil: This pertains to reason (aql) and refers back to objective realities (wujud va adam - existence and non-existence), such as good and evil. This type of Good and evil is not conventional (i'tibari). Whatever is said about good and evil concerning God in theology (Kalam) falls into this category and represents realities. Conventional (I'tibari) Good and evil: This is found in the realms of jurisprudence (fiqh) and ethics (akhlaq) (Amoli, 1998, p. 46).

8. Rational Good and Evil Propositions are of the Type of Certainties and Realities

A large number of Islamic thinkers believe that propositions concerning rational good and evil are objective (ainiyāt) and certain (yaqīniyāt). Therefore, they can be used as premises in demonstrative syllogisms (qiyāsāt-e burhānī).

9. Muhaqqiq Lahiji's View

Muhaqqiq Lahiji, the renowned student of Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi, asserts that good and evil are inherent (dhātī) and a necessary judgment of reason ('aql). He considers opposition to this view to be mere obstinacy and animosity. In his book *Sarmāyeh-e Īmān* (The Capital of Faith), he writes about this:

> "Know that the truth is the first doctrine (that of the 'Adliyyah), because the goodness of some actions is necessary, such as justice and truthfulness; and similarly, the evil of some actions,

such as injustice and falsehood, is necessary; and reason does not need divine law (shar') in these two judgments."

He then raises an objection to this theory, stating:

"Objection: Philosophers have considered 'Justice is good' and 'Injustice is evil' to be among the generally accepted propositions (maqbūlāt-e 'āmmah), which serve as the material for dialectical syllogisms, and they have based agreement on these on public interest and public harm. Therefore, the claim of necessity, which is essential for certainties (yaqiniyyat) that serve as the material for demonstration, is not admissible for these propositions; and the agreement of the majority of rational people does not indicate it" (Lahiji, 1993, p. 60).

In response, Lahiji states:

"The necessity of the two aforementioned judgments and their non-dependence on contemplation and thought, is so evident that their denial is pure obstinacy and cannot be answered... And the consideration of public interest (maṣlaḥat) and public harm (mafsadah) in the mentioned judgments cannot contradict their necessity. For it is possible that a single proposition, from one aspect, falls within the certainties and from another aspect, falls within the accepted propositions (maqbūlāt) [or well-known propositions (mashhūrāt)]. And such a premise can be considered in both demonstration and dialectic (jadal), in each case from a different aspect... And the acceptance of these propositions by the general rational public is not due to public interest or harm, but rather due to their necessity. For anyone who reflects upon themselves will know that, irrespective of considering public interest or harm, they judge by the aforementioned judgments;

> therefore, these judgments are inevitably issued even by groups who are not aware of public interests and harms, or are oblivious to them" (Lahiji, 1993, p. 60).

10. Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzevari's View

Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzevari, like Muhaqqiq Lahiji, believes that propositions of rational good and evil are self-evident (badīhīyāt), and the judgment concerning them is also self-evident. The fact that philosophers have categorized them among generally accepted propositions (maqbūlāt-e āmmah), which serve as material for dialectic (jadal), does not contradict their self-evident nature. This is because the latter refers to an example for the general common good and evil (maslahat va mafsadah-e ammah), where the acceptance of all people, not just a specific group, is considered valid. He states: well-known propositions can be self-evident even while being well-known, and propositions of rational good and evil are of this kind (Sabzevari, 1994, p.341).

11. Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr's View

Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr believes that propositions of rational good and evil are self-evident (badīhī) and primary (awvalī). Therefore, they can be used as premises in demonstrative syllogisms (qiyās-hā-ye burhānī). He states:

> "There is no dispute regarding the perceptions of practical reason in themselves; that is, there is no disagreement on how reason perceives their requirements, whether they are worthy of being done or not. For example, if lying is considered in itself, reason dictates its non-commission, while concerning truth-telling,

> reason dictates its commission. However, sometimes these requirements conflict, such as when not lying would necessitate betrayal. In such cases, there is a conflict between the requirement for truth's 'goodness' and falsehood's 'ugliness.' Thus, in these instances, disagreements arise among rational people regarding the preference of one requirement over another." (Sadr, 1996, Vol. 4, p. 138).

Ustad Ammar Abu Ragheef derives the following conclusions from Shahid Sadr's statements:

1. Perceptions of practical reason are not absolutely necessary judgments. Rather, they are self-evident judgments conditioned (on the absence of conflict and sufficient knowledge regarding conflicting requirements).
2. Perceptions of practical reason are propositions that reason grasps self-evidently and clearly. Any disagreements stem from rational individuals' differing diagnoses of these requirements, which does not harm their primary (awvalī) nature. (Abu Ragheef, 1997, p. 146).

In another objection, Shahid Sadr states that the School of I'tibār considers mashhūrāt (well-known propositions) to be of the nature of inshā'iyyāt (performative/declarative statements). Apparently, their interpretation is that mashhūrāt are performative matters conventionally established by rational people. This is inconsistent with the apparent meaning of the logicians' statements. For logicians, mashhūrāt are firm assents (tasdīq-e jāzim). However, they are firm assents that lack a demonstrative epistemological foundation; instead, their foundation might be common fame or public opinion, and so on.

In other words, mashhūrāt and non-mashhūrāt do not differ in being firm assents; their only issue lies in the proposition's epistemological foundation, not in them being performative. (Sadr, 1996, Vol. 4, p. 45).

12. Dr. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi's View

Dr. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi extensively discusses Good and evil in his book *Kāvesh-hā-ye Aql-e Amali* (Investigations of Practical Reason). In summary, he contends that Good and evil are two simple concepts, and thus, they lack a real or nominal definition. From this, he also asserts that they cannot be grasped in their essence. (This point pertains to conceptual analysis.) He then states that propositions of Good and evil are factual propositions. (His statements largely refer to the remarks of the late Allameh Tabataba'i.) In one instance, he explicitly says that one should fundamentally not discuss conventionalities (e'tibāriyāt) concerning propositions of Good and evil, because these propositions are objective and factual.

In analyzing "objectivity" (ʿaynīyat), Dr. Ha'iri Yazdi states that his analysis is that Good and evil are derived from correspondence or non-correspondence with pre-ordained laws, as both God and humans legislate laws. Now, if an action corresponds to the law, we say it is Husn (good); if it does not correspond to the law, we say it is Qabīh (evil). He explicitly states that this resembles the discussion of "correctness" (ṣiḥḥat) and "invalidity" (fasād) that jurists (fuqahā') address. When we say an action is Husn, it means it conforms to those pre-ordained laws. When we say it is Qabīh, it means it does not conform. In this sense, he asserts that Good and evil are objective and real matters. He also draws attention to the point that one should not argue that legislation itself is conventional, and

therefore, how can correspondence or non-correspondence with legislation be an objective reality? This is because it is entirely reasonable to abstract concepts from conventional matters based on different relationships and additions, such as the correspondence of an external action with what is commanded (ma'mūr bih), and this is a real matter (Ha'iri Yazdi, 2005, p. 148).

In summary, Dr. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi believes that the assertion of conventionality (e'tibārīyat) for Good and evil (goodness and badness) is entirely incorrect. Instead, from a conceptual standpoint, Good and evil are simple concepts. Furthermore, in terms of analyzing the propositions themselves, they are among the objective and real propositions. Their root lies in the fact that Good and evil are abstracted based on their correspondence or non-correspondence with pre-ordained laws.

13. Ayatollah Sobhani's View

Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani believes that just as logicians and philosophers, with evidence, consider theoretical reason to possess self-evident truths and theoretical propositions (nazariyāt), by the same token, they also consider practical wisdom to possess self-evident truths and theoretical propositions. He considers the goodness of justice (ḥusn al-'adl) and the badness of oppression (qubḥ al-ẓulm) to be among those propositions where the mere conception of the subject and predicate is sufficient for assenting to "Justice is good " and "Oppression is bad."

Ayatollah Sobhani elaborates on this point, stating:

"Our argument is that what has been said regarding the issues

> and propositions of theoretical wisdom also applies to the issues and propositions of practical wisdom. This is because practical wisdom is also a category of knowledge and perception. If our perceptions and knowledge did not ultimately lead to a series of self-evident matters, then thought and argumentation would have to proceed indefinitely, and not even a single issue would become clear to humanity. This contradicts our intuition, as we possess a great deal of knowledge within the domain of practical wisdom.

Fundamentally, when logicians divide knowledge and perception into self-evident and theoretical, they recall a reason that encompasses both perceptions related to theoretical wisdom and perceptions related to practical wisdom. The reason for this division lies in two points:"

1. The self-evident nature of division.
2. The necessity of infinite regress (tasalsul) or circularity (dawr) if there were no self-evident principles.

These two reasons, just as they necessitate that the propositions of theoretical wisdom must ultimately lead to self-evident truths, likewise necessitate that the propositions of practical wisdom also lead to them.

The essence of the argument is that, just as in theoretical wisdom there must be a series of self-evident and self-validating propositions by which theoretical thoughts are acquired, similarly, in practical wisdom, there must be a series of self-validating propositions that are considered the key to solving other issues of practical wisdom. This is a truth that intellectual demonstration, as alluded to, dictates for this division. Whether we call these types of propositions in

practical wisdom "self-evident" and "theoretical" or reserve these two terms for theoretical wisdom and call this category in practical wisdom "self-validating" and "non-self-validating" propositions, there is no escape from this two-part division, both in theoretical and practical wisdom (Sobhani, 2003, pp. 78-79).

He then refers to two types of self-evident truths (badīhīyāt):

a. Primary self-evident truths (badīhīyāt-e awvaliyyah), where the mere conception of the subject and predicate is sufficient for assent.

b. Innate self-evident truths (badīhīyāt-e fiṭrī) [propositions whose syllogism is always accompanying them].

He believes that the self-evident truths of practical reason belong to the first type (Sobhani, 2003, p. 80).

14. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's View

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi believes that ethical and legal propositions (the "oughts" and "ought-nots" of practical reason, which are based on rational good and evil) are philosophical propositions and are philosophically provable. While presenting some preliminary points on this matter, he states:

1. Ethical and legal propositions (practical reason) relate to voluntary human behavior – behaviors that are means to achieve desired goals. Their value stems from this instrumental and preliminary desirability.

2. The goals that humans strive to achieve are either: Fulfilling natural and worldly needs and satisfying animal

instincts. Securing social interests and benefits and preventing corruption and chaos. Attaining eternal happiness and spiritual and moral perfection. However, natural and animal goals do not inherently create value for their preliminary actions and do not automatically connect with ethics and law. But securing social interests, which inevitably conflicts with individual interests and pleasures, is considered one of the sources of value. Similarly, considering eternal happiness, which necessitates overlooking some material and worldly desires and objectives, is another source of value. And above all, the ultimate motive for behavior should be reaching human's true perfection, the manifestation of which, from an Islamic perspective, is proximity to God Almighty (qurb-e Khodā-ye Muta'āl). Therefore, it can be said that value in all cases arises from foregoing a desire to achieve a higher desire.

3. Various goals have been stated for rights (ḥuqūq), the most general and comprehensive of which is securing social interests, and it branches into various sub-categories. On the other hand, various ideals have been mentioned for ethics (akhlāq), above all of which is ultimate perfection in the shadow of proximity to God Almighty. Whenever this goal becomes the motive for human behavior, whether individual or social, it will acquire ethical value. Therefore, behaviors related to rights can also fall under the umbrella of ethics, provided they are performed with an ethical motive.

4. The aforementioned goals have two aspects: Their desirability for humans in such a way that it leads to foregoing lower desires. From this perspective, it connects with the innate human desire for happiness and perfection. This is a psychological aspect, dependent on knowledge and scientific and perceptual principles. Their ontological aspect, which is completely objective and independent of individual desires, inclinations, diagnoses, and knowledge. Whenever an action is considered in relation to a desired goal from the perspective of its desirability, the concept of value is abstracted from it. And whenever it is considered from the perspective of its existential relationship with the consequent result, the concept of obligation (wujūb), worthiness, or necessity is derived from it, which in philosophical terminology is expressed as contingent necessity.

Conclusion on the Truth and Falsity of Ethical and Legal Propositions. Given these premises, we can conclude that the criterion for the truth and falsity (ṣidq va kadhb), and correctness and error in ethical and legal propositions is their impact on achieving desired goals. This impact is not subject to anyone's desire, inclination, taste, or opinion. Rather, like other cause-and-effect relationships, it is a reality in itself. Of course, the diagnosis of the ultimate goal and intermediate goals may be subject to error, just as some, based on their materialistic worldview, have confined human goals to worldly well-being. Similarly, errors may occur in identifying the paths that lead humans to real goals. However, all these errors do not harm the reality of the cause-and-effect relationship between voluntary actions and

their consequent results. They do not cause these propositions to exit the domain of rational discussions and demonstrably provable arguments. This is just as philosophers' errors do not mean denying rational realities independent of opinions and thoughts, and just as scientists' disagreements on empirical laws do not negate those laws.

The conclusion, then, is that the principles of ethics and law are philosophical propositions, provable by rational demonstrations. However, the ordinary human intellect may be insufficient in their branches and details due to the complexity of formulas, the multitude of factors and variables, and a lack of comprehensive understanding. It might not be able to deduce the ruling of every specific proposition from general principles. In such cases, there is no alternative but to rely on divine revelation (Mesbah Yazdi, 2001, p. 81).

Conclusion

In summarizing the theories regarding the conceptual nature of Good and evil (goodness and badness) and their relationship with reality, four views can be identified:

1. This view posits that Good and evil are true objective matters, and the role of humans concerning them is purely one of perception, reflected in our intellect without any specific intellectual activity. In other words, Good and evil belong to the category of first intelligibles or essential concepts. In this perspective, Good and evil are external realities that are reflected in our minds, and our role here is merely to "photograph" them. However, our sense faculties do not perceive these objective matters; rather, it is the intellect that

grasps them. Our good actions, like justice, possess an objective quality and have an external correlate, but this correlate is not something to be seen, heard, or the like; it is rather something to be intellectually comprehended. By observing objective human actions and their sense perception, the intellect grasps other objective qualities that are not sense, meaning it becomes aware of the Good and evil of actions. To make it more understandable, consider this example: The existence of substance externally is an objective matter, but our senses do not perceive substance directly. However, the intellect, with the help of the senses, understands that there is something present that holds other visible or perceptible qualities. When we see an apple, we perceive its color, smell, taste, etc., and at the same time, the intellect comprehends that there is also a substance that carries these sense attributes. The Good and evil of actions belong to this same category; that is, they are of the nature of essential concepts and possess an objective and determinate correlate externally.

2. This view holds that Good and evil are objective matters related to the relationship between an action and human desires, in that our desire is directed towards that action. They do not have a determinate correlate like essential concepts. In other words, humans are constructed in such a way that they have specific desires. There are specific emotions and feelings within human existence, and these desires, in turn, necessitate specific actions. There is a

congruence between human wants and a certain set of actions. Actions that are in congruence with our desires are characterized as Husn, and actions that are not in congruence with our desires are characterized as Qabīh. In essence, Good and evil are the product of comparing our desires with our actions. In this case, it must be said that Good and evil are akin to philosophical concepts (mafāhīm-e falsafī) and refer to the relationship between specific human desires and actions congruent with them.

3. In this view, Good and evil are purely conventional matters. Here, Husn means what is conventionally established in a society and what people consider good, and Qabīh means what is not customary or agreed upon. An example is the custom of removing one's hat as a sign of greeting and respect, which is customary in some societies. In this sense, Good and evil have neither an objective correlate, nor does an innate human inclination relate to them, nor do they arise from specific human desires. Thus, in this context, Good and evil are purely conventional concepts that do not refer to any kind of reality.

4. view states that Good and evil are objective matters pertaining to the relationship between voluntary human actions and a specific desired outcome. The concepts of Good and evil do not have objective correlates like essential concepts; however, external matters, i.e., external actions, are characterized by them. Whenever an action, irrespective of its relationship with the perceiving person and their desires, is

compared with a specific result and it becomes clear that this action has a positive impact on achieving that result and is related to it, it is characterized as Husn. Otherwise, it will be characterized as Qabīh.

The difference between this view and the second theory is that in this theory, we compare the relationship between two real external entities irrespective of human desire and evaluate their relationship, meaning they are considered as two real and objective entities, not in terms of whether our desire relates to them or not. Whereas in the second theory, the relationship between one's own desire and an external entity (action) is evaluated; that is, "Is this action in agreement with my desire or not?" In other words, in this theory (number four), we are comparing two entities. Although one of these two entities might be a human action, it is not considered from the perspective that a human has a specific taste, desire, or inclination, but rather from the perspective that a perfection exists for humanity and has been realized externally. In this case, we say that a particular voluntary human action has a positive relationship with the perfection achieved for humanity. This relationship is also a cause-and-effect relationship, and since this action leads to that desired perfection, it is characterized as good, meaning it has an objective aspect and is independent of the perceiving person. However, in the second theory, the focus is on the relationship between two things, one of which is human desires, and it has a subjective aspect, meaning it relates to

the perceiving person. Based on the fourth theory, the concepts of Good and evil are among the second philosophical intelligibles (maʿqūlāt-e thānī falsafī) and refer to the objective positive or negative relationship between an action and a desired goal.

References

Avicenna, H. (1984). *Shifa*. Qom: Manshurat Ayatollah al-Uzma Najafi Marashi.[In Arabic]

Avicenna, H. (1991). *Najah*. (A. R. Umayra, Ed., 1st ed.). Beirut: Dar al-Jabal. [In Arabic]

Abu Ragheef, S. (1997). *Al-Usus al-Mantiqiyah*. (1st ed.). Beirut: Manshurat Dar al-Thaqalayn. [In Arabic]

Isfahani, M. (1995). *Nihayat al-Dirayah*. Bi Ja: Intisharat Sayyid al-Shuhada. [In Arabic]

Javadi Amoli, A. (1998). *Falsafa Huquq-e Bashar* (Philosophy of Human Rights). (2nd ed.). Qom: Markaz-e Nashr-e Isra.[In Persian]

Ha'iri Yazdi, M.(2005). *Kāvesh-hā-ye Aql-e Amali* (Investigations of Practical Reason). (2nd ed.). Tehran: Mo'assese-ye Hikmat va Falsafe-ye Iran. [In Persian]

Hilli, A. (1994). *Al-Jawhar al-Nadid*. (M. Bidar Far, Ed., 5th ed.). Qom: Intisharat-e Bidar. [In Arabic]

Sobhani, J.(2003). *Husn va Qubh Aqli* (Rational Good and Evil). (A. R. Golpayegani, Written by., 1st ed.). Qom: Intisharat-e Mo'assese-ye Imam Sadiq. [In Persian]

Sabzevari, M.(1994). *Sharh al-Asma' va Sharh Du'a al-Jawshan al-Kabir*. (N. Habibi, Ed., 2nd ed.). Tehran: University of Tehran. [In Persian]

Sadr, M. (1996). *Buhuth fi Ilm al-Usul*. Qom: Mo'assese-ye Da'irat al-Ma'arif Fiqh-e Islami. [In Arabic]

Tusi, K. (1994). *Sharh al-Isharat va al-Tanbihat*. 1st ed. Qom: Nashr al-Balaghah. [In Arabic]

Mesbah Yazdi, M. (2001). *Falsafat Akhlaq* (Philosophy of Ethics). (1st ed.). Tehran: Intisharat-e Beyn al-Melal. [In Persian]

Motahari, M. (1997). *Majmu'e Asar* (Collected Works). (5th ed.). Tehran: Intisharat-e Sadra. [In Persian]

Motahari, M. (2008). *Majmu'e Asar* (Collected Works). (5th ed.). Tehran: Intisharat-e Sadra. [In Persian]

Bi-quarterly Journal of
Theosophia Islamica
EISSN: 2783-3240
Vol. 4 ● No. 2 ● 2024 ● Issue 8

Examining Mulla Sadra's Approach in Reducing Aristotelian Moderation to Unity

Vahid Raouf Moghaddam[1] Ali Alahbedashti[2]

Received: 2025/05/22 Accepted: 2025/07/09

Abstract

Aristotle and Mulla Sadra have similar approaches to acquiring moral virtues. The three main ethical approaches are virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism. Mulla Sadra, while accepting Aristotelian virtue-centeredness and moderation as the manifestation of true virtue, completes it and reveals the nature of true virtue. True virtue is of the genus of knowledge and belongs to the highest part of human identity, namely, the theoretical intellect. Moderation in practical reason provides the necessary ground for attaining the true virtue of theoretical wisdom. The final flourishing of the theoretical intellect is achieved by knowing the highest stage of unity. Both thinkers emphasize the acquisition of all moral virtues and the completion of all dimensions of human identity.

1. PhD Candidate, Department of Ethics, Faculty of Theology, University of Qom, Qom, Iran (corresponding author).
Email: v0322619181@gmail.com
2. Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies, University of Qom, Qom, Iran.
Email: alibedashti@gmail.com

* Raouf Moghaddam, Vahid; Alahbedashti, Ali. (2024). Examining Mulla Sadra's Approach in Reducing Aristotelian Moderation to Unity, *TheoSophia Islamica*, *4*(8), pp. 33-62.
https://doi.org/10.22081/JTI.2025.72181.1099

Mulla Sadra considers all virtues, even moderation, to be preliminary, viewing true virtue as the theoretical intellect's knowledge of the high stage of unity. The teacher of philosophers (Aristotle), however, while also focusing on theoretical wisdom, considers all virtues related to human perfections as true virtues and does not accept the deprivation of any of them. In this paper, the author aims to integrate Aristotle's holistic approach with Mulla Sadra's monism using an analytical method and to explain this process in order to provide a more complete depiction of ethical virtue-centeredness. The data collection method for this paper is library-based, and the research method is descriptive-analytical, which are methods of qualitative research.

Keywords

Aristotle, Mulla Sadra, Moderation, Unity, Virtue.

1. Introduction

Among Aristotle's three ethical works—the *Magna Moralia*, the *Eudemian Ethics*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*—his references in ethical writings are mostly focused on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The unique Aristotelian style of writing and his argumentative thought process are more apparent in the *Nicomachean Ethics* than in the other two books. For this reason, this paper will rely on a translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* for a brief account of Aristotelian moderation. This work contains ten books, each of which consists of several chapters. This book will be used solely to explain the foundation of Aristotle's ethical view.

Some Muslim thinkers fully accepted the Aristotelian theory of moderation regarding moral virtue, while others added a number of virtues but still accepted the core of Aristotle's ethical thought. This paper reports on the complementary approach of the founder of Transcendent Theosophy (Mulla Sadra) to Aristotle's ethical framework. In this area, Mulla Sadra accepts Aristotle's solid ethical framework and uses it as his starting point, but he does not stop there. He goes beyond it, providing a dynamic reading of moderation and preparing the ground for its return to true virtue.

In this regard, many valuable works have been written, such as "The Place of Practical Reason in the Perfection of Theoretical Reason" by Morteza Keshavarz, "The Theory of Moderation in Farabi and Ghazali" by Mahboubeh Yazdanpanah, and "Sadra's Moral Education" by Sara Tousian, among others. However, none of these valuable works have analytically and step-by-step documented the way the First Teacher's (Aristotle's) moderation is reduced to Sadra's unity. The innovation of this paper lies in depicting this reduction in three steps: definition, explanation of the components, and arguments.

2. Analysis and Examination of the Components of Aristotelian Ethics

In Aristotle's ethics, virtue, moderation, excess, deficiency, and vice are the main components. Moderation is the criterion for identifying virtue, while excess and deficiency are the criteria for identifying vice. From his perspective, the existence of virtue is essential for ethical behavior, and matters such as consequences or legal duties are not at the core of ethical thought. Of course, he does not consider the mere existence of virtue sufficient for the moral agent; the agent must necessarily apply the virtues, otherwise, they will not become virtuous (Aristotle; 1999; pp. 38, 60).

Aristotelian ethics places a special emphasis on the end goal. There is a strong focus on moral development in ethical education and training. Virtue is considered to have intrinsic value. He emphasizes the important role of understanding virtues for performing ethical actions. In his ethical thought, happiness (eudaimonia), which is an objective matter, is the goal of human behavior and is achieved through the acquisition of virtues. Intention and motivation are sometimes more important than knowledge. If a moral agent acts commendably without justice, it is not considered a true moral virtue (Aristotle; 2007; p. 38).

Practical wisdom (phronesis) enables the moral agent to discover universal rules and specific judgments, such as what action to perform, in what manner, towards whom, and to what extent, in different situations. The true politician is someone with a great and specific passion for learning moral virtues, because they want to raise their fellow citizens to be noble, honorable, and law-abiding people (Aristotle; 2002; vol. 1; p. 83). From his perspective, a reciprocal existential relationship exists between practical wisdom and

moral virtues, where the absence of one leads to the absence of the other. Virtue is both intrinsically desirable and desirable because it leads to happiness. The criterion for the correctness of an action, in his view, is internal, and actions have moral value only if they are motivated by good intentions (Aristotle; 2007; p. 38; 1999; p. 46).

3. The Nature of Virtue

Virtue is something that influences emotions and actions. In its nature and definition, it leads the agent to express the mean of actions with correct goals. According to Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics, the phenomena of the soul are of three kinds: passions, faculties, and states of character (Aristotle; 2002; vol. 1; p. 96).

Virtue, on the one hand, cannot be one of the passions that affect the soul, because a person is never known as virtuous based on the passions and feelings that come over them. They are not praised for their emotions; they are not worthy of praise simply for feeling fear or joy. On the other hand, virtue is not a faculty or a capacity either, because no one is considered virtuous or praised for being receptive to passions (our faculties and capacities are innate and natural, meaning they are inherent) . Therefore, virtue must be a state of character.

Performing a behavior, along with practice and persistence, gradually leads to the creation of a firm state of character. As a result of this state of character, the performance of that behavior will no longer be abandoned (Aristotle; 2002, vol. 2, p. 77).

Virtue is not necessary, but it is acquired and "voluntary." This is because the subject of rational deliberation and choice is matters that lead to an end, and every virtuous activity is related to these

matters (Aristotle, 2002, vol. 1, p. 130). With this statement, he critiques the famous phrase of Socrates that "the root of every undesirable behavior is ignorance." Moral virtue is acquired through habit, while something that arises from the nature of a thing does not change as a result of habit. Therefore, virtue is acquired neither by nature nor in opposition to it (Aristotle, 2002, vol. 1, p. 87). If you bring a piece of plastic close to a magnet a thousand times to create a habit for it to be attracted to the magnet, it will never happen, because it is not in its nature.

4. The Type of Virtue

Moderation is the state of being in the middle ground, and what is important about it is being between two vices. Virtue is a state of character that makes a person good and well-behaved (Aristotle, 2002, vol. 1, p. 98). Merely being a state of character is not enough to create virtue; rather, it is the moderation and balance in the rational, spirited, and appetitive faculties that leads to the manifestation of beliefs, emotions, and actions in a proper measure. In other words, the good for a person is achieved through the activity of the soul in the way of virtue (Aristotle, 1999; p. 39).

Virtue is a state of character of the type of the mean or moderation. It is a state of character that, in emotions and actions, chooses the middle ground between the extremes of excess and deficiency, which is compatible with rational principles. The person with practical wisdom determines this mean by considering these principles (Aristotle; 1999, pp. 64 and 66).

Syntaxic equality is a form of moderation. In all examples, moderation is a single point that is equidistant from its two sides. The moderate state is positioned in a good, moderate place such that its position cannot be moved a little farther or closer (Aristotle, 1999, pp. 66- 67).

However, from his perspective, the "state of moderation" in human ethics is not in an equal position relative to the two sides across all people and different virtues. What is important in the virtue of moderation is being between two vices (Aristotle, 1999, pp. 63, 173). The virtue of moderation is relevant both for quantitative actions and for qualitative activities, where it means observing the conditions of "proportions and measures" in various situations and circumstances (Aristotle, 1999, p. 66).

If all human passions and actions are applied at the appropriate moments, in the correct situations, and toward the right people, then moderation has been observed, and it will lead to success. Thus, virtue is a state of character of the mean and always aims for moderation (Aristotle; 2002; vol. 1; p. 100). In other words, feelings must be applied at the right moment, on appropriate subjects (a mother's anger at an infant's crying is incorrect), in proportion to the status of the people involved (one should show less sensitivity toward the mistakes of people who have rights), with the right cause and motive, and in the correct way (Aristotle; 1999; pp. 64-65).

5. Features of Moderation

The middle point is determined through reason. However, for a specific instance of a mean like self-control, Aristotle does not define any limits of excess or deficiency. Similarly, for instances of excess or deficiency, such as licentiousness or insensibility, he does not define any limit of moderation. For him, acts like prostitution, theft, and murder are unacceptable (Aristotle; 2002; vol. 1; pp. 100-102; 1999; p. 66).

A sign of moderation in the appetitive faculty is that when a person abstains from excessive desires, they must enjoy this abstinence. The person who is excessive or deficient, however, does not enjoy abstaining; rather, they enjoy their excess or deficiency

because they lack temperance. The excessive person has one way to distinguish pleasure derived from virtue from an unworthy pleasure: they must be raised from childhood to enjoy worthy things and feel pain from unworthy ones. Pleasure and pain must be regulated within the realm of rational judgment in education and training to serve as a standard for identifying virtuous behavior (Aristotle; 2002; vol. 1; p. 91). Therefore, the virtue of moderation is both a semantic guide for the moral agent and a practical guide for virtuous performance (Aristotle; 1999; p. 39).

To perform specific actions in the realm of individual agency, it is necessary to explain specific virtues and not just suffice with explaining moderation. The middle point in different ethical judgments can shift for two reasons (Aristotle, 1999, p. 66):

First, ethical matters possess diverse natures that cause this. With regard to courage, which is the middle point for the spirited faculty, cowardice is farther from rashness, because the nature of courage and rashness are closer from a rational perspective.

Second, one side of the middle point can have greater ugliness, because it is more sought after by human desires. The inclination towards licentiousness is greater, and its ugliness is greater than that of insensibility. In fact, a lack of desire is very rare (Aristotle; 2002; vol. 1; pp. 103-108).

A moderate person will never enjoy the excessive things that a wicked person desires and will be disgusted by their existence. Conversely, the moderate person benefits from pleasures that lead to health and well-being and are within the bounds of moderation, as long as they do not harm their honor or exceed their capacity. The behavior of a moderate person in relation to pleasures will be based on "sound reason" (Aristotle, 2002, vol. 1, p. 146).

Exceeding the bounds of moderation is linked to licentiousness (Aristotle, 2002, vol. 1, p. 68). For a noble and moderate person, virtue is something that is real and truly good. However, the immoderate and blameworthy person does not care about what is genuinely worthy and considers anything they desire to be good (Aristotle, 2002, vol. 1, p. 127).

He dedicates two chapters of the third book to explaining that moderate behavior is both voluntary and acquired, defending the free nature of ethical behavior. He believes that all beings in nature, except for humans, progress toward perfection in a determined way. However, the fact that some individuals may have an innate talent for certain virtues or feel a "sense of contentment" regarding them does not make moderate behavior an involuntary trait.

6. Problems with Aristotelian Moderation

The first problem is that the virtue of moderation is a psychological phenomenon and is never of the genus of feelings and emotions that are independent of reason. Like a natural talent, it is not innate and constantly with the moral agent. Therefore, the range of moderation in various conditions and actions must first be identified, which is not an easy task, and the general term "moderation" will not solve this problem. Performing a moderate action requires a sage who has, through extensive practice, gained skill in controlling the three faculties to achieve balance among them and has the ability to identify the point of moderation in any given situation.

From an ontological perspective, Peripatetic philosophers always analyze individuation by incorporating particular accidents. Naturally, in ethical discussions, they will also seek to determine the appropriate individual moderate decisions by identifying specific ethical rules. The thinker of Transcendent Theosophy (Mulla Sadra) consistently criticizes the Peripatetic philosopher in the field of

ontology, arguing that by adding accidents to one another, no matter how numerous they are, one cannot arrive at a particular individual of an existent thing. This point can also be raised in ethics: by identifying particular ethical rules, no matter how detailed, one cannot arrive at the individual rule of moderation that is appropriate for a person. This is especially true given Aristotle's point that in choosing a passion or an action, there is no single, fixed, and correct choice that is independent of all conditions for all people. This insight only applies to the identification of certain general ethical rules (Aristotle, 2002, vol. 1, p. 100). Even assuming a limited number of fixed ethical laws, it would be impossible to identify the point of moderation with a single rule. Therefore, simply identifying the critical points of excess and deficiency will not result in the power to make correct ethical decisions and choices. Based on this, it will be difficult for people who neither possess the virtue of moderation nor have access to a sage to determine the personal ethical rule that applies to them in a particular situation.

The second problem is: what is the justification for making moderation the criterion for the goodness of ethical behaviors, and is this criterion considered a self-evident matter? Assuming that moderation is the criterion for goodness in a general sense and in certain actions, why should it be the criterion in all actions? Does such a definition meet the formal conditions of definition provided by this prominent philosopher?

Most Islamic philosophers have accepted the definition of this prominent philosopher and considered it to meet the conditions for a definition. The mean (observing moderation) leads to beautiful character and health of the soul, just as observing moderation in eating leads to physical health (Farabi; 1992 AH; p. 58). The states of character (the state of moderation) by which a person performs good and

beautiful actions are virtues (Farabi; 1985; p. 24). An action is considered a moral virtue if it is the mean (moderation) between two vices (Ibn Miskawayh; 2005 AH; pp. 46-47). The mean (the virtue of moderation) is like the center of a circle, while the countless points on the circumference are the vices (Ibn Miskawayh, 2005 AH, pp. 45-46). The perfection of the spirited, appetitive, and rational faculties lies in observing moderation (Amiri; 1996; p. 75). The prerequisite for having a virtuous character is justice (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 9; p. 127).

7. Components of Mulla Sadra's Thought

In Sadra's ethics, virtue, moderation, and unity take on new meanings. Here, moderation is the manifestation of virtue, and the prevalence of unity is the criterion for true virtue. He divides nobility and happiness into two parts:

1. True Nobility and Happiness: This is achieved by the human intellect and brings the most fundamental part of a person's identity to perfection.
2. Preparatory Nobility and Happiness: This is not true happiness; it is achieved through the human soul and provides the groundwork for true happiness. It is not true happiness because the soul is the aspect of a person that is connected to the body and requires physical actions to form its identity. This part belongs to the more superficial aspects of human identity, and its existence is necessary as a medium for completing a person's identity. This is the practical part, and its happiness lies in liberation from the pain and suffering of the natural world, which has a negative nature (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9, p. 131).

7. Identifying the Place of Moderation

In the thought of most Muslim philosophers, the criterion for moral virtue is definitely observing moderation in all aspects. Mulla Sadra presents moderation as the general and primary criterion for the nobility of the soul and considers all other virtues to be its branches (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9, p. 92).

He believes the happiness of each of the soul's faculties is in accordance with the nature of that faculty, but he places the perfection and happiness of the soul itself within the bounds of moderation and away from excess and deficiency. The reason for avoiding excess and deficiency and staying within the bounds of moderation is so that the soul does not become passive and weak in relation to the body. The soul's constant preoccupation with the body leads to its enslavement. Moderation is, in fact, the emptying of the soul from its preoccupation with the excessive and deficient matters of vices. Of course, the complete emptying of the soul is impossible as long as it is occupied with managing the body in the physical world. However, when the moral agent achieves a state of moderation for the soul, actions are issued from the soul with ease, free from excess and deficiency.

Excess and deficiency cause the body to influence the soul, but moderation results in the soul being free from the influence of the body. In his words, moderation is like abandoning bodily actions and weakening one's attention to them, similar to temperate water that is neither hot nor cold (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9, p. 126). With this statement, he elevates his ethical thought from a basic level to a transcendent one, a progression he also makes in his ontology.

7.2. The Elevating Aspect of Moderation is Consistent with the Nature of the Soul

In a general understanding of human identity, there are three fundamental domains:

1) The Domain of Intellectual Realities: This domain lacks bodily and material characteristics.
2) The Domain of the Material and Bodily Aspect: This is completely separate from the immaterial aspects.
3) The Domain of the Soul: This serves as the objective intermediary between the intellect and the body. The soul is similar to the first domain in that its identity is akin to intellectual reality, but it resembles the second domain in that it requires bodily actions to perform ethical behavior.

The elevating state of ethical moderation is not contrary to the nature of the soul; rather, it is of the same genus as the soul's immaterial identity. Any entity that contains contradictory components will experience conflict in receiving grace from higher principles. It needs to be emptied of this struggle and conflict to remove the obstacle to receiving grace, and this liberation will happen in the field of moderation (Mulla Sadra; 1981; p. 238).

8. Analysis and Examination of Mulla Sadra's Foundations

To understand the connection between Aristotelian moderation and "unity," it is necessary to explain the philosophical foundations of Transcendent Theosophy.

8.1. The Main Foundation

1. The Primacy of Existence as Goodness: A key tenet of Mulla Sadra's view is that if the very principle of existence is good,

then awareness of existence (of any existence) will also be good. Everything possesses goodness to the extent that it partakes in existence (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 9; p. 121).

Considering what has been said, the acquisition of the virtue of moderation, from Aristotle's perspective, is for the purpose of achieving happiness (eudaimonia) and attaining goodness (Aristotle; 2002; vol. 1; p. 73). Virtue itself is also desirable, and goodness, relative to virtue, is considered a goal that is dissolved in the path of virtue. By combining both principles, one can conclude that the purpose of acquiring the virtue of moderation is to achieve a higher share of existence.

2. The Unity of the Soul: The soul has three human, animal, and vegetative dimensions with multiple faculties, such as the rational, animal, imaginative, perceptive, vegetative, nutritive, growth-oriented, and motive faculties (Mulla Sadra; 2004; pp. 553-554). Since the core of the soul's essence is celestial, it possesses a special kind of unity that encompasses all these dimensions and faculties within a single identity (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 8; p. 54).

Furthermore, every firm virtue in the soul arises from one of these three things: a) Knowledge (Sciences) b) States (Inner states, characters, and psychological dispositions) c) Outer behavior .On the other hand, correcting behavior is for the sake of improving inner states and achieving intellectual growth and progress (Mulla Sadra; 2002; pp. 74-80). Therefore, the human soul must be understood to the necessary extent.

Building on Mulla Sadra's virtue-based ethical framework, which is influenced by Aristotelian ethics, ethical growth isn't just about correcting behavior. The goal isn't to simply perform a duty or achieve the right behavioral outcome; instead, it's to cultivate a

virtuous person. This can only be achieved through an understanding of the soul's dimensions and faculties.

8.2. The Faculties of the Soul

Mulla Sadra drew extensively from the ideas of earlier philosophers, including Plato, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ghazali, and others. As a result, he provides multiple classifications for the soul's faculties.

- The vegetative soul has many sub-branches of faculties but lacks perceptual and motive ones.
- The animal and human souls, however, have both perceptual and motive faculties (Mulla Sadra; 2004; pp. 523-599).

The human soul's perceptual faculties have two parts. The core of this is the theoretical intellect, whose cognitive development is of utmost importance for a virtuous person. The second part is the faculty of knowledge, which has three cognitive functions: discerning truth from falsehood in statements, distinguishing right from wrong in beliefs, and finally, determining beautiful from ugly actions (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 9; p. 78; 1987; vol. 6; p. 373). From the perfection of the faculty of knowledge, wisdom is born (Mulla Sadra; 1987; vol. 9; pp. 88-89).

The motive part of the human soul is the faculty of justice and reason, which manages the motive faculties of the animal soul, namely desire and anger. The virtue of this faculty is justice, which is the head of the aforementioned motive faculties and serves the directives of the cognitive faculties (Mulla Sadra; 1990; vol. 1; p. 421).

A full explanation of the multiple classifications of these faculties requires a separate and extensive research project and is beyond the scope of this paper. The soul's core identity is celestial and possesses a unity with its faculties. The central point and essence of

the soul, during external sensations, descends to the lower level of the senses, and in the perceptions of the theoretical intellect, it rises to that level (Mulla Sadra; 2004; pp. 553-554).

8.3. Attributes of the Soul's Faculties

He outlines the main attributes and their numerous branches, without which virtuous behavior is impossible to attain. These are:

1) The Angelic and Rational Attribute: This is the pure source of knowledge and purity.
2) The Satanic Attribute: This is the site of the raging of satanic forces, from which deceit, cunning, trickery, arrogance, love of rank, pride, and dominance arise. The necessary cunning for acquiring the means of carnal pleasure and debauchery is a result of the resourcefulness of this attribute.
3) The Predatory Attribute: Its roar gives rise to envy, contentiousness, conflict, and struggle.
4) The Beastly Attribute: From its activity, greed and licentiousness emerge (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 9; p. 82).

Moderation is achieved for the soul by the internal cleansing of these very faculties. This process begins with internal purification and manifests in behavior (Mulla Sadra; 1990; vol. 1; p. 421).

9. Levels of Virtuousness

Practical wisdom is of three types:

1) Practical wisdom as a disposition (character).
2) Practical wisdom as knowledge about a disposition.
3) Practical wisdom as actions resulting from a disposition (Mulla Sadra, 1990, vol. 4; p. 116).

Practical wisdom as a cognitive faculty is at a higher rank than practical wisdom as a disposition, and practical wisdom as a disposition governs practical wisdom as an action. This is because every action that a person performs must be based on a wise, moderate will, and every dispositional wisdom must be derived from the path of wise knowledge.

The moderation achieved by the soul's faculties and the resulting virtuous behaviors are a path that must lead a person to the transcendent point of true virtue (Mulla Sadra, 1990; vol. 9; p. 80). The virtue of moderation is not the final good or the ultimate goal for a person; rather, it is a safe and direct path to attain true virtue (Mulla Sadra; 1987; vol. 6; p. 376).

10. The Concomitance of Virtue and Pleasure

From the perspective of both thinkers, a virtuous life is accompanied by pleasure. According to Aristotle, ordinary people often face conflicts between lower-level pleasures and higher ones. However, the taste of those who seek higher things leads them to a sincere inclination toward lofty matters. Their life is not based on pleasure, but their virtue is inherently associated with pleasure. A truly good person feels pleasure in performing good actions. If a generous person does not feel pleasure from their giving, they are not virtuous, as they are giving begrudgingly. All virtuous behaviors must, in their essence, be pleasurable, and these two are inseparable (Aristotle; 2002; vol. 1; p. 71).

According to Mulla Sadra's approach, too, the goal of virtue is happiness, and this is accompanied by pleasure, because everything attains pleasure by achieving the desire of its essence (Mulla Sadra; 2004; p. 202). This statement shows that pleasure does not belong only to those with awareness but also includes inanimate objects.

The perfection of each of the sensory faculties is in its perception of the sensory quality appropriate to it: the imagination through hope and longing, touch through the perception of a moderate temperament, the sense of smell through pleasant aromas, and so on (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 9; p. 80).

What can be inferred from Aristotle's words is that a person who seeks higher things has a pure inclination toward lofty matters. However, Mulla Sadra's words explicitly state that pleasures associated with lower-level virtues merely facilitate and provide the groundwork for attaining higher and true virtues, and they are not sought for their own sake.

The advantage of Mulla Sadra's statement over this prominent philosopher is that he goes into detail about the ranking of pleasures, considering true pleasure to be a matter of perception. "... their perceptions are of different ranks" (Mulla Sadra; 1989, vol. 9, p. 122). Given that the foundation of pleasure is perceptual, bodily and natural pleasures must be weaker than psychic and imaginal pleasures, and psychic pleasures must be weaker than intellectual pleasures (Mulla Sadra; 1987; vol. 3; p. 770).

From the combined words of both philosophers, it is clear that happiness is accompanied by the sum of pleasures derived from all virtues. However, Mulla Sadra's works place a strong emphasis on higher, intellectual pleasures, considering them incomparable to other pleasures. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the higher pleasures derived from true virtues does not mean that the lower levels of pleasure, which come from lower-level virtues, are not desirable at all.

11. Evaluating the Superiority of the Virtue of Theoretical Wisdom in Mulla Sadra's View

The principle of existence and the perception of existence are

equivalent to goodness. Two conclusions can be drawn from this: first, every rank of existence, no matter how weak, possesses goodness and is desirable. Based on this, commentators who concluded from Mulla Sadra's emphasis on higher ranks that he considers the lower ranks to be undesirable are mistaken.

Desirable things are divided into three categories:

1. First Category: Things that are desirable for their own sake.
2. Second Category: Things that are desirable only for the sake of another goal. This includes psychic, bodily, external, and providential virtues, each comprising several sub-items.
3. Third Category: Things that are both desirable in themselves and for the sake of another goal. He gives the example of health, which is both an existential and desirable good in itself and is also desirable as a prerequisite for acquiring higher virtues (Mulla Sadra, 1987, vol. 1; pp. 158-159).

All virtues and their fruits and goods, even their lowest rank, are to some extent desirable. Having a more intense existence is equivalent to having more wealth and goodness. The intellect has the highest rank of existence, and the psychic and bodily ranks are in the subsequent positions. Therefore, the virtue of theoretical wisdom is at the highest rank of all virtues (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 9; p. 131).

Of course, attaining this intellectual virtue is impossible without first attaining practical virtues. By acquiring the state of justice through moderate actions, the soul achieves all its practical virtues concerning the desires of the motive faculties of lust and anger. However, two other higher ranks of cognitive virtue still remain. The

first higher virtue relates to the "faculty of knowledge and intellect," which has three duties: distinguishing truth from falsehood in statements, right from wrong in beliefs, and beautiful from ugly in actions. The next, and highest, virtue is theoretical wisdom, which begins with the theoretical knowledge of the realities of existence and reaches higher ranks of knowledge. Through the effort to acquire this highest virtue, the rational faculty achieves its highest rank of actualization (Mulla Sadra; 2001; p. 153).

The effort to acquire practical psychic virtues results in the purification of the soul from excessive and deficient vices and pollutions. This brings about valuable fruits and goods, such as clear and pure-hearted observations, very sincere intentions that foster true virtues, humble heart-felt attentions, and abstemious bodily actions in eating, sleeping, and the like (Mulla Sadra; 1987; vol. 5; pp. 333-335).

12. Mulla Sadra's Arguments

True virtue and nobility are achieved through the virtue of theoretical wisdom. It is in the realm of theoretical wisdom that the virtuous individual first gains knowledge of the realities of existence, including absolute existence. In higher stages, they directly observe the immaterial and separate intellectual beings. The higher stage of connection is where the individual becomes identical with the relational aspect of the active intellect's existence (and not the independent existence of the active intellect). In the highest stage, they attain the meeting with the Most High Reality.

12.1. Unity as the True and Demonstrative Criterion of Virtue

Mulla Sadra quotes the philosopher Pythagoras, stating: "The virtue and nobility of every being arise from the prevalence of unity, and the less unity it possesses, the more imperfect it will be in terms

of nobility and virtue" (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 5; 212).

No being is devoid of this unity, and naturally, no being is existentially deprived of nobility and virtue (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 2; p. 88). Since the Most High Necessary Being does not have multiple objective aspects and is completely free from any stain or multiplicity, it holds the highest rank of nobility (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 7; p. 252). Therefore, any being that reaches an existential proximity to the Most High Reality will benefit from this highest rank of nobility and virtue (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 7, p. 191).

When the criterion for nobility becomes the prevalence of unity, it becomes clear that the ranks of nobility will increase or decrease according to the degrees of closeness to or distance from the single, Most High Principle. The natural world, which has the weakest rank of unity, is the furthest existential rank from the highest rank of unity, which is the Most High Principle. The intellectual world, which has the most intense rank of unity, is existentially closest to the Most High Reality (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9; p. 11).

Given that the criterion for true nobility and virtue is unity, why can true nobility and virtue only be attained through the intellect and theoretical wisdom? Why can the faculty of justice and practical reason not reach the highest point of virtue? (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9; p. 11).

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, every human perception—from sensory perceptions and imaginations to conjectures and intelligibles—and all sensory, imaginative, and intellectual faculties are existentially immaterial. For this reason, they possess a greater degree of unity than the natural world.

However, despite the fact that all cognitions are immaterial, the degree of immateriality of intellectual perceptions is greater than

that of imaginary perceptions, and imaginary perceptions are greater than sensory ones. Therefore, while the sensory faculties have perceptions with a weaker degree of unity, the perceptions of the intellectual faculties possess the highest degree of unity (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9, p. 371).

Since the faculty of justice and practical reason are responsible for moderating the animal motive faculties of desire and anger and for controlling psychic desires, they are logically incapable of attaining the highest degrees of virtue and nobility. This is because true virtue and nobility are of the genus of knowledge (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9, p. 122). Sensory and imaginary perception, which are responsible for perceiving the multiple and colorful external matters, cannot be worthy of receiving true virtue and nobility, despite being a cognitive faculty and thus higher than the motive faculties, because of the weakness of the perception of unity in the senses and imagination.

However, the intellect and theoretical wisdom, which can perceive the highest degree of unity, are worthy of receiving the highest degree of virtue and nobility. Of course, a person cannot attain theoretical wisdom unless moderation and a virtuous disposition (moral wisdom) govern them, and moral wisdom is a necessary condition for acquiring theoretical wisdom. The moderation of desire and anger itself is managed by practical wisdom and the faculty of justice, and the moderation of the faculty of justice is guided by the theoretical intellect (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9, p. 90).

Following thinkers like Ghazali, he points out that for the highest degrees of virtue, there is a rank that, due to its elevation, is higher than the scientific perception of intellects and can only be reached by attaining high degrees of spiritual journeying (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 2; p. 322).

12.2. First Argument

"Indeed, what is truly pleasurable (the effect of true virtue) is existence, especially intellectual existence, and especially the True Beloved... He will come to a comfort that has no pain" (Mulla Sadra; 2001; p. 365).

On the one hand, the principle of existence is good, and awareness of one's own existence or any other existence leads to the attainment of virtue accompanied by pleasure. In the second stage, since the existence of every being is pleasurable to itself, the perception of its own existence will naturally be pleasurable to it. In the third stage, if the cause of a being that has a higher and more intense rank of existence is present with its effect, the perception of the virtue and pleasure of the effect will become stronger and more intense, because it gains access to a stronger and more intense understanding of itself (Mulla Sadra; 1989; vol. 9; pp. 120-122). This explains why the higher ranks of virtue must be of the genus of knowledge and perception.

12.3. Second Argument

In addition to the principle of existence being good and a virtue, he uses his own foundational principle, trans-substantial motion (al-haraka al-jawhariyyah). Human perfection culminates in substantial motion. A person reaches theoretical wisdom when their existence is elevated, and in this case, they will be able to acquire higher degrees of virtue (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9, p. 121). The stronger the rank of existence, the more its nobility and virtue are elevated, and the lower the rank of existence, the weaker its nobility and virtue will be (Mulla Sadra; 1989, vol. 2; p. 11).

The specific characteristic that distinguishes humans from

other living beings is speech and reason, which is acquired in the advanced stages of trans-substantial motion (al-haraka al-jawhariyyah). With the help of this faculty, a person will be able to have rational perceptions. Consequently, the virtue that is perceived with the help of the rational faculty must be a high rank of virtue, which is of the genus of knowledge and perception. In the highest degrees of virtuousness of the rational faculty, union with the active intellect will become possible.

12.4. Third Argument

The means of attaining virtue are three: the knower who perceives the virtue, the perception itself, and the virtue that is perceived.

In the second stage, the power of perception comes from the power of the perceiver.

In the third stage, the power of intellectual perception is higher than the power of sensory perception. This is because both the intellect itself and what is perceived by the intellect are free from being mixed with matter, which is a weaker existence. When the intellect perceives something, the perceived object is fully present to the intellect, and nothing of the intelligible is hidden from it. This is unlike sensory perceptions, because although sensory perception is immaterial, it has a weaker degree of immateriality. Furthermore, what is perceived by sensory perception is material and has the weakest degree of existence. Thus, what is perceived by sensory perception is not fully present to the senses, and the senses only perceive a specific aspect of it.

In sensory perceptions without the involvement of the intellect, there is error and mistake of the sensory faculty, as well as forms of

conflict, opposition, deficiencies, flaws, and aversion. In intellectual perception, not only are these kinds of shortcomings and defects absent, but intellectual perception is also needed to remove the shortcomings of sensory perception (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 9; p. 122). Unless the intellect states that when light enters a medium like air, which has a lower density, and then enters a medium like water, which has a higher density, it undergoes a tendency and turbulence, the senses alone will not be able to perceive this perceptual error.

13. Summary and Conclusion

How can the Aristotelian virtue of moderation, which is a kind of moral wisdom, be linked to the virtue of unity, which from Mulla Sadra's perspective is the principle and true virtue?

If practical reason—with the help of the views and beliefs gained in the realm of theoretical reason—uses its faculties to perform specific actions, it will open the way for virtuous behavior. Therefore, more valuable actions will be issued from the soul in accordance with each rank of cognitive growth that is achieved. The faculty of knowledge within the rational faculty perceives the beauty of generosity, but this level of perception is only general and not sufficient. It must be applied to a specific behavior by practical reason, such as a specific act of kindness applied to a particular needy person, to result in a virtuous action.

In this discussion, Mulla Sadra establishes a connection between the realm of ontology and the realm of epistemology. The elevation of a person's existential rank leads to the attainment of higher values, and the knowledge and application of higher values lead to the promotion of a person's existential rank. In this way, both realms reinforce each other until a person achieves the highest rank of virtue.

From an existential point of view, a person is a gradational reality (tashkik al-wujud) that has multiple ranks. The intensification of a person's share of existence is directly related to the extent of their share of rationality and moral values.

From his perspective, the perception of existence is virtue, and to the extent that a person's existence expands, their share of virtue will increase. This is because the more existence expands, the more perfect it becomes, and the impurities of non-existence depart from it. The purer it becomes from imperfections, the more virtuous effects will be manifested by it.

For the education of a person who has true virtue, on the one hand, the motive faculty of the human soul, namely practical reason, must temper the motive faculties of the animal part of the soul and subdue desire and anger. On the other hand, the perceptual faculties of the human soul, namely the faculty of knowledge and the theoretical intellect, must undergo voluntary cognitive perfection.

The lowest rank of human perception is sensory perception, and a person who is trapped by the senses and sense-perceived things can never display trans-sensory virtuous behavior. All sensory knowledge will only invite a person to virtuous behavior in the present moment, and only when they are in contact with sense-perceived things.

The higher rank is imaginative perception, through which a person imagines themselves within a human society, and by strengthening and cultivating this perception, virtues with a social dimension are achieved. Imaginative knowledge invites virtuous behaviors in all time frames. With the expansion of perceptions, a person will gain access to general concepts and will proceed to analyze the universe. The person's transcendent capacities will

blossom. By knowing sense-perceived things, they will achieve the expansion of their existence in the realm of sense-perceived things. By knowing imaginative concepts and producing imaginative value-creating virtues, they will achieve the expansion of their imaginal existence. Finally, by attaining intellectual knowledge and being freed from all perceptual limitations of the previous faculties, they will expand their existence to encompass the entire universe. In every step of expanding their perception, the reality of the world expands for the person.

Unless vices like bestiality, savagery, and devilry—which take over the heart from early childhood—are controlled from within a person in the light of moderation and the angelic faculties are not allowed to flourish, the human's inner self will remain a battlefield between the angelic faculties and the satanic forces, and attaining true virtues will become a myth for the person. In the animal realm, carnal desire and angry persistence are the drivers of actions. However, in the human realm, desire originates from knowledge and rational consciousness, which indicates a person's existential elevation. The will that is issued from practical reason is ahead of and higher than animal desire and is considered subsequent to and obedient to knowledge.

In Mulla Sadra's view, the path, the traveler, and the destination are one and the same in the journey to attain true virtue. As Aristotle also agreed, this is a movement that is realized from within.

However, Mulla Sadra considers the attainment of intellectual virtues to be stronger, more complete, and more numerous. Although he, like Aristotle, emphasizes the necessity of acquiring all virtues across the different dimensions of the soul, he places a greater emphasis on the acquisition of intellectual virtues. He considers their

product to be incomparable to other virtues for the virtuous person.

When a person knows something with their theoretical intellect, their soul is perfected through a union with that form due to the identity between the knower and the known. They then observe the light, value, beauty, and splendor of the essence of its cause within themselves through presential knowledge (knowledge by presence).

The purer the perception, the more possible it becomes to attain pure existence, and the attainment of pure existence will bring about a stronger perception. This continues to the point where a person achieves union with the active intellect and becomes identical with the relational aspect of this sacred intellect. The perceptual forms that are gained as a result of the connection with the active intellect are the most complete and perfect forms, and they are ultimately in harmony with the human soul. The pleasure derived from this will be incomparable to sensory and natural pleasures. The perception of this singular and unique reality will lead to the internalization of beautiful moral behaviors in the rational soul.

References

Aristotle. (2000). *Nicomachean Ethics*, (A. Pourhosseini, Trans., 1st ed.). vol. 1 & 2, Tehran: University of Tehran Press. [In Persian]

Aristotle. (1999). *Nicomachean Ethics,* (M. Lotfi, Trans., 1st ed). Tehran: Tarh-e No Publications. [In Persian]

Aristotle. (2007). *Nicomachean Ethics,* (S.Saljouqi, Trans., 1st ed). Tehran: Erfan Publications. [In Persian]

Ibn Miskawayh, A. (2005). *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq wa Tatheer al-A'raq*, Qom: Tolu'e Nour Publications. [In Arabic]

Amiri, A. (1996). *Rasa'il,* (Tedayyon, Trans., 1st ed). Tehran: University Publishing Center. [In Persian]

Farabi, M,(1992) *Al-Tanbih 'ala al-Sa'adah*, Lebanon: Beirut Publications. [in Arabic]

Farabi, M. (1985). *Fusul Muntaza'ah*, Tehran: Maktabat al-Zahra Publications. [In Arabic]

Mulla Sadra. *Iksir al-'Arifin*, Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, n.d. [In Arabic]

Mulla Sadra. (1987). *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* (M. Khajavi, Ed., vols. 1, 3, 5, 6, & 9). Qom: Bidar Publications. [In Arabic]

Mulla Sadra .(1989). *Al-Hikma al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*, (vol. 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9). Qom: Mostafavi Publications. [In Arabic]

Mulla Sadra. (1990). *Sharh Usul al-Kafi* (M. Khajavi, Ed., vol. 1). Tehran: Institute for Cultural Studies and Research. [In Arabic]

Mulla Sadra. (1981). *Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyyah fī al-Manāhij al-Sulūkiyyah*, Tehran: University Publishing Center. [In Arabic]

Mulla Sadra. (2022). *Kasr al-Asnām al-Jāhiliyyah*, Tehran: Sadra Islamic Wisdom Foundation. [In Arabic]

Mulla Sadra. (2001). *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, Qom: Islamic Propagation Organization, 2001 [2001]. [In Arabic]

Mulla Sadra. (1984). *Mafatih al-Ghayb* (M. Khajavi, Ed). Tehran: Institute for Cultural Studies and Research.[In Arabic]

Bi-quarterly Journal of
Theosophia Islamica
Islamic Sciences and culture Academy
EISSN: 2783-3240
Vol. 4 ● No. 2 ● 2024 ● Issue 8

Sadra's Wisdom and the Problem of Meaningfulness in Human Life

Bahman Zamanian[1]

Received: 2025/04/06 Accepted: 2025/05/21

Abstract

Meaningfulness and meaninglessness are new philosophical problems confronting philosophers. Islamic philosophy, especially Transcendent Theosophy (Hikmat Muta'aliyah), as a philosophy concerned with identifying the truths of the world, is no exception and must offer a response to this issue. The aim of the present research was to reconstruct the viewpoint of Transcendent Theosophy on this problem using a descriptive-analytical method. Based on the principles of Transcendent Theosophy, the findings of the research can be explained as follows: Transcendent Theosophy considers meaningfulness and meaninglessness as philosophical second intelligibles (ma'qūlāt-e thāniyah falsafī) that can be abstracted from human life, and the goals present in human life lead to the abstraction of these concepts. Sadraian wisdom claims that the more real and harmonious the goals are with human life, the more

1. Ph.D. in Comparative Philosophy, Department of Philosophy and Kalam, Shahid Motahari University, Tehran, Iran.
Email: sadrazamane@gmail.com

* Zamanian, Bahman. (2024). Sadraian Wisdom and the Problem of Meaningfulness in Human Life, *TheoSophia Islamica*, *4*(8), pp. 63-90.
https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71589.1060

meaningful human life will be. The solution proposed by Transcendent Theosophy in this regard is to return to human primordial nature and to redefine monotheistic goals and eternal life for humanity, as these concepts contribute to the meaningfulness of human life.

Keywords

Meaningfulness, Meaninglessness, Life, Pure Relation, Transcendent Theosophy.

Introduction

The quest for and discovery of truth is a fundamental characteristic of human existence. As a conscious being, humanity has faced various questions throughout life, such as the mystery of its own existence and that of surrounding objects: "Where have I been? Where am I? And where am I going?" Humans are fundamentally seeking a convincing and rational answer to their questions. The emergence of philosophy as a discipline can be traced back to this very pursuit. These types of questions have not only preoccupied the minds of ordinary people but have also been particularly significant for philosophers throughout history. They have striven to find answers to these questions, leading to the development of philosophy as a field of study. Therefore, questions of this nature are as old as human civilization itself. The degree of success or failure of these endeavors, however, is not the focus of this research.

One of the most important issues that has engaged philosophers in recent decades, and for which they are seeking a compelling answer, is the meaningfulness and meaninglessness of human life. Specifically, questions arise such as: "Is absurdity dominant in human life?" or "Does human life have meaning?" and "How can one escape absurdity and experience a meaningful life?" Many books and articles have been written on this topic, including: "An Analysis of the Role of Ethics and Religiosity in the Meaningfulness of Life with Emphasis on the Solutions of the Holy Quran" by Akhtar Soltani and Hamed Hayati (Intercultural Studies, Fall 1399: No. 44); "The Role of Self-Knowledge and *Hayat Tayyebah* (Good Life) in the Meaningfulness of Life from the Viewpoint of Allameh Tabataba'i" by Ali Ghanavati et al. (Quranic Theology, Fall 1399 SH: No. 15); "The Absurdity of Absurdity" by Asgari Soleimani (Naqd-o Nazar, 2003: No. 32); and "The Meaning of Life in

Khayyam's Thought" by Touraj Aghdaii and Hajar Khadem (Conference on the Promotion of Persian Language and Literature, 2013: No. 8).

The distinguishing feature of the present research is its explanation of the meaningfulness and meaninglessness of human life based on the specific principles and characteristics of Transcendent Theosophy. Although the concepts of meaningfulness and meaninglessness of human life were not explicitly addressed by Islamic philosophers, especially Sadr al-Muta'allihin, an investigation and analysis of the ontological, epistemological, and anthropological foundations of Sadraian wisdom will guide us to a particular model of giving meaning to life. In other words, Mulla Sadra's understanding and interpretation of meaningfulness in life can be discovered in his works and principles, and his answer to the aforementioned problem is predictable. Therefore, based on this criterion, we aim to extract and infer Sadr al-Muta'allihin's analysis of the meaningfulness of human life through library research and data processing using an analytical-descriptive method.

1. The Mode of Existence of Meaningfulness and Meaninglessness

Given that the subject of philosophy is "being qua being" (mujūd bimā huva mawjūd), the identification of reality and external truths has been a central concern for Islamic philosophers. They seek to comprehend reality and know it as it truly is. According to this theory, understanding truths and attaining reality depends on humanity's ability to discover reality. This means that humans possess the capacity to discover reality as it is, and reality can be grasped by humans. Therefore, there is a direct and undeniable connection between Islamic ontology and epistemology. The dominant method in Transcendent Theosophy is the rational method, meaning the identification of reality is based on rational self-evident truths. Hence,

it can be said that its ontology is a rational ontology.

Therefore, the geography of philosophy and philosophers' presence will be as vast as the geography of existence. This means that all of existence, by virtue of its being, falls under the subject matter of philosophy. In other words, philosophy is responsible for explaining existential truths as they are qua existent. On the other hand, humans sometimes perceive something as real and true when it is not, leading to error. Conversely, they might consider something unreal when it actually possesses reality. Given philosophy's characteristic and its philosophical method, which is rational ontology, one can distinguish real truths from unreal ones (Tabataba'i, 2008, p. 9).

In summary, Islamic philosophy, by virtue of its subject matter and demonstrative method, has the capacity to examine realities in terms of their existence, distinguish perceived realities from non-perceived ones, and investigate the mode of existence of these realities. Meaningfulness and meaninglessness of life are no exception to this rule. That is, by considering the subject and demonstrative method of philosophy, the mode of existence of meaningfulness and meaninglessness in life can be thoroughly examined and investigated. Therefore, it must be clarified what kind of existence meaningfulness and meaninglessness possess, how they exist, and whether absurdity (pūchī) has any share of existence. Mulla Sadra believes that the reality that fills the external world is "existence" (wujūd). Consequently, primacy (aṣālat) belongs to "existence," and external existences are, by themselves, instances of existence and existent. This means that in the predication of the concept of "existence" to those external realities that fill the external world, they are independent of any intermediary or restrictive aspect. However, essential realities are not like this. They exist through existence and are realized under the

protection of "existence" (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981 SH, p. 6). The judgments they accept are also through "existence." This means that a reality such as quiddity (māhiyyat) is predicated with existence through its union with "existence," and consequently, it is existent by means of existence and exists with a restrictive, limiting aspect. In other words, quiddity is not, by itself, an instance of existence or existent. Rather, it is abstracted from the "limit and finitude" of existence, and since existence is limited, quiddity is abstracted from "existence."

Some other realities, such as unity (vaḥdat), actuality (bi'l-fi'l), and potentiality (bi'l-quwvah), exist by virtue of existence (bi'l-wujūd). However, they are neither like the essence of existence that fills the external world, nor are they like quiddities (māhiyyāt) that are realized through a restrictive, limiting aspect. Instead, such realities exist with a restrictive, potential aspect (ḥaythiyyat-e taqyīdiyyah sha'niyyah).

These types of concepts, unlike quiddity which is abstracted from the limit and finitude of external realities, are abstracted from the very text of external realities. In other words, these realities exist in an inclusive manner; they are accumulated, abstract attributes of existence, woven into its fabric (Yazdanpanah, 2010 SH, Vol. 2, p. 290). Such concepts, which exist with a "restrictive, potential aspect," are termed philosophical second intelligibles (ma'qūlāt-e thāniyah falsafī). They are essentially distinct from first intelligibles and logical second intelligibles. It is worth noting that Mulla Sadra claims philosophical second intelligibles are not merely mental constructs, unlike logical intelligibles; rather, they have an external reality. This means that in reality and in their state of being, they exist by virtue of existence. Consequently, philosophical intelligibles and concepts are considered external. In other words, not only is their attribution external, but their occurrence is also external. This is because attribution is dependent on

and a pure relation to its relata; thus, if the attribution is external, the relata of the attribution must also have externality. Of course, the externality of each existent will be proportionate to its specific existential locus.

«و الحق أن الاتصاف نسبة بين شيئين متغايرين بحسب الوجود في ظرف الاتصاف فالحكم بوجود أحد الطرفين دون الآخر في الظرف الذي يكون الاتصاف فيه تحكم»

(صدر الدين شيرازی،۱۹۸۱م، ج ۱، ص ۳۳۶-۳۳۷).

> "And the truth is that attribution is a relationship between two distinct things in terms of their existence within the context of the attribution. Therefore, judging one of the relata to exist without the other in the context in which the attribution occurs is arbitrary." (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 1, pp. 336-337)

His mentioned occurrence does not lead to a multiplicity of external texts. Instead, if philosophical concepts exist externally, they are realized by external existence, and they are woven into its fabric, existing with a restrictive, inclusive aspect. Therefore, realities-in-themselves \ do not cause a proliferation of external texts; it's not that we encounter two distinct texts externally. Rather, there is one reality called "existence," with which these realities coexist. These concepts are abstracted from the very core of "existence"; hence, a text separate from existence is not conceivable for these realities. Now, a question arises: in which category of the aforementioned concepts do meaningfulness and its opposite, meaninglessness of life, fall? Are they of the nature of "existence" that fills the external world? Or are they like quiddities that exist with a restrictive, limiting aspect and are abstracted from the finitude and end of a thing? Or are they of the nature of philosophical second intelligibles?

Although concepts like meaningfulness and meaninglessness are predicated on human life, it should not be overlooked that their

predication on human life will not be like the predication of the concept of "existence." This is because these concepts are not, by themselves, instances of existence or existent. Therefore, one cannot expect a concept like meaningfulness to be identical to the concept of "existence." On the other hand, the mentioned concepts are not of the nature of essential concepts, because meaningfulness and meaninglessness are not abstracted from the limit and finitude of things and external realities. Therefore, their type will be distinct from the type of essential concepts.

The conclusion is that meaningfulness and meaninglessness will be of the nature of philosophical second intelligibles. This means that just as concepts like unity, actuality, and potentiality are abstracted from external realities and predicated upon them, meaningfulness and meaninglessness are also abstracted from human life and predicated upon it. The upshot of the argument is that meaningfulness and meaninglessness are two concepts abstracted from human life. That is, human life is such that these two concepts are abstracted from it and predicated upon it. Therefore, the criterion and basis for the abstraction of such concepts is human life and its existence. Hence, if there were no life or existence, the abstraction of the two concepts of meaningfulness and meaninglessness would also be impossible.

2. Critique of Absolute Nihilism

Based on the preceding discussion regarding the mode of existence of meaningfulness and meaninglessness in human life, absolute meaninglessness (pūchī muṭlaq) cannot have external realization or actualization. This is because absolute meaninglessness signifies utter invalidity and pure non-existence. Therefore, no external instance can be found for absolute meaninglessness, and it does not possess

external reality or establishment in this sense. Consequently, absolute meaninglessness would be paradoxical and contradictory. Just as a square circle is impossible to realize externally, absolute meaninglessness is also impossible to realize externally. This is because absolute meaninglessness, while being non-existence and invalidity, would simultaneously need to have realization and existence, which is a contradiction.

Thus, the hypothesis of absolute meaninglessness for life would be impossible, and life would not be characterized by absolute meaninglessness. Therefore, life being characterized by meaninglessness or emptiness will be a relative attribution. That is, a meaningless or empty life is a life that *could* be meaningful but currently lacks meaning. Since such a life is not characterized by meaningfulness, it is called a meaningless or empty life. In other words, the acceptance of meaninglessness depends on the acceptance of life's meaningfulness; without acknowledging life's potential for meaning, one cannot speak of its meaninglessness. The conclusion is that the presupposition of the claim of meaninglessness is the acceptance of life's meaningfulness (Shahriari, 2003, pp. 92-107). Therefore, anyone claiming absolute meaninglessness has already presupposed meaningfulness for their claim; consequently, absolute meaninglessness is impossible (Soleimani Amiri, 2003, pp. 2-42).

The claim of absolute meaninglessness is akin to the claim of absolute skepticism, which denies all knowledge, yet implicitly acknowledges a form of knowledge behind this very claim. Meaningfulness and meaninglessness of life are like the concepts of sight and blindness. Just as the concept of blindness is predicated on a being that *has the potential for sight*, the concept of meaninglessness is predicated on a reality that *has the potential for meaningfulness* but

is currently not meaningful. Therefore, the concept of blindness cannot be predicated on a wall, because a wall does not have the potential for sight to begin with. In other words, there is a privation and possession (malakah and 'adam malakah) relationship between meaningfulness and meaninglessness/emptiness. Meaningfulness is predicated on a reality that possesses the attribute of meaningfulness, and meaninglessness is considered the privation of this attribute.

3. Human Identity

Understanding human identity (huwiyyat-e insānī) is essential as one of the fundamental and important bases for giving meaning to human life in Sadraian wisdom. That is, the connection between meaningfulness/meaninglessness and understanding human identity is undeniable and will influence our stance on this matter. In Islamic philosophy and Transcendent Theosophy, arguments have been put forth for the immaterial aspect of human beings. Sadr al-Muta'allihin believes that in addition to a material dimension, humans also possess an immaterial and abstract realm. Therefore, based on this principle, the truth and identity of human beings must be sought in their abstract realm (sāḥat-e tajarrudī). Consequently, a being possessing such a characteristic will be immortal (nāmīrā), and human individuality will also reside in that very abstract aspect. Even the material and bodily aspect of human life will be dependent on the abstract aspect.

كما أن البدن حي بحياة النفس و أنها أصل قوامه و لبه» (طباطبائی،۱۹۸۱ م ،ج۶، ص۱۰۸).

> "Just as the body is alive by the life of the soul, and it [the soul] is the origin of its constitution and its essence." (Tabataba'i, 1981, Vol. 6, p. 108)

Such an abstract reality can be called the "Divine Spirit " (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1984: p. 86). The existential inclination and tendency towards

the higher world, the existential desire for infinite perfection, and the innate inclination towards praiseworthy virtues and perfections are inherent characteristics of the human truth and abstract realm. That is, these characteristics must be recognized in the mode of existence of the soul. In the philosophical culture of Sadraian wisdom, such a mode of existence is called primordial nature (Mulla Sadra, 1984, p. 242).

This means: "It is a unique nature and a special creation, distinct from nature, which is found in all inanimate, non-growing, or lifeless animal beings, and distinct from instinct, which is present in animals and the animalistic dimension of humans." (Javadi Amoli, 2010, p. 117)

Among the mentioned characteristics, the inclination towards the sacred realm and the desire for infinite perfection are of paramount importance. This existential yearning for an infinite truth will be the fundamental axis of meaningfulness in life. It is crucial to remember that this existential inclination and desire for such an infinite truth is not a mere concept; that is, the discussion is not about the *concept* of infinity, but about the existential reality of infinity.

Now, a question arises: Why does such a desire exist within the very essence and identity of human beings? From Sadr al-Muta'allihin's perspective, human beings possess a poor identity, and poverty is considered an intrinsic and essential part of their existence. Therefore, this characteristic and attribute is not something bestowed upon them through an external act of positing (jaʿl) (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1984 SH, p. 280). In other words, the human identity is entirely dependent on others, and this dependency is not something that a cause has given to it; rather, poverty is the very essence of human identity. To elaborate, humans are not "poor" in the sense of being a thing upon

which poverty, as an accidental attribute external to their essence, might befall; instead, their entire essence is poverty.

«الفقر و الحاجة عين حقائقها لا أن لها حقائق على حيالها- عرض لها التعلق بالغير و الفقر و الحاجة إليه بل هي في ذواتها محض الفاقة و التعلق»(صدر الدين شيرازی،۱۹۸۱م، ج۱، ص ۴۷).

> "Poverty and need are the very essence of their realities, not that they possess distinct realities on their own which are then incidentally characterized by dependence on others, poverty, and need for them. Rather, in their very essences, they are pure indigence and dependence." (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 47).

To approach and understand Sadr al-Muta'allihin's intention regarding the impoverished existence of human beings, it's necessary to examine the characteristic of human poverty through four hypotheses and identify the correct one.

a: Hypothesis 1: Poverty and Need are Accidental Attributes

The first hypothesis is that poverty and need for humans are like heat for water. This hypothesis is incorrect because heat, as an accident, is external to the essence of water. That is, water has an intrinsic essence, and heat is an attribute that attaches to it from outside its inherent identity, separating from it after a short time. If poverty and need were like heat for water, it would imply that humans are, in their essence and identity, independent and self-sufficient of a Creator. This is rejected from an ontological and theological perspective, as humans cannot exist independently alongside God.

b: Hypothesis 2: Poverty as an Essential Concomitant

In the second hypothesis, poverty is considered an essential concomitant. While it is impossible to separate an essential

concomitant from its essence (except through intellectual reflection and analysis), this category is also not considered correct by Sadr al-Muta'allihin. Even though an essential concomitant, like evenness for the number four, can never be separated from the essence of the number four (and the number four is always concomitant with evenness), poverty for humans is not like evenness for the number four. This is because "being four" has a priority in rank over evenness, and the existential level of "four" precedes its concomitant, evenness. Therefore, if poverty were an essential concomitant of humans, it would imply that humans are, in their identity and essence, independent and self-sufficient of a Creator. This type of independence for human identity is not accepted in Transcendent Theosophy.

c: Hypothesis 3: Poverty as a Quidditative Reality (Gender and Species)

In the third hypothesis, poverty is regarded as a quidditative reality (ḥaqīqat-e māhavī) and a logical genus or species for humans. This is also not accepted within the Sadraian philosophical system. In Transcendent Theosophy, quiddity (māhiyyat) is conventional (e'tibārī) and lacks primacy (aṣālat). According to Mulla Sadra, what is primary and fills the external world is existence (wujūd), and quiddity exists dependently and in the shadow of existence. Therefore, from Sadr al-Muta'allihin's perspective, accepting poverty as a quidditative characteristic for humans would entail human independence at the level of existence, which is inconsistent with Mulla Sadra's existential system.

d: Hypothesis 4: Poverty as Pure Relation based on the Primacy of Existence

The fourth hypothesis is analyzed based on the primacy of

existence (aṣālat-e wujūd). According to this criterion, the entire existential identity of a human being is encompassed by poverty, and they are the very essence of relation (ʿayn-e rabṭ) and the very essence of dependence on the cause. This means that a human being, as an effect, is nothing but an illuminative emanation (ifāḍah ishrāqī) and a mode (shuʾūn) of the cause.

To illustrate, consider an example: whenever a human intends, they can create forms in their mind. The mental form in question is the very essence of dependence and relation to human will, such that it is created immediately upon attention and ceases to exist with inattention. An effect like a human being is similar to that mental form; that is, it is the very essence of dependence and relation to its cause. It is worth noting that the human intellect has the power of separation and individuation. This means that in the laboratory of the intellect, one can hypothetically separate human identity and its poverty, considering human identity independently. However, externally, human identity is nothing but a relation to the cause and dependence on it. Therefore:

> "The effect does not have an identity distinct from the reality of the cause that emanated it... Therefore, the effect, in terms of its being an effect, has no reality except by being subordinated to the cause, and it has no meaning other than being an effect and subordinate to the cause." (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 2, p. 299)

Therefore, with its impoverished identity, humanity belongs to the bestowing cause of existence, and its existential subsistence (qawām-e wujūdī) depends on that very cause. This means the effect is subsistent upon its bestowing cause of existence. (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, Vol. 3, p. 250).

4. Human's Relational Identity and the Cause's Existential Encompassment

We've established that human identity is the very essence of relation, dependence, and need for its cause. This analysis leads to a specific kind of existential kinship and suitability between the cause and the effect. The effect's identity is not distinct from the identity of the cause that emanated it. Sadr al-Muta'allihin believes that this relation and dependence not only creates a unique kinship between cause and effect, but also signifies a deeper, more precise truth. In this relationship, the bestowing cause of existence has a "sustaining togetherness" with its effect, which is humanity. This means the cause is present within the effect's very locus and level of being.

« لكن العلة موجودة مع المعلول في مرتبة وجود المعلول»(صدرالدين شيرازى، ج۷،ص ۳۳۱).

> "But the cause is present with the effect in the level of the effect's existence." (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, Vol. 7, p. 331)

In other words, the Cause of Causes, by virtue of its oneness (vaḥdat) and existential encompassment, is present throughout all existence. Therefore, no locus can be found where the Almighty Truth is not present (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, p. 36).

Humanity, as one of the effects, is no exception to this rule. The Cause of Causes is present in the human existential locus and fills the human domain with its sustaining presence. However, it's self-evident that the sustaining presence of the Divine Truth in the human existential locus does not imply indwelling, union (ittiḥād), or mixture with humanity or any other effect. Rather, because the Divine Truth is in the ultimate state of simplicity and is "One in Essence", the existential scope of such a reality encompasses all existence, and there is no locus where the light of Truth is not present. Therefore, the sustaining togetherness, simplicity, and oneness of "He, the Exalted,"

will not permit such a mixture (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 6, p. 373).

The example of the soul (nafs) seems useful to explain the above content. Based on the intellectual framework of Transcendent Theosophy, humans possess an immaterial reality called the soul that constitutes their identity, and it is through this abstract realm that they attain individuality. This means that humans acquire a single "I" that remains from the beginning of life to its end (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, Vol. 9, p. 39). This "I" is a simple reality that is present in all human existential loci. That is, the "I" is present in the sense realm and perceives sensibles, and this very "I" is present at the level of imagination and performs imaginary perceptions; furthermore, the "I" is present in the intellectual realm and intellectually perceives intellectual realities. Therefore, although the reality of the soul or "I," as a single reality, possesses a simple unity, it can be present in sense, imaginary, and intellectual loci (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1984, p. 554). This means the "I" feels, the "I" imagines, and the "I" inteljects, but the presence of the "I" in different loci does not lead to composition or anything else.

5. Human Knowledge and Gnosis of the Cause

Given the preceding discussion, the sustaining presence of the Almighty Truth, the Cause of Causes, within the human existential locus yields the conclusion that human beings possess an intuitive and unmediated knowledge of the Cause of Causes.

«إن إدراك الحق تعالى على الوجه البسيط حاصل لكل أحد في أصل فطرت» (صدر الدين شيرازی،۱۹۸۱،ج۱، ص ۱۱۶)

> "Indeed, the perception of the Exalted Truth (al-Ḥaqq taʿālā) in a simple manner is achieved by everyone in their primordial nature (fī aṣli fiṭratih)." (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 116).

Even the priority of knowledge of the Cause of Causes over

knowledge of oneself will be a logical consequence of the aforementioned principle. That is, humanity first intuits the Divine Truth and the Cause of Causes, and then, after this intuition, discovers itself. However, it should not be overlooked that Sadr al-Muta'allihin considers this knowledge to be simple knowledge. This means that although humans have knowledge of the Divine Truth, they do not have knowledge of that knowledge, unlike complex knowledge where knowledge of knowledge is included. More clearly, if a human being has knowledge and awareness of a reality, and is also aware of their knowledge of that reality, such knowledge would be complex. But if this is not the case, such knowledge would be of the nature of simple knowledge (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, Vol. 1, p. 116).

In addition to intuitive knowledge of the Cause of Causes, one can also point to humanity's existential inclination and desire towards that transcendent reality. That is, an inner pull directs humanity toward an unlimited perfection and calls it toward an infinite perfection. The upshot is that the abstract realm of humanity, i.e., the soul (nafs), possesses intuitive knowledge (maʿrifat-e shuhūdī) and an existential desire (mayl-e wujūdī) for the Cause of Causes. However, attention to the material world and egoistic attachments causes this knowledge to dim. That is, the product of egoistic attachments to the world prevents humans from acquiring complex knowledge. Nevertheless, the existential desire and inner inclination towards infinite perfections remain in humans. But since this existential desire is not accompanied by complex intuitive knowledge, humans seek infinite perfection in other matters and substitute perceived instances for the true instance. Therefore, if intuitive knowledge is elevated and transformed into complex knowledge, humanity will not lose sight of the instance of infinite perfection, and a correspondence will be established between existential desire and intuitive knowledge.

6. Human Identity and Meaningfulness in Life

With humanity's intuitive knowledge and existential desire for infinite perfection, a clear picture of the meaningfulness and meaninglessness of human life emerges. Based on this, Transcendent Theosophy presents the meaningfulness of human life as a return to one's existential truth and original, authentic human primordial nature (fitra). It believes that the dust of illusion and fantasy must be cleared from its face. Through this process, human life and existence will acquire a humane color and essence, escaping emptiness and experiencing a life imbued with transcendent meanings.

«فتطهير نور الفطرة عن رذائل التخيّلات ، والارتهان بالموهومات الّتی استرقّت العقـول الضعيفة والنفوس القاهرة والقوی الجزئيّة »(صدرالدين شيرازی، بی‌تا، ص۷۵).

> "So, the purification of the light of primordial nature from the vices of imaginations, and from being enslaved by delusions that have subjugated weak intellects, suppressed souls, and partial faculties." (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, bi-ta, p. 75).

Therefore, the expansion of worldly life and a complete focus on humanity's natural and material dimension won't give life meaning. Instead, it distances individuals from their true life and leads to perplexity. Has industrial development and modernity truly brought meaning to human life and freed us from confusion and aimlessness, or has it fueled our perplexity, aimlessness, and nihilism? So, only goals that align with human intuitive knowledge and existential desire can imbue human life with meaning. Such goals are more real, have a more objective correlate, and bring endless joys. The delight, joy, and happiness derived from a life rooted in knowledge and an existential yearning for infinite perfection are incomparable to the fleeting pleasures of other life models.

The upshot is that the meaningfulness and meaninglessness of human life must be sought in its proximity to or distance from that infinite perfection. In other words, the more one's intuitive knowledge (maʿrifat-e shuhūdī) of the Cause of Causes and the Divine Truth, and one's existential desire (mayl-e wujūdī), increase, the more human life acquires a transcendent meaning. Conversely, the more this knowledge and existential desire diminish, the more humans fall into perplexity and aimlessness, perceive their lives as meaningless, and succumb to emptiness.

6-1. Meaningfulness in Individual Life

Before engaging in social life, a human being possesses an individual identity with specific individuality. Such a being, with such an identity, has been created in a way that free will is inherent in its very essence and nature. In other words, the mode of human existence is a conscious, volitional mode, hence, one is "forced to be free" (Javadi Amoli, 2015 SH, Vol. 1, p. 514). Therefore, the principle of human freedom and free will is itself not optional. Consequently, any action a human performs or refrains from is done or refrained from by their own will and choice.

Of course, animals also operate similarly; they act based on will and possess two categories of faculties: perceiving and moving. However, the volitional realm of humans is distinct from that of animals. The distinction lies in the fact that humans organize their actions based on a will that possesses human identity, unlike animals whose consciousness is limited to imaginal consciousness. That is, animals do not engage in rational deliberation or contemplation in their actions, and their moving faculty is a power called the instigating or appetitive moving faculty or instinct. Humans, however, have a will that originates from faculties that do not have an animalistic

flavor. Their perceiving faculties are rational, and their motivating faculties are superior to the appetitive moving faculty. Sadr al-Muta'allihin refers to the faculty superior to the appetitive moving faculty as practical intellect.

«هذه الإرادة في الإنسان من قوة هي فوق القـوة الشـوقية الحيوانيـة- التـي تتشـعب إلـى الشهوة و الغضب و هي العقل العملی»(صدر الدين شيرازی ،۱۹۸۱م، ج۶، ص۳۵۴).

"This will in human beings originates from a faculty that is above the animal appetitive faculty — which branches into desire (shahvah) and anger (ghaḍab) — and that faculty is the practical intellect (al-ʿaql al-ʿamalī)." (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981 CE, Vol. 6, p. 354).

On the other hand, humans have an inherent inclination and existential desire for beauty and splendor. They find pleasure in anything that brings them joy; the actions and behaviors they undertake are also for this very purpose, and they desire such a life. Especially if this beauty and splendor has greater permanence, their desire for it will be even stronger. In other words, humans prefer beauty and splendor that isn't fleeting. Thus, beauty and splendor give meaning to their lives. Such beauty and splendor must be found in the ultimate cause and the Exalted Truth, because He Himself, in addition to possessing absolute beauty and splendor, is also the source of all the beauties in the world.

«أن الواجب تعالى أجمل من كل جميل»(صدرالدين شيرازی ،۱۹۷۵، ص۱۵۶).

"Indeed, the Exalted Necessary Being is more beautiful than every beautiful thing." (Sadruddin Shirazi, 1994, p. 156).

Therefore, humanity's ultimate perfection must be sought in recognizing and reaching the ultimate cause (the Cause of Causes). It's essential for humans to organize their actions and behaviors based on a conscious will directed towards it. The result is that if a person's voluntary actions are oriented towards their innate knowledge and

existential desire for the ultimate cause and the Exalted Truth, they will attain a special life that gives meaning to their existence. Thus, meaninglessness and meaningfulness are two concepts that can only be abstracted from human life. These concepts describe the nature of human existence: if a person seeks their innate knowledge and existential desire, their life will be meaningful to the extent that they acquire that knowledge. Conversely, if they deviate from this innate understanding, they will experience bewilderment and meaninglessness in life.

Of course, our understanding of death's role in the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of life is undeniable. Hence, some, to prove the absurdity of human life, resort to their understanding of death and argue: "Since we are going to die, all chains of justification must be suspended in mid-air. We study and work to earn an income; we earn an income to pay for clothes, housing, entertainment, recreation, and food. We pay these expenses to keep ourselves alive from one year to the next, and we keep ourselves alive, perhaps, to support our families. Ultimately, for what purpose are all these actions performed? All of this is a long journey that leads nowhere" (Shahriyari, 2003, pp. 92-107). The question that arises is whether humans decay and perish upon death, or do they experience a new life? If someone believes that humans cease to exist upon death and provides a justified reason for their mortality, then the absurdity and meaninglessness of human life must be accepted as logical consequences of their argument. Although they may not conventionally abandon eating and sleeping, the question remains: what is all this effort and striving really for? Logically, there will be no convincing answer to this philosophical question, as no justified reason for it will exist.

Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Mulla Sadra) claims that humans spend a very short part of their lives in this world and continue their eternal life after death, meaning human identity is immortal. As mentioned earlier, humans possess a trans-material dimension, and this very trans-material dimension causes their survival after death and their immortality. While proving the immaterial nature of the soul and the existence of life after death is beyond the scope of this research, attention to the trans-material dimension of humans is undeniable in the meaningfulness of human life. Based on this premise, if the soul reaches the end of its worldly life, it enters a new life. Therefore, all those questions will find a logical answer, because worldly life is a prelude to constructing the afterlife. That is, there is a real and existential relationship between the actions a person performs in this world and their afterlife, and a person is tormented or blessed by the qualities they have established within their soul (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1975, p. 344). In summary, belief in the resurrection (Ma'ad) not only frees human life from absurdity but also brings about a particular kind of meaningfulness in human existence, because such a life is consistent with human nature (Ashtiani, 2001, p. 173). That is, humans always seek an eternal life without suffering, even those who commit suicide because they love themselves and believe that suicide will free them from suffering. However, a person who does not consider life after death as the end of the road and believes in it will never suffer from depression or meaninglessness and is always vaiting to attain eternal life.

6-2 Giving Meaning to Social Life

Up to this point, we've explored how individual life finds meaning through innate knowledge and an existential inclination towards the absolute being. However, a crucial question arises: Can we speak of giving meaning to human social life, or should meaning

in human existence be reduced solely to individual life?

As previously stated, humans are conscious, volitional beings; their actions and activities are intentional and deliberate. A significant portion of human actions are social actions. In fact, most of our interactions unfold within the framework of society, and society actualizes many of our hidden and potential perfections. For this reason, humans are inherently social beings. Mulla Sadra asserts that humans, in addition to their individual existence, possess a social life and are "civil by nature" (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1975, p. 488). It's clear that the coherence of a society, for social life to thrive, depends on unity and integration. Without this solidarity, a society simply won't materialize, and anarchy will prevail. Furthermore, the coherence and unity of a society are contingent upon the existence of shared goals and ideals. What brings people together to live socially is the presence of these common objectives and aspirations. Determining which goals and ideals emerge in the social sphere or how a particular goal transforms into a dominant culture requires further investigation. Nevertheless, the existence of shared goals and ideals is essential for the formation of a cohesive and unified society.

These shared goals and ideals lay the foundation for social laws. For instance, a society built on secularist goals and ideals will establish laws consistent with those aims, whereas an ideological society will seek legislation aligned with religious objectives. Consequently, social actions, values, and norms are interpreted based on the corresponding goals and ideals of that society. Meanings consistent with these goals and ideals manifest in the objective realm of human action. Therefore, goals and ideals interpret and explain the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of human actions in the social arena.

Social actions, then, possess meanings. For example, a person driving might use their car horn. This action is performed consciously and volitionally, but behind this will lies a meaning embedded in the behavior. Honking might be a warning to a pedestrian, an invitation for a pedestrian to get in, or even a greeting to a friend (Parsania, 2022, p. 26). In any case, it is the goals and ideals that give meaning to social actions and make the behaviors of individuals in society meaningful.

It's crucial to note, however, that not every goal or ideal can be implemented in a society. Only those that align with human existential structure and fulfill its fundamental dimension are viable.

For example, a society with a physicalist interpretation might not acknowledge a trans-material dimension for humans, emphasizing instead a purely material human identity. In such a case, the society's goals and ideals would be shaped by this premise, pursuing the development of humanity's material aspect and worldly pleasures. Social behaviors and actions would be understood through this lens, and the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of life would be interpreted within this framework. This means if individuals in such a society succeed in developing their material lives, they'll experience a meaningful existence. Otherwise, their worldly lives will be meaningless, and futility will dominate.

The distinction of meaning-making in life through the lens of Transcendent Theosophy (Hikmat-e Muta'aliyah), compared to other interpretations, lies in its recognition of the Absolute Being and the Cause of Causes as the central signifier and fundamental axis for giving meaning to human life. This perspective, therefore, presents humanity with expansive goals and ideals that extend beyond the confines of worldly existence. It's important to note that Mulla Sadra's framework doesn't completely reject the world. Instead, worldly life gains meaning under the umbrella of divine unity, and it

becomes intrinsically linked with the afterlife and life after death. Consequently, a spirituality aligned with human existential structure and innate inclination emerges. In such a life, humans engage in an existential interaction with the Absolute Being, to the extent that it imbues all dimensions of human life—including behaviors, ethical values, and beliefs—with meaning.

It is in this context that Tawhid maintains a continuous presence throughout human existence, encompassing all aspects of human life and imbuing human actions with a monotheistic direction and meaning. Thus, with this interpretation, it's impossible for an action to occur without Tawhid being imbued within it and present in the arena of human life. The reason why giving meaning to human life solely based on worldly existence and its development, without considering Tawhid, yields nothing but absurdity is that the very nature of the world is characterized by flux and change (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1984, p. 398). Therefore, becoming attached to such a reality will always be accompanied by anxiety, and if a beloved object possessing this characteristic is lost, the outcome will be nothing but a sense of emptiness.

Conclusion

Meaning in human life, within the framework of Transcendent Theosophy (Hikmat-e Muta'aliyah), can be explained and achieved based on its fundamental principles. According to Mulla Sadra's philosophy, giving meaning to human life falls within the category of philosophical second intelligibles and can be abstracted from the very nature of human existence. By this criterion, meaningfulness and meaninglessness are relative. Therefore, absolute absurdity would not have a coherent meaning and would, in fact, be contradictory.

The approach to meaning-making in human life derived from

Transcendent Theosophy relies on a specific anthropology. Based on Mulla Sadra's anthropology, human identity is a relational identity. This relational identity possesses an existential inclination and a particular knowledge of the Cause of Causes. The Cause of Causes has a sustentative concomitance with humanity, and it is precisely upon this innate inclination and inner knowledge that human life gains meaning. Furthermore, Mulla Sadra's understanding of death provides another foundational aspect for meaning-making in life. Considering the principles of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, meaning in human life is not only achievable in the individual dimension of existence but also extends to make social life meaningful.

References

Ashtiani, J. D. (2001). *Sharh-e Zad al-Musafir* [Commentary on Zad al-Musafir]. Qom: Daftar-e Tablighat.[In Persian]

Parsania, H. (2022). *Jahan-haye Ejtema'i* [Social Worlds]. Qom: Entesharat-e Farda. [In Persian]

Javadi Amoli, A. (2010). *Ensan az Aghaz ta Anjam* [Man from Beginning to End]. Qom: Isra. [In Persian]

Javadi Amoli, A. (2015). *Sharh-e Iqaz al-Na'imin* [Commentary on Iqaz al-Na'imin]. Qom: Isra. [In Persian]

Shahriyari, H. (2003). Nagel's Article "Absurdity." *Faslname-ye Naqd va Nazar*, (30), pp. 92-107. [In Persian]

Shirazi, S. (1981). *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-Arba'ah al-Aqliyah* [The Transcendent Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys]. (Vols. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9). Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath.[In Arabic]

Shirazi, S. (1984). *Mafatih al-Ghayb* [Keys to the Unseen]. Tehran: Moassese-ye Tahqiqati Farhangi. [In Arabic]

Shirazi, S. (1981). *Shavahid al-Rububiyyah* [Evidences of Lordship]. Mashhad: Al-Markaz al-Jami' li al-Nashr. [In Arabic]

Shirazi, S. (1975). *Mabda' va Ma'ad* [The Beginning and the Return]. Tehran: Anjoman-e Hikmat va Falsafe-ye Iran. [In Arabic]

Tabataba'i, M. H. (1981). *Hashiyeh bar Asfar* [Gloss on the Asfar]. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath. [In Arabic]

Tabataba'i, M. H. (2008). *Nihayat al-Hikmah* [The End of Wisdom]. Qom: Entesharat-e Nashr-e Islami. [In Arabic]

Asgari Soleimani, A. (2003). "Poochi-e Poochi: Naqdi bar Maqaleh-ye 'Poochi'" [The Absurdity of Absurdity: A Critique of the Article 'Absurdity']. *Faslname-ye Naqd va Nazar*, (31-32), pp. 2-43. [In Persian]

Yazdanpanah, Y. (2010). *Sharh-e Hikmat-e Ishraq Vol. 2* [Commentary on the Philosophy of Illumination, Vol. 2]. Qom: Entesharat-e Moassese-ye Imam Khomeini (RA). [In Persian]

Naraqi, M. M. (2000). *Sharh-e Ilahiyyat min Kitab al-Shifa'* [Commentary on the Metaphysics of Kitab al-Shifa']. Qom: Congress for the Commemoration of Naraqi. [In Persian]

Bi-quarterly Journal of
Theosophia Islamica
EISSN: 2783-3240
Vol. 4 ● No. 2 ● 2024 ● Issue 8

Critique of Descartes' Linguistic View as Narrated by Chomsky

Isa Mousazadeh[1]

Received: 2025/05/05 Accepted: 2025/06/29

Abstract

Descartes never explicitly discusses linguistics. We owe the very notion of "Descartes' linguistics" to the investigations of Noam Chomsky, an American philosopher of language. Chomsky infers from Descartes' direct and indirect references to language that, from Descartes' perspective, language is, firstly, innate, secondly, originates from the individual rather than society, and thirdly, is a creative, not mechanical, act. This paper, employing a descriptive-analytical method and framed as a critique, aims to clarify and analyze a specific facet of Cartesian thought. It concludes that language, as Descartes could have described it, is subjectivist, and this approach presupposes the possibility of a private language. In essence, the individual and subjective nature of language necessitates accepting a private language. However, a private language has self-destructive implications, providing grounds for serious critiques of Descartes' linguistic view (as extracted by Chomsky).

Keywords

Descartes, Chomsky, Linguistics, Relation of Language and Action, Private Language.

1. Ph.D. in Philosophy and Official Researcher at the Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy, Qom, Iran.
Email: mousazadeh83@isca.ac.ir

* Mousazadeh, Isa. (2024). A Critique of Descartes' Linguistic View as Narrated by Chomsky, *TheoSophia Islamica*, *4*(8), pp. 91-108.
https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71781.1074

Introduction

In the minds of contemporary philosophers, language stands out as one of the most influential topics across all intellectual domains, making it a central focus for many leading thinkers worldwide. We believe that the intellectual capital of the modern era is deeply rooted in the precise ideas of great thinkers, who sometimes weren't even aware of the implications of their own thoughts—implications later recognized and extracted by subsequent thinkers. Descartes is one such figure. While there's no explicit discussion titled "linguistics" in Descartes' philosophy, it was Noam Chomsky who first applied this term to his ideas. Chomsky dedicated one of his later works, *Cartesian Linguistics*, published in 1966, to this very subject. In it, he posits that "Descartes himself paid little attention to language, and his few statements on the matter can be interpreted in various ways" (Chomsky, 2003, p. 7).

It's important to clarify that this paper does not aim to examine the appropriateness of the term "Cartesian linguistics." Instead, assuming Chomsky's research, it seeks to analyze and critique a specific view of language that Chomsky extracted and highlighted from Descartes' philosophical perspectives[1].

What's clear is Descartes' profound influence on subsequent philosophy and philosophers. Precisely for this reason, clarifying and critically examining various facets of his thought holds special significance. This critique of Descartes' linguistic view (as extracted by Chomsky) aims to illuminate and analyze one such aspect of his thought, and it is an entirely novel endeavor that has not been

1. Given that Chomsky explicitly considers his ideas to be a continuation of Cartesian linguistics, we can sometimes utilize Chomsky's approaches to clarify Descartes' views.

undertaken before. To achieve this, we will first present an explanation of Descartes' linguistic view as Chomsky extracts it, with references to some of Descartes' own statements. Subsequently, we will critique these views based on Chomsky's findings.

1. Descartes' Linguistic View as Narrated by Chomsky

1-1. The Innate and Individual Nature of Language

From Descartes' perspective, ideas fall into three categories: innate, adventitious (acquired), and factitious (invented). Innate concepts exist potentially in the soul prior to experience, only emerging and becoming actual when an empirical context arises. They reside in the mind as predispositions, becoming clear and distinct perceptions upon encountering sense experiences (Descartes, 1982, pp. 65-67). This classification and Descartes' definition of innate ideas are incredibly helpful in understanding his linguistic theory.

Given what we observe in Descartes' philosophy, we'd expect him to consider at least the initial principles of language as innate and, therefore, individual. After his methodical and pervasive doubt, he's left with no other option but to start from the mind and mental concepts to reconstruct his entire system of beliefs. These reconstructed beliefs, of course, hold a firmer ground than before. In this way, Descartes begins with concepts and then proves the existence of external realities. He states: "I shall shed light on the true richness of our soul, which offers each of us the means, without any help from another, to discover within ourselves all the knowledge we need to grasp the most complex elements of cognition" (AT X 496; CSM II, 400). Descartes' position seems quite clear. In his view, if concepts, as conceived, have an object, that object will precisely possess the characteristics of the concept in question. For example, he says: "The mere fact that I can clearly and distinctly perceive one thing apart

from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct; for it is at least possible for them to be separated by God" (Sixth Meditation, op. cit).

According to Noam Chomsky, the innate and foundational concepts from which Descartes begins serve as a shared framework for both thought and language. Therefore, even though words in different languages don't perfectly align, a common ground can be found for all the world's languages. The variations among languages are then attributed to the manner in which these concepts are expressed and articulated. Essentially, the conceptual framework upon which diverse languages are built is a universal feature of all humans. The extent to which experience and differing cultural conditions modify this framework is a subject of debate. However, the conceptual framework itself guides the acquisition of vocabulary through a rich, fixed, and unchanging mental system that transcends and, in fact, precedes experience (Chomsky, 1988, p. 32).

By asserting the universality of the foundations of thought and language, one can readily claim that certain linguistic features and categories in humans have a biological origin. In other words, every human brings these categories into the world at birth, and life's experiences merely serve to activate and actualize them. This is precisely the approach Descartes alludes to: half of the language acquisition process is provided by human nature and innate faculties, while the other half is made possible by experience and environment (Chomsky, 1965, p. 52). This illustrates how the belief in the innate and inherent nature of linguistic frameworks profoundly influences the analysis of how language is acquired. In this scenario, when a child is placed in an appropriate environment, language will emerge within them, just as a child's body grows and develops when exposed to nutritional and environmental stimuli.

From what's been discussed, we can conclude that language, in Descartes' view, is an individual matter. Its origin lies in innate and inherent characteristics that are entirely individual, even if they possess an intersubjective quality due to being common among different people.

1-2. The Creative Nature of Language

Descartes believed there are limits to physical explanation; not everything can be reduced to the interactions of matter in motion. The ability to think and speak, unlike animal behavior, which is instinct-driven (Descartes, 1964 SH, p. 229) and thus falls within a mechanical description, cannot be explained solely by referencing the functions of a mechanical system.

In Descartes' view, human language, unlike animal "language" (or behaviors that resemble language), is independent of external stimuli. It functions freely as a tool for self-expression and free thought (Cottingham, 2013 SH, p. 196).This leads to two distinct types of "language":1- Animal "language": This is mechanical and imitative, originating from the body.2-Human language: This is free from external stimuli, creative, and originates from the mind and soul. It's worth noting that Descartes essentially restricts true language to the thinking being, identifying humans as the sole users of language. For this reason, he attributes humanity's non-mechanical nature to its ability to use language. Descartes believes that because humans can express their inner thoughts through language, the truth of this ability must be linked to a realm beyond the purely mechanical (Cottingham, 2013 SH, pp. 196-197).

Descartes used the possession of genuine language and the ability to demonstrate intelligent responses in diverse and novel situations as key arguments to show that human capabilities differ

from those of animals not just in degree, but fundamentally in kind. In his view: "We can certainly conceive of a machine so constructed that it utters words, even words corresponding to bodily actions that cause a change in its organs[1]. But it is not conceivable that such a machine should produce different arrangements of words so as to give a meaningfully appropriate answer to everything that is said in its presence, as even the dullest of men can do" (Discourse on Method, Part Five, AT VI 56f; CSM I 140). Furthermore, Descartes believed that genuine language is free from external stimuli and involves the capacity for creative responses to an indefinite range of situations. For this reason, he thought it "impossible for a machine to have enough different organs to make it act in all the contingencies of life in the way that our reason makes us act" (Discourse on Method, Part Five, AT VI 56f; CSM I 140).

The human mind employs language creatively and is free from the dominance of external stimuli. According to Descartes and his followers, the normal and ordinary use of language is creative, infinite, and seemingly free from the control of external stimuli or internal states, all while being appropriate to the context and situation. This is why, even though language provides limited tools, it offers the possibility of unlimited expressions.

In ordinary speech, humans don't simply repeat what they've heard before; instead, they produce novel linguistic forms. These forms are often ones the individual has never uttered before, or they may even be entirely new in the history of the language. There's seemingly no limit to such innovations. Furthermore, such discourses aren't random sequences of sentences and utterances. They are appropriate and relevant to the situation that elicits them, though the

1. For example, if you touch one spot on it, it might ask what you want; if you touch another, it might cry and say you're hurting it, and so on.

situation itself isn't the *cause* of these sentences (meaning language and linguistic categories can't be reduced to mere communicative or situational policies). For Cartesians, therefore, the creative aspect of language use is the best evidence that another being similar to us possesses a mind similar to our own (Chomsky, 1988, p. 5).

Based on the preceding explanation, it appears that for Descartes, language is a creative tool for the free expression of thought and an appropriate response to new situations, independent of external stimuli or physiological conditions.

2. Critique of Descartes' Linguistic View as Narrated by Noam Chomsky

2-1. Overlooking the Relationship Between Language and Action

Given what we've discussed, it's clear that the relationship between language and action in Descartes' philosophy could, at best, be that every action helps to actualize language from potentiality. However, this is a very simplistic understanding of the Cartesian-Aristotelian relationship between language and action. In this superficial view of their connection, the function and role language plays in different situations, along with the meaning of linguistic expressions, are entirely disregarded. Furthermore, as we'll explore, a consequence of this perspective on the language-action relationship is the acceptance of the possibility of a private language[1].

Today, following the work of thinkers like Wittgenstein, the relationship between language and action is largely taken for granted by many scholars, not just in philosophy but across various branches of the humanities. Later Wittgenstein developed a theory of language

1. We will see that defending the possibility of a private language, especially after the arguments of later Wittgenstein, is an extremely difficult task.

that not only moved beyond his earlier "picture theory of language"[1] but also initiated a new and highly influential movement in all fields of the humanities. In this new approach, widely known as the "use theory of language," he emphasizes the connection between meaning and function, advising, "Don't look for the meaning, look for the use" (Magee, n.d., p. 557). Indeed, according to later Wittgenstein's perspective, meaning depends on the role and function a linguistic unit plays. Therefore, meaning is no longer inherent but rather embedded in its use. More precisely, not only is meaning no longer inherent in the essence of language, but there is fundamentally no essence at all; everything finds its meaning in its application.

To clarify the relationship between meaning and function (the link between language and action), he frequently used the example of chess, emphasizing concepts like roles, rules, and functions to illustrate the connection between action and meaning (Wittgenstein, 1953, pp. 48, 85, 222, 567). Therefore, understanding meaning through usage means seeing the meaning of expressions as dependent on the role they play in a specific context. It follows that you can't conceive of a meaning for them independent of this context and function. Of course, it's clear that, according to this theory, words don't have fixed roles at all. They acquire their roles based on the language-game and context in which they're used, and consequently, they gain their meaning through their function.

While the later Wittgenstein's emphasis on the use and function of linguistic expressions in various contexts is crucial for

1. According to this theory, Wittgenstein states that a linguistic proposition or statement about the world is a picture of reality. In other words, a picture represents a state of affairs in logical space, which depicts the existence or non-existence of a fact (Wittgenstein, 2001, 2.01). Please provide the exact page number.

determining their meaning, we must also consider the individual's personal state. For instance, imagine an individual, let's call them "A," who is both depressed and a skilled chef. According to Wittgenstein, A would certainly be familiar with the "language-game" of cooking. However, if told that "cooking is enjoyable and a very good activity," A might, on one level, say they understand what we're saying. Yet, we know that, on another level, they might *not* truly grasp it. This isn't because they're unfamiliar with the language-game itself, but because their current mental state prevents them from fully comprehending the sentiment. This is a point that Wittgenstein did not address, and it seems essential to add this consideration to his "use theory of language."

Heidegger, too, as one of the most important and influential contemporary philosophers, speaks of the profound relationship between language and action. He expresses the intertwining of language and action through the concept of discourse (Rede). The most precise meaning of discourse is uncovering or exhibiting. Heidegger sees discourse as the interpretation of phenomena within their "fore-sight" (Vor-sicht), encompassing all actions and concepts related to this "fore-sight." Therefore, discourse connects phenomena to the totality of their references. For example, a shoe, a shoemaker, a shoe seller, and a consumer together form a referential totality. Thus, the shoemaker's actions can only be understood in relation to the other referential elements (i.e., the shoe, the shoe seller, and the consumer) (Mulhall, 2005, pp. 92-93).

Heidegger's notion of discourse, as a process of articulation and description, possesses linguistic and non-linguistic (or practical) aspects[1].

1. It should be noted that for Heidegger, action is an entirely linguistic category, and the meaning of the intertwining of language and action, summarized in the concept of discourse, is nothing other than this.

For instance, using a hammer in different situations is the practical aspect of discourse, while talking about its uses constitutes the verbal aspect of discourse. We can thus draw the general conclusion that the meaning of anything is only revealed by referring to its referential totality.

It's crucial to understand that Heidegger fundamentally makes no distinction between language and Being (Hasti); he considers them to be identical. He refers to this unique perspective on the relationship between Being and language in various ways: "We exist in/through language" (Heidegger, 1982, p. 112). "Language transforms things and us into itself, and language becomes Being" (Heidegger, 1982, p. 74). Or, "A thing 'exists' only where a word brings it into being" (Heidegger, 1982, p. 63).

Therefore, all of Heidegger's pronouncements about Being are also applicable to language, and language is inextricably intertwined with all dimensions of our existence, encompassing both thought and action. Thus, it becomes clear that the absence of an adequate relationship between language and action in Cartesian linguistics is a serious flaw that demands attention. Furthermore, overlooking this relationship has other criticized implications and consequences, the most important of which we will address next: the issue of "private language."

2-2. The Problem of Private Language

A private language refers to a language that, in principle, can only be understood by the speaker themselves. The meaning of words in such a language consists solely of the individual's private sensations, which are accessible only to them. Consequently, no other person can comprehend this language. It's a language that is fundamentally untrainable and untransmittable, and others can in no

way participate in it, because its words refer to concepts that are necessarily unavailable to anyone else.

Wittgenstein, in section 243 of his *Philosophical Investigations*, defines private language as follows: "The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the speaker; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language" (Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 243). Descartes' explanation of knowledge and how it's acquired necessitates a private language. This is because the Cartesian "I" finds itself capable of speaking to itself about its own experiences, while knowing nothing about a world independent of those experiences (Descartes, 1982, pp. 66-76).

Furthermore, if the only path to certainty and knowledge is the "I's" immediate intuition, then others have no vay to grasp the content of my intuition. Consequently, any language used to express such intuition would be private. The resulting conclusion is that, according to Descartes' view, we must build language, knowledge, and linguistic communication based on our own inner experiences, and only then can we infer the external world and the existence of others.

Numerous arguments have been put forth demonstrating the impossibility of such a language. Given our focus on two prominent philosophers, Wittgenstein and Heidegger, in the previous section, we'll specifically address their reasons here.

The argument Wittgenstein presented to refute private language, as detailed in section 258 of his *Philosophical Investigations*, is as follows:

To illustrate the impossibility of a private language, or in other words, to show its internal inconsistency, Wittgenstein offers an example. He asks us to imagine wanting to record the recurrence of a specific sensation in a diary. For this purpose, he associates it with the

sign 'S' and writes this sign in his calendar every day he experiences the sensation. First, he notes that a definition for the sign cannot be formulated. But, he asks, can he still give himself a kind of ostensive (pointing) definition? How? Can he point to the sensation? Not in the usual, conventional sense. However, he speaks or writes the sign while concentrating his attention on the sensation, thus, as it were, invardly pointing to the sensation.

But what is the purpose of this ceremony? Because it all seems to be mere ceremony. Surely, a definition is used to fix the meaning of a sign. Well, this is precisely what happens through my focusing of attention, because in this way I impress the connection between the sign and the sensation upon myself. But "I impress it upon myself" can only mean this: this process causes me to remember the connection correctly in the future. However, concerning the present (current) sensation, I have no criterion for correctness. We want to say: whatever is going to seem correct to me is correct. And this only means that here we cannot speak of "correctness" at all (Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 258).

It's evident that according to this argument, the very possibility of a private language is fraught with contradiction. If a private language were possible, we couldn't differentiate between the correct and incorrect use of words. This is because, under the assumption of a private language, there's no general criterion to determine the proper use of words. Furthermore, linguistic communication and understanding words necessitate distinguishing between the correctness and incorrectness of word usage. Without this, it would lead to linguistic and epistemological skepticism. Consequently, a private language, by leading us into linguistic and epistemological skepticism, ceases to be a language at all. In other words, the absence of a distinction between the correct and incorrect use of words equates to the meaninglessness

of those words. As a result, the premise of a private language leads to a contradiction.

A more fundamental critique of the possibility of private language can be found in Heidegger's philosophy. This critique stems from his use of the term Dasein to refer to what we are (human existence).

Heidegger views Dasein as a "being-there" or a "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 2014 SH, pp. 71-85; Craig, 1998, p. 311). This means Dasein always exists in relation to the world and is never outside of this relationship[1]. Dasein's "being-with," "being-in-relation-to," and its connection with others (who are a crucial part of Dasein's world) constitute Dasein's existence. In fact, it can be said that "others" fundamentally ground Dasein, because our existence is always oriented towards them. Therefore, our existence is constantly affirmed by others. We are born into a culture, learn a language, and live in a world shaped by previous generations of others; thus, we are co-participants in our being-in-the-world.

Considering Heidegger's view that Being and language are identical, and his interpretation of human existence (Dasein) as "being-in-the-world" (a world where "others" form a fundamental part), we can conclude that these others, who are integral to Dasein's existence, play an undeniable and significant role in all aspects of Dasein's Being, including its everyday language.

Therefore, the meaning of linguistic expressions is entirely

1. Husserl, Heidegger's teacher, considered the essence of consciousness to be intentional, and Heidegger accepted this intentional character. However, he attributed it not to consciousness but fundamentally to human existence itself, and to demonstrate this mode of human existence, he used the famous term Dasein, meaning being-in-the-world.

contingent on their relationship with other people and on action within the context of social interactions. Language will take shape within the fabric of society and in light of its ways of life. This, of course, does not contradict the existence of an innate capacity for language acquisition (which is an individual matter), because the capacity for language acquisition is one thing, and the notion of a private language is something entirely different.

Conclusion

Although Descartes didn't have a dedicated discussion on linguistics, based on Noam Chomsky's interpretation of his ideas, Descartes would likely consider the origin of language to be individual, not social. When Descartes doubted everything, he also doubted the existence of others, leaving him no choice but to accept language as an individual phenomenon. In doing so, he emphasized the innate and divine aspects of language, contrasting them with a conventional and social understanding. While he also highlighted the creative dimensions of language, he overlooked the role of action and the functions of language in giving it meaning. Consequently, Descartes, overall, viewed language as a mental, individual, and innately rooted matter.

The critique directed at Chomsky's extracted account of Descartes' linguistic view primarily concerns the neglect of society, social relations, situations, and conventions in the formation and meaning-making of language. Essentially, in Descartes' linguistic view (as presented by Chomsky), the relationship between meaning and way of life, as well as psychological and individual characteristics, is disregarded. This oversight of social aspects and the role of linguistic functions in shaping meaning is not only indefensible today,

given the valuable contributions of philosophers like Wittgenstein and Heidegger, but also carries implications such as the acceptance of a private language. This concept, too, after the insights of philosophers like Wittgenstein and Heidegger, no longer holds a serious position or significant support among thinkers.

References

Ashtiani, J. D. (2001). *Sharh-e Zad al-Musafir* [Commentary on Zad al-Musafir]. Qom: Daftar-e Tablighat.[In Persian]

Asgari Soleimani, A. (2003). "Poochi-e Poochi: Naqdi bar Maqaleh-ye 'Poochi'" [The Absurdity of Absurdity: A Critique of the Article 'Absurdity']. *Faslname-ye Naqd va Nazar*, (31-32), pp. 2-43. [In Persian]

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. ISBN 9780262260503

Chomsky, N. (1966). *Cartesian Linguistics: A Chapter in the History of Rational Thought*. New York: Harcourt Jovanovich.

Chomsky, N. (1988). *Language and Problems of Knowledge*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Chomsky, N. (2003). *Zaban Shenasi-e Dekarti* [Cartesian Linguistics] (A. Taherian, Trans., 2nd ed.). Tehran: Hermes Publications. [In Persian]

Cottingham, J. (2013). *Descartes* (S. M. Shahra'ini, Trans.). Tehran: Nashr-e Ney. [In Persian]

Craig, E. (Ed.). (1998). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (10 vols.). London & New York: Routledge.

Descartes, R. (1964). *Goftar dar Ravash-e Rah Bordan-e Aql va Jostan-e Haqiqat dar Olum* [Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and Searching for Truth in the Sciences] (M. A. Foroughi, Trans.). Tehran: Niloufar. [In Persian]

Descartes, R. (1982). *Ta'ammolat* [Meditations] (A. Ahmadi, Trans.). Tehran: Entesharat-e Mojtama'-e Daneshgahi-e Adabiyat va Olum-e Ensani. [In Persian]

Descartes, R. (1897–1913). *Oeuvres de Descartes* (C. Adam & P. Tannery, Eds., vols. X, VI, VII). Paris: Léopold Cerf.

Descartes, R. (1984). *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, & D. Murdoch, Trans., Vols. I, II). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1982). *On the Vay to Language* (P. D. Hertz, Trans.). New York: Perennial Library.

Heidegger, M. (2014). *Hasti va Zaman* [Being and Time] (A. Rashidian, Trans., 6th ed.). Tehran: Nashr-e Ney. [In Persian]

Javadi Amoli, A. (2010). *Ensan az Aghaz ta Anjam* [Man from Beginning to End]. Qom: Isra. [In Persian]

Javadi Amoli, A. (2015). *Sharh-e Iqaz al-Na'imin* [Commentary on Iqaz al-Na'imin]. Qom: Isra. [In Persian]

Magee, B. (n.d.). *Filasofeh-ye Bozorg* [The Great Philosophers] (E. Fooladvand, Trans.). Tehran: Sherkat-e Sahami-e Entesharat-e Kharazmi. [In Persian]

Mulhall, S. (2005). *Heidegger and Being and Time*. London: Routledge.

Naraqi, M. M. (2000). *Sharh-e Ilahiyyat min Kitab al-Shifa'* [Commentary on the Metaphysics of Kitab al-Shifa']. Qom: Congress for the Commemoration of Naraqi. [In Arabic]

Parsania, H. (2022). *Jahan-haye Ejtema'i* [Social Worlds]. Qom: Entesharat-e Farda. [In Persian]

Shahriyari, H. (2003). Translation of Nagel's Article "Absurdity." *Faslname-ye Naqd va Nazar*, (30), 92-107. [In Persian]

Shirazi, S. (1981). *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-Arba'ah al-Aqliyah* [The Transcendent Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys]. (Vols. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9). Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath.[In Arabic]

Shirazi, S. (1975 SH). *Mabda' va Ma'ad* [The Beginning and the Return]. Tehran: Anjoman-e Hikmat va Falsafe-ye Iran. [In Arabic]

Shirazi, S. (1981). *Shavahid al-Rububiyyah* [Evidences of Lordship]. Mashhad: Al-Markaz al-Jami' li al-Nashr. [In Arabic]

Shirazi, S. (1984). *Mafatih al-Ghayb* [Keys to the Unseen]. Tehran: Moassese-ye Tahqiqati Farhangi. [In Arabic]

Tabataba'i, M. H. (1981). *Hashiyeh bar Asfar* [Gloss on the Asfar]. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath. [In Arabic]

Tabataba'i, M. H. (2008). *Nihayat al-Hikmah* [The End of Wisdom]. Qom: Entesharat-e Nashr-e Islami. [In Arabic]

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations* (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness, Trans.). London & New York: Routledge Classics. (Original work published 1922).

Yazdanpanah, Y. (2010). *Sharh-e Hikmat-e Ishraq Vol. 2* [Commentary on the Philosophy of Illumination, Vol. 2]. Qom: Entesharat-e Moassese-ye Imam Khomeini (RA). [In Persian]

Bi-quarterly Journal of
Theosophia Islamica
Islamic Sciences and culture Academy
EISSN: 2783-3240
Vol. 4 ● No. 2 ● 2024 ● Issue 8

Wittgenstein and Anti-Realism

Khadijeh Aslibeigi[1]

Received: 2025/04/30 Accepted: 2025/06/14

Abstract

This article examines Wittgenstein's teachings on realism and anti-realism through the lens of his philosophy of language. Realism posits that every linguistic statement is either true or false, independent of human consciousness and knowledge. Consequently, the Principle of Bivalence—accepting only truth and falsity as semantic values—is central to this view. In contrast, anti-realism rejects this principle, asserting that the truth or falsity of statements can only be determined if empirical or epistemic evidence is available, and statements cannot be evaluated independently of mind and language. Wittgenstein challenges both perspectives by critiquing the foundations of language and focusing on its functions within various contexts of life. He views language not as a passive mirror of reality, but as a constitutive agent within which reality takes shape. This article elucidates Wittgenstein's arguments against the notion of realism and utilizes Dummett's analyses of meaning and truth to clarify the anti-realist foundations in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language.

Keywords

Wittgenstein; Realism; Anti-Realism; Semantic Realism; Principle of Bivalence; Language-Games; Use Theory of Meaning.

1. Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Philosophy and Islamic Wisdom, Faculty of Islamic Sciences and Research, Imam Khomeini International University (RA), Qazvin, Iran. Email: aslibeigi.kh@gmail.com

* Aslibeigi, Khadijeh. (2024). Wittgenstein and Anti-Realism, *TheoSophia Islamica, 4* (8), pp. 109-132. https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71781.1074

Introduction

The relationship between language and reality, and specifically the debate between realism and anti-realism (or non-realism), is among the most significant philosophical disputes in the contemporary era. This discussion has deep roots in the history of philosophy, particularly within the Scholastic tradition. It saw a resurgence in the 19th century and continued with new styles and formulations in the 20th century, especially in the philosophy of science and the philosophy of language. The core of this dispute lies in a metaphysical disagreement about the relationship of "truth"—as a characteristic of language or thought—to reality. The central question is whether truth exists independently of language and mind, or if it is shaped within a linguistic framework.

In this context, Michael Dummett and Donald Davidson have played prominent roles in formulating these debates anew. Dummett, despite his intellectual proximity to Frege and his admiration for Frege's explanation of meaning and thought, adopted an anti-realist approach himself and became a primary advocate of semantic anti-realism. His definition of anti-realism is based on the idea that the concept of truth should not be central to a theory of meaning; instead, provability should take its place. This position stands in direct opposition to realism, as, for Dummett, the meaning of a sentence is more concerned with its conditions of use or provability than with its correspondence to reality (Dummett, 1996, pp. 467-475). Conversely, although Davidson does not explicitly use the terms "realism" and "anti-realism," he is often categorized as a realist due to his reliance on Tarski's theory of truth in his analysis of meaning (Rorty, 1979, pp. 261-262). This debate has continued among philosophers such as McDowell, Colin McGinn, and Mark Platts, who have defended realism, while

Dummett, in opposition to them, is considered a staunch opponent of realism.

Within this context, Wittgenstein stands out as one of the most important figures in 20th-century philosophy of language. His views have led to diverse interpretations regarding his alignment with either realism or anti-realism. In the realm of religion, exegetes like D.Z. Phillips, Rush Rhees, and Peter Winch have offered an anti-realist interpretation of Wittgenstein's ideas. Winch, in particular, argues that "reality is nothing more than language, and the distinction between real and unreal is formed within language" (Winch, 1972, pp. 11-13), thus considering reality an intra-linguistic phenomenon.

However, others, including Sabina Lovibond, propose a realist reading of his works, based on Wittgenstein's statement that "the hardest thing in philosophy is to be non-empiricist and yet a realist" (Lovibond, 1983, p. 36). She believes that while Wittgenstein denies the metaphysical role of reality in the theory of language, he doesn't completely remove the concept of reality from the scope of philosophical analysis. In light of these perspectives, fundamental questions arise: Does Wittgenstein consider reality a world independent of mind and language, or does he deem it dependent on linguistic structures? Is the question of the realism-anti-realism debate even meaningful in the first place? Or, as Richard Rorty claims, has this question lost its significance because language and thought are no longer considered representations of reality? (Rorty, Angel, 2014 SH, pp. 14-15).

This article aims to examine Wittgenstein's position on theories of meaning and their relation to realist and anti-realist viewpoints. Focusing on the use theory of meaning and the idea of language-games, we will analyze Wittgenstein's arguments against certain realist theories of meaning. In doing so, we'll leverage

Dummett's theoretical framework to clarify the key concepts of realism and anti-realism.

1. Realism and Anti-Realism

The term "realism" has consistently been used by philosophers to describe certain philosophical viewpoints across various contexts. However, there's been limited work done to precisely define realism and anti-realism. It's clear that one can be a realist about one subject and an anti-realist about another. It's even possible for an individual to have a general inclination towards realist views.

For example, you might be a realist about specific mental states, events, and processes, about possible worlds, or about mathematical objects. You could even be a realist about a particular class or type of statements that Dummett calls the "disputed class," such as statements about the future or moral judgments. However, because there are distinct types of realism, realism concerning the future or ethics doesn't easily fit into doctrines related to the realm of entities.

Realism, in general, is the view that accepts the existence of entities independent of us. According to this perspective, statements belonging to a specific class, and external realities, are either true or false, irrespective of human conceptual schemes or our knowledge of their truth or falsity (Dummett, 1982, p. 55). Most philosophers have adopted a realist stance concerning the past. Based on realism about the past, every event either happened or it didn't, regardless of whether anyone has knowledge of it or possesses evidence for it. However, A.J. Ayer, in *Language, Truth and Logic*, rejected this realist idea, stating that propositions about the past can only be true if there's something in the present or future that can be offered as evidence for them.

It's clear that we can never (currently or in the future) provide direct evidence for the truth of what is now past. Since our evidence at any given time must consist of things existing at that time, it seems that, as Russell concluded, a Cartesian doubt about the past is inevitable. Currently, philosophers generally consider Cartesian doubt to be meaningless, and this clearly obliges us to maintain an anti-realist view concerning propositions about the past. This view suggests that propositions about the past, if true, are true only in light of what is or will be. Therefore, it's possible that propositions or statements about the past are neither true nor false (Dummett, 1963, p. 153).

The approach opposing realism is anti-realism (or non-realism), which denies the existence of entities independent of human beings. Their primary reason for rejecting a world independent of humanity and its knowledge is that there's no criterion or standard for the existence of such a world, and the external world cannot be known except through human senses. In essence, this view emphasizes the mediating role of humans, their senses, their cognitive faculties, and their minds in relation to the external world. Among contemporary anti-realists is T.H. Green, who was influenced by and, in a sense, synthesized the ideas of Kant and Hegel. Unlike realists, Green denied the reality of perceptible things or phenomena, stating that what appears in our experience is a set of relationships. For example, when we evaluate the color of something, we shouldn't consider it a real, independent entity. What appears to us as black is the relationship of this sense input to other sense inputs, to the object that is black, and to the living being perceiving it. Therefore, blackness itself is not a real thing; it's inherently meaningless and inexplicable in itself. What is real, then, are the relationships between different things, which are dependent on the human mind (Shariatmadari, 2000 SH, p. 237).

Anti-realists can be broadly divided into two main groups: radical and moderate.

The radical anti-realists believe that reality is entirely linguistic, having no existence within the world independent of human language, society, and culture. They contend that language is the creator of everything, and it is solely humanity and its language that define and determine the nature of everything.

Moderate anti-realists, on the other hand, hold that our understanding of truth must primarily rely on investigation within the social realm and context. They believe the meaning of anything must be grasped through its use (Zandiyeh, 1386, p. 420).

2. Semantic Realism

It is important to clarify that our discussion of realism here does not refer to classical realism, which opposes nominalism, nor to realism that opposes phenomenalism. Rather, in this context, realism is a view that accepts the Principle of Bivalence. According to this view, every sentence or proposition in a language is either true or false, with no third possibility. Crucially, this principle is considered independent of us; that is, its truth or falsity is independent of human knowledge. Examples of this theory of meaning can be found in the philosophy of Russell, Frege, and especially in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

> "A picture either corresponds or does not correspond to reality; it is either true or false; it is either right or wrong" (Wittgenstein, 2000, Proposition 2.21).

For the realist, the truth-value of sentences expressed about external reality doesn't depend on whether we have reasons or proofs for them possessing such a truth-value. Rather, it depends on a reality

that exists independently of our knowledge of it. These sentences will be true or false based on whether or not they correspond to that reality (Dumm'ett, 1969, pp. 358-359). Generally, realism, in the sense discussed, encompasses referential theories of meaning, which hold that the meaning of words and linguistic expressions stems from their reference or indication to objects. According to this view, words are like labels; they are signs used to represent, designate, name, denote, or refer to things in the world. For example, "The cat is sitting on the mat" represents a cat sitting on a mat because the word "cat" designates a specific cat, the word "mat" refers to the mat in question, and "...is sitting on..." indicates the relationship of sitting on something. Therefore, sentences mirror the state of affairs they describe, and it is through this mirroring that they can possess meaning (Lycan, 2013 SH, p. 9).

In this theory, the meanings of atomic propositions are determined by their agreement or disagreement with states of affairs. Once the truth-values of basic propositions are established, the meanings of compound propositions can be ascertained by the truth-values of their fundamental components. This means the truth or falsity of the entire proposition depends on the truth or falsity of its constituent parts. The truth or falsity of these propositions can be determined using a truth table, based on the truth or falsity of their components (Mounce, 2000, pp. 56-57).

During the second phase of his philosophical thought, Wittgenstein rejects this account of meaning. His reason for rejecting realist theories is that they have neglected the use of language in their explanation of meaning. In this period, Wittgenstein adopts a new explanation of language. He believes that, in addition to conveying meaning or stating facts, language has other functions. For the multitude of language-games, one can point to reporting an event,

reflecting on an event, promising, giving orders, or warning (Wittgenstein, 2009, section 23). According to this view, although language is still considered a tool, other functions beyond mere fact-stating and expression have been added to it, consequently moving meaning beyond the limited scope of reference. It seems we can distinguish between two aspects of "use" in Wittgenstein's philosophy, which are the main reasons for his denial of realist theories of meaning.

The first reason Wittgenstein rejects realist theories of meaning is that they're presented outside of language-games (Wittgenstein, 2009 SH, sections 1-37). It's best to explain Wittgenstein's concept of language-games through an example.

3. Language-Games

Wittgenstein compares language to a game. At first glance, this term might be misunderstood as "wordplay," leading one to believe Wittgenstein means that language is just a trivial manipulation of words (Magee, 1995 SH, p. 171). However, his intent is that language resembles games in many respects.

Regarding language-games, Wittgenstein states: "I shall call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, a 'language-game'" (Wittgenstein, 2009 SH, section 7).

Words are like chess pieces, and the meaning of a piece is the role it plays in the game. The use of the word "game" here is an analogy. Just as there are connections and resemblances between various games like chess, football, and swimming, without any inherent commonality, the same applies to the different uses of language. Perhaps nothing could better illustrate that there is no shared essence among the diverse ways language governs life. Another factor leading to the comparison of language to a game is that

both are governed by rules. Although these rules are conventional, players accept them as if they were natural laws. Language, too, is a rule-governed activity (Lacoste, 1997 SH, p. 107).

Let's illustrate the concept of a language-game with an example. Consider the sentence: "The broom is broken." How do we determine its meaning? Realist theories of meaning would simply analyze this sentence as a composite of "broom" and the predicate "is broken." The meaning of "broom" is the object itself, and "is broken" denotes the state of the broom. According to realist theory, if this sentence corresponds to reality, it's true; otherwise, it's false. Wittgenstein rejects this analysis because, in his view, the meaning of a word or sentence lies in its function within common usage, not in its referential relationship. To understand the meaning, we shouldn't ask what the sentence depicts, but rather what function it serves. How can we use the sentence "The broom is broken"? We can use it to describe the appearance of an object, report an event, reflect on an event, and many other uses. Considering these diverse uses, we see that the meaning of the sentence changes depending on its application. This implies that the language-game is the primary factor in how a sentence is understood. Suppose the sentence "The broom is broken" is used as a warning not to use the broom. A realist explanation, which equates to a pictorial description of "the broom is broken," certainly wouldn't be able to convey the meaning as a warning. When a sentence is understood as a warning, the realist explanation might provide additional necessary information to convey the meaning of the sentences, but not before its use in a specific language-game. This is because sentences and concepts don't have pre-established, fixed meanings with identical functions. Depending on various situations and conditions, they will have diverse functions and form different language-games. Realists, with their truth-condition theories of

meaning, have neglected the semantic distinctions that different language-games impose on language.

The second argument against realist theories of meaning is the use theory of meaning, which focuses on the shared and universal nature of linguistic usage.

4. The Use Theory of Meaning

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein introduced the use theory of meaning. This theory not only critiques his earlier picture theory of language but also offers a new explanation of language's role in conveying concepts and performing other functions.

In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein believed that the only language from which precise meaning could be derived was the language of factual statements (i.e., language that pictured facts and made claims about them). In this earlier period, language was considered singular, with no indication that it served as a tool for communication with others. However, in his later period, he viewed language as a communal, rule-governed practice that, to some extent, constructs the very form of life and culture of its speakers. The uses of language, along with its words and sentences, create meaning. This meaning is connected to what the language user intends and is rooted in the institutions and customs of their social life.

Wittgenstein begins *The Blue Book*, one of his earliest later philosophical works, by urging us to no longer ask, "What is the meaning of a word?" but instead, "How is the meaning of a word explained?" (Wittgenstein, 2006, p. 7). In his final thoughts, Wittgenstein emphasizes that: "For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word 'meaning,' it can be defined thus:

the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein, 2006 SH, section 43).

The concept of the meaning of any expression is a holistic concept: an expression only has meaning within the linguistic context to which it belongs. The meaning of an expression corresponds to understanding it; that is, grasping the meaning of an expression is equivalent to understanding that expression. Understanding an expression means knowing its correct use or its use in accordance with established rules, or providing correct interpretations of its meaning within context, as well as the appropriate reactions of others to its use (Grayling, 2009, p. 139).

When we determine the meaning of an expression, we must provide information that is both learnable and understandable, meaning it must be applicable (Wittgenstein, 2009 SH, sections 190, 692). If we assume that the meaning of some expressions cannot be learned, then without a doubt, that expression or statement becomes impossible to play a role in any language-game, and in such a case, one cannot gain knowledge about how to use it.

Wittgenstein states that: "Understanding an expression may mean knowing how to use it or being able to use it" (Kenny, 1994, p. 63). He also notes that: "To understand the meaning of a word is to know the possible ways of its use from a grammatical point of view" (Kenny, 1994, p. 64).

Norman Malcolm writes that Wittgenstein's intention with "use" of an expression refers to the specific conditions, environment, and context in which it's spoken or written. This contrasts with the misconception that Wittgenstein meant the correct or ordinary use of an expression (Malcolm, 1967, p. 337).

Wittgenstein clarified this point in section 199 of the

Philosophical Investigations, stating: "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique." And mastery of a technique rests on following a rule, which is the fundamental principle underpinning language itself (Wittgenstein, 2009 SH, section 199).

Learning a language means mastering the prescriptive rule-governed techniques for using its expressions. To understand the meaning of any expression means to be able to use it correctly. One cannot follow a rule they don't comprehend or understand. Following a rule is not a mysterious affair; rather, these rules are established in ordinary explanations of meaning during teaching, in correcting incorrect uses of expressions, and in clarifying what was said. Imagine someone being told the meaning of certain expressions in a language they don't understand. And further imagine that this meaning is in no way comprehensible to the recipient of the information. In this scenario, what would count as their understanding of that expression? Absolutely nothing could determine whether they know the meaning or not. Knowing the meaning of an expression is being able to use it in a sentence. These requirements of learnability and comprehensibility of the meaning of expressions are what Wittgenstein had in mind, summed up in his slogan: "Meaning as Use." According to the anti-realist reading of Wittgenstein's teachings, the meaning of a word is closely tied to how it's used among the speakers of that language and the context and background in which it's employed. In this approach, there's no external standard or criterion for ascertaining the truth or falsity conditions of a word's use. Everything depends on the context and situation in which it's used. It is precisely because of this perspective that realist theories of meaning are rejected. Specifically, their realist manifestation is what renders these theories ineffective.

5. Semantic Realism and the Principle of Bivalence

A common characteristic of realist theories of meaning is their emphasis on the Principle of Bivalence. This principle always allows them to assert that every proposition is either true or false (A∨¬A). This principle is often known as the Law of Excluded Middle. While the Principle of Bivalence and the Law of Excluded Middle are frequently treated as interchangeable, this is incorrect. The Principle of Bivalence implies the Law of Excluded Middle, because one can assert A when A is true and ¬A when A is false. However, the Law of Excluded Middle does not imply the Principle of Bivalence.

For the Principle of Bivalence to imply the Law of Excluded Middle, one must be able to infer "A is true" from A, and "A is false" from ¬A. But neither of these inferences is valid unless the Principle of Bivalence has already been accepted. Since this principle implies the Law of Excluded Middle, doubting the Law of Excluded Middle necessitates doubting the Principle of Bivalence (Dummett, 1991, p. 9).

The importance of the Principle of Bivalence lies in its ability to allow speakers of a language to independently engage with the Law of Excluded Middle (LEM). The LEM is based on an unfiltered realism, stating that the state of affairs is such that any proposition we consider is either true or false, with no third possibility. This latter assumption is a common belief regarding the LEM, and it provides a strong reason to reject any realist theory of meaning. "Either this mental image is in his mind or it is not; there is no third possibility!" (Wittgenstein, 2009, sections 352-369).

Let's consider an example of the LEM that holds true under a realist theory of meaning: the sentence "Tehran is the capital of Iran." If I understand the meaning of this sentence, how can I demonstrate my knowledge of its meaning? Certainly, by determining that one of

the approaches is true. Since this sentence is meaningful and decidable, its truth or falsity can be investigated through research and based on available evidence. However, let's assume that neither of these approaches is decidable—meaning there is no method for investigating their truth or falsity, and no arguments for or against them. In this case, how can I demonstrate my knowledge of the sentence's meaning? How can I show that I know its meaning? Simply saying "I know its meaning" isn't enough; I might be mistaken. How can I prove I'm not mistaken? The requirement for public meaning is necessary to demonstrate that my claim of knowing is not an error. For limited domains of objects and decidable sentences, the LEM always holds ($A \vee \neg A$), by stating that it's impossible for the objective situation to be outside these two states: either it agrees with A or it agrees with A. However, as mentioned, this principle is limited to certain domains and loses its effectiveness for undecidable propositions. The rejection of the universality of this principle in parts of formal logic and transcendental logic has been put forth by Husserl.

"It is clear that logic does not concern itself with propositions that we call, by virtue of their content, nonsensical; propositions such as 'The sum of the angles of a triangle equals the color red.' Naturally, no one engaged in scientific theory encounters such a proposition. Nevertheless, every declarative sentence that merely satisfies the conditions of purely grammatical semantic unity is conceivable as a judgment; a judgment in the broadest sense of the word. If the principles of logic are to be related to judgment in general, then they, and certainly the principle of excluded middle, will not be trustworthy. For every judgment that is nonsensical by virtue of its content will violate this principle" (Husserl, 1969, p. 228).

A proposition like "The sum of the angles of a triangle equals the color red" is certainly not true. However, it doesn't follow that the

proposition "The sum of the angles of a triangle does not equal the color red" is true, because the original proposition is nonsensical. Therefore, such propositions are not subject to the Law of Excluded Middle. Many propositions are undecidable, meaning there's currently no proof to confirm or deny them. For example, Goldbach's Conjecture, which states "Every even number greater than two is the sum of two prime numbers," is not a nonsensical proposition. Nevertheless, this conjecture has neither been proven nor disproven, nor is there any method or proof that can definitively determine its truth or falsity. Therefore, applying the Law of Excluded Middle to this proposition is not justifiable (Shafiei, 2018).

Wittgenstein's argument is to deny the Principle of Bivalence because it implies the truth of the Law of Excluded Middle for every arbitrary proposition. However, as mentioned, some sentences are not true according to LEM (and we can't say they are false). Therefore, if the universality of LEM is denied, the Principle of Bivalence is also certainly denied. The key to his argument is that meaning must be public; that is, when someone claims to know something, they must be able to demonstrate their understanding of that meaning.

Considering these two arguments, we derive the following view of realist theories of meaning:

1. They are incapable of determining the language-game for a specific utterance of a sentence, and thus they fail to provide a correct meaning for that sentence within that game.
2. Even in a pre-determined game, realist theories of meaning lead to contradictory performance, where the Law of Excluded Middle either holds true or it doesn't.

It's not hard to understand why Wittgenstein wants to reject

such a realist theory of meaning. A significant part of the private language argument stems from the rejection of the Principle of Bivalence. This is because there's no rule for stating sentences like "Either he is in pain or he is not in pain, or we can say so or not." Other philosophical fields have also been influenced by this principle, and we'll touch upon some points regarding Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics. For example, in *Philosophical Investigations*, section 352, Wittgenstein discusses the recurrence of 7777, stating:

Mathematical arguments, like "The sequence of 7777 either appears or it does not—there is no other possibility." But what does this even mean? We are using an image: the image of a visible number sequence where one person sees the whole thing and another does not. The Law of Excluded Middle here says: it must appear either this way or that way. So, in truth, it says absolutely nothing; rather, it presents us with an image—and this is merely stating the obvious. Now the question must be: Does reality correspond to the image or not? And this image seems to determine what we should do, what we should search for, and how (we should search for it)—but it doesn't. This is only because we do not know how to apply it. Saying here that "there is no third possibility" or "But a third possibility cannot exist!" demonstrates our inability to look away from the image: an image that appears as if it should already contain both the problem and its solution, while we always feel that this is not the case.

Generally speaking, any philosophical position that views the world as independent of language (meaning, independent of us) is unacceptable. The rejection of realist theories of meaning presented philosophers with a new approach: when encountering philosophical problems, they could recognize the limitations of realist theories of meaning and resolve many philosophical issues through anti-realist arguments.

Given Wittgenstein's negative stance on specific theories of meaning, we aim to demonstrate whether a positive outlook on meaning exists within the philosophy of language presented in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Although he opposed systematic theorizing in philosophy and didn't explicitly present a theory of meaning, his critique of realist theories of meaning implicitly contains the essential elements of a theory of meaning that can be called anti-realist.

Wittgenstein's arguments against realist theories of meaning were divided into two categories:1- Arguments related to the ineffectiveness of these theories in different language-games.2- Arguments that consider any theory advocating the Principle of Bivalence improbable. We'll now examine both groups separately. When someone proposes a theory of meaning for a language, they almost certainly intend for that theory to apply to the entire language, as it's impossible to isolate a part of language for study. Therefore, when we interpret realist theories of language as theories of the whole language, we become confused by the fact that a given sentence or statement can be used for various purposes and intentions. Consequently, the meaning of a sentence will vary from one language-game to another. Realist theories failed to grasp this diversity in meaning because they strictly defined meaning in terms of reference and truth-value.

1. A component that expresses the mood (or force) of the utterance. Speech acts are evident in the works of figures like Strawson, Grice, Searle, and others.
2. A syntactic theory that shapes grammatical relations.
3. A transformational component that takes the utterance along with its mood, converts it into related declarative sentences, and then subjects it to semantic analysis in the old-fashioned way.

The theory of force posits that countless sentences or expressions in language do not possess truth conditions, yet they are still meaningful. For example, "Tehran is the capital of Iran" has truth conditions and is in the indicative mood. However, the sentence "Rostam is the most prominent character in the Shahnameh" lacks truth conditions, as Rostam is a name with no referent in reality, but it is still meaningful. In addition to the indicative mood, there are also interrogative moods (e.g., "Is Tehran the capital of Iran?") and imperative moods. Dummett believes that "mood is a feature of the form of a sentence, and force is related to the meaningfulness of that sentence's utterance" (Dummett, 1993, p. 202).

While such a comprehensive theory of force doesn't fully exist yet, some work has been done in this area. It appears that no Wittgensteinian would fundamentally object to this theory.

Assume there are infinitely many language games. In this case, every judgment, for example, a mathematical judgment, is applied to infinite cases, in infinite declarative acts, all of which are different. How can a force theory be able to recognize all of them? Perhaps this is an infinite theory, and for this reason, its acceptance as a theory is difficult, so it seems that no theory of meaning can be offered. But Wittgenstein has a kind of argument that shows something other than this. What is meant when speaking of "infinite" language games? Surely Wittgenstein does not accept the idea that language as a whole is equivalent to a truly infinite language/game. For him, "infinite" language games are always capable of creating another language game. This idea is what is expressed in the example "there is no house on this road" just because you can build another house, it does not mean that the last one does not exist. From this point of view, the "infinite" problems raised are resolved. Language as a whole consists

of a finite number of language games, so the force theory seems to be limited to a distinct set of operations for each speech act and grammatical mood. It is true that a new speech act can be created, but then we can only add a new condition (Clausy) to this theory. We do not say that the last condition does not exist, this is what you would say if you want to say: "There is no house on this road, you can always build another house" (Wittgenstein, 2009, paragraph 29). Given these statements, we witnessed Wittgenstein's first objection against the realist theory of meaning. His second objection is deeper, which arises with respect to the principle of bivalence. It is not that this principle proves ineffective in the face of certain characteristics of language, but rather that this principle, given some of Wittgenstein's theories, including the theory of "meaning as use," lacks coherence. There are examples of undecidable judgments and sentences that clearly indicate that there is no way for the principle of bivalence, and therefore realism should be abandoned. But does this not destroy the opportunity for a theory of meaning? Dummett's answer to this question is negative because, in his opinion, you can replace the theory of reference/truth conditions with a theory based on assertibility.

According to Dummett, constructing a suitable semantic theory can resolve the disagreements between realists and anti-realists. From the realist perspective, the truth condition of a judgment determines its meaning. However, for anti-realists, the meaning of a judgment lies in knowing how it is true and what evidence supports it. The truth of the judgment, in this view, is the existence of that very evidence. This means a judgment's meaning is directly linked to the evidence that confirms it (Dummett, 1963, p. 146).

This approach allows for a semantic theory of meaning that

aligns with the requirements of "meaning is use," where understanding the meaning of any sentence is provable through verification. Of course, certain judgments or sentences will remain neither true nor false, and consequently, their meanings will be incomplete. Such a theory already exists for a significant portion of language. This is essentially intuitionistic logic, which forms the basis of intuitionistic mathematics, where verifiability is conditional on the existence of proof and evidence. Although these specifics aren't directly found in Wittgenstein's research, he seemingly wouldn't oppose such theories, as they too consider the criterion of use.

With Dummett's perspective, we've constructed a theory of meaning for language that addresses each of Wittgenstein's objections to specific theories of meaning. This theory explains the different uses of a sentence within language and considers the meanings of sentences in accordance with the apparent needs of the general public.

However, this theory came at a cost for Wittgenstein: we had to abandon realism. We can't talk about a reality independent of ourselves, and our true and false judgments aren't possible without considering our ability to discern them. If sentences or judgments are neither true nor false, there can be no world for them to either agree or disagree with, because it is through our language that we bring the world into reality. Wittgenstein didn't explicitly state this, but he seems to agree on this point. For him, "grammar tells what kind of object anything is" (Wittgenstein, 2009, paragraph 373), or he states that "one ought not to ask what A is, but what its use is" (Wittgenstein, 2009, paragraph 370). Nevertheless, this constructed world remains objective because language itself is objective and public. Therefore, for speakers of a language, reality remains objectively fixed among them.

Considering the above, Wittgenstein's philosophical research can be regarded as a precursor to recent anti-realist theories of meaning, especially Dummett's theory.

Conclusion

The fundamental issue in the debate between realism and anti-realism revolves around the existence or non-existence of entities independent of human beings. Does the world exist as a reality independent of our minds and language? And is there an external reality that can be the object of our knowledge, or is this reality dependent on the knowing subject? Various answers have been offered to these questions. Most interpreters of Wittgenstein, including Ayer, have adopted an anti-realist reading of his philosophy of language. On the one hand, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein advocates for pure certainty in light of language games and forms of life. In paragraph 559, he states: "The language-game is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there—like our life" (Wittgenstein, 2011, paragraph 559). This suggests that, in a sense, he believes in realism within the domain of language games and forms of life.

However, classifying him as a realist becomes problematic when considering the classic definition of realism. Realists view the world as a reality independent of human beings, where human existence or non-existence has no impact on it. In contrast, according to Wittgenstein's concept of language games, an individual is either inside a language game, playing a role by knowing how to use it, or outside the language game, unaware of what is happening within it. From Wittgenstein's perspective, one cannot step outside language to speak about the world and its truths; in fact, it is language that gives meaning to reality. Hanfling, to illustrate Wittgenstein's anti-realist

stance, cites an example from *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, paragraph 357. Wittgenstein asks: "Are these systems part of our nature or the nature of things? How can one put it? Not part of the nature of numbers and colours" (Wittgenstein, 2005, paragraph 357). If someone (unlike Wittgenstein) answers "yes" to the second part, they are considered a realist. However, Wittgenstein's response implies he does not subscribe to realism. Although Hanfling believes Wittgenstein doesn't adopt the first option either (that it's part of our nature).

Furthermore, when Wittgenstein discusses disparate systems in different cultures, if realism were correct, there would be a supra-linguistic criterion by which the correctness or incorrectness of other systems, or even our own, could be determined. But in his view, there is no criterion or standard outside of language games by which the truth or falsity of a system can be proven, and this demonstrates his anti-realist approach. In summary, classifying Wittgenstein as a realist or anti-realist depends on the meaning we attribute to realism. If realism refers to a reality independent of our minds, Wittgenstein might be considered a realist given his statement in *On Certainty*: "We cannot help believing a great deal; we cannot help believing, for example, that there is a chair here." Demanding reasons for such beliefs is also meaningless to him, and he considers doubting the existence of reality to be neither possible nor meaningful. However, if realism implies a belief in a supra-linguistic standard or criterion by which the reality of different systems is evaluated, then he can be considered an anti-realist, as in his view, nothing exists outside of language.

References

Rorty, R; Angell, P. (2016). *What Use is Truth?* (R. Mahmoudi. Trans., 1st ed). Tehran: Kargadan Publications.[In Persian]

Zandieh, A. (2007). *Religion and Religious Belief in Wittgenstein's Thought*. Tehran: Negah-e Moaser. [In Persian]

Shafiee, M; Mesgari, A. (2018). "Is the Principle of Excluded Middle a Negative Condition for Truth?" *Journal of Philosophy*, *16*(30). pp. 79-96. https://doi.org/10.22059/jop.2019.259960.1006367. [In Persian]

Grayling, A.C. (2009). *Wittgenstein*. (A. Haghighi. Trans., 1st ed). Tehran: Basirat Publications. [In Persian]

Lacoste, J. (1997). *Philosophy in the 20th Century*. (R. Davari Ardakani. Trans., 1st ed). Tehran: Samt Publications. [In Persian]

Lycan, G. (2013). *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*. (M. Mohammad Amini, Trans., 1st ed.). Tehran: Hermes Publications. [In Persian]

Magee, B. (1995). *Men of Ideas*. (E. Fouladvand. Trans., 1st ed). Tehran: Tarh-e No Publications. [In Persian]

Mounce, H.O. (2000). *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*. (S. Alavinia. Trans., 1st ed). Tehran: Tarh-e No Publications. [In Persian]

Wittgenstein, L. (2000). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. (M. Sh. Adib Soltani, Trans., 2nd ed.). Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications. [In Persian]

Wittgenstein, L. (2005). *On Certainty*. (M. Hosseini, Trans 1st ed.). Tehran: Hermes Publications. [In Persian]

Wittgenstein, L. (2009). *Philosophical Investigations*. (F. Fatemi, Trans 1st ed.). Tehran: Markaz Publications. [In Persian]

Wittgenstein, L. (2011). *On Certainty*. (M. Hosseini, Trans. 2nd ed.). Tehran: Hermes Publications. [In Persian]

Dummett, M. (1963). "Realism." In Michael Dummett (1978), *Truth and Other Enigmas*, Cambridge MA: Harward UP, (pp. 145-165).

Dummett, M. (1969). "The Reality of the Past." In Michael Dummett (1978), *Truth and Other Enigmas*, Cambridge MA: Harward UP, (pp. 358-374).

Dummett, M. (1982). "Realism." Dordrecht, Holland, and Boston, U.S.A: D. Reidel Publishing.

Dummett, M. (1991). *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*. Cambridge MA: Harward UP.

Dummett, M. (1993). "Mood, Force, and Convention." In Michael Dummett (1996b). (pp. 202-223).

Dummett, M. (1996). "Realism and Anti-Realism." In *The Seas of Language*. Oxford University Press. (pp. 462–478).

Husserl, E. (1969). *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. Translated by D. Cairns. Netherlands: Martin Nijhoff, The Hague.

Kenny, A. (ed.). (1994). *The Wittgenstein Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lovibond, S. (1983). *Realism and Imagination in Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Malcolm, N. (1967). "Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann." In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 7-8, Paul Edvards (ed.). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Rorty, R. (1979). *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton University Press.

Winch, P. (1972). "Understanding a Primitive Society." In *Ethics and Action*. London, pp. 8-49.

Bi-quarterly Journal of
Theosophia Islamica
EISSN: 2783-3240
Vol. 4 ● No. 2 ● 2024 ● Issue 8

An Examination of the Soul and Sense Perception in Aristotle, Avicenna, and Mulla Sadra, with an Emphasis on Mulla Sadra's Theoretical Rupture

Mohsen Bagherzadeh Meshkinbaf[1]

Received: 2025/06/11 **Accepted: 2025/07/30**

Abstract

This article, using a descriptive-analytical method, aims to articulate the epistemological rupture of Mulla Sadra's theory of the soul from that of the Peripatetic philosophers. We begin by critically examining the theories of the soul and sense perception in Aristotle and Avicenna, then delve into Mulla Sadra's intellectual leap on this topic. We'll demonstrate how a transformation in this theory also leads to a revolution in the theory of knowledge of the external world. In general, regarding the discussion of perceptions and knowledge, Mulla Sadra rejects all previous theories, which include: The critique of knowledge being quidditative and the theory of correspondence between knowledge and the known, The critique of knowledge being a psychic quality, The critique of the theory of abstracting the form of the external object in the mind, The critique of knowledge being a mental form and an addition.

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran.
Email: m.bagherzade@uok.ac.ir

* Bagherzadeh Meshkinbaf, Mohsen. (2024). "An Examination of the Soul and Sense Perception in Aristotle, Avicenna, and Mulla Sadra, with an Emphasis on Mulla Sadra's Theoretical Rupture," *TheoSophia Islamica, 4* (8), pp. 133-166.
https://doi.org/10.22081/JTI.2025.72119.1083

One of Mulla Sadra's unique conclusions in his theory of the soul is the power of actualization and inventiveness of the mental form. From his perspective, the soul is the agent and creator of sense and imaginative forms. Therefore, it must be stated that with this view, the relationship between forms and the soul is one of action to agent, not one of acceptance to recipient. As Mulla Sadra would assert, just as God emanates creation, we too emanate our knowledge in the form of mental images from within.

Keywords

Aristotle, Avicenna, Mulla Sadra, Soul (Nafs), Sense Perception, Inherent Subsistence (Qiyam-e Hululi), Emanative Subsistence (Qiyam-e Suduri).

1. Introduction

In this article, we'll explore the similarities and differences in the theories of the soul (nafs) and sense perception among Aristotle, Avicenna, and Mulla Sadra. Our primary aim is to highlight the brilliance and advancement of Mulla Sadra's views on these topics compared to his predecessors. Therefore, our evaluations will be based on Mulla Sadra's perspective, considering his approach as the dominant one throughout this article. We'll specifically focus on explaining Mulla Sadra's theoretical rupture in the concepts of the soul and sense perception, relative to the two aforementioned thinkers, by drawing on the new principles of Transcendental Philosophy (Hikmat Muta'aliyyah). This will also provide the reader with a brief understanding of the distinct logic underlying Transcendental Philosophy and Peripatetic philosophy.

In this article, the author argues that Mulla Sadra's theory of the soul and perceptions could lead to a distinct epistemological theory. While the term "epistemology" should be used loosely when referring to both Greek and Islamic philosophy (as their focus was more on the ontology of knowledge, and modern epistemology, as it emerged in 17th-century Europe, is a later development fundamentally different from classical thought), Mulla Sadra's theory offers a new approach. This approach should be understood as a rupture from previous meanings. Mulla Sadra had the potential (if his views were correctly interpreted) to mark the end of the old philosophical path and, at the same time, to lay the groundwork for a new foundation from which a theory of epistemology could be extracted.

Among the areas where Mulla Sadra extensively engaged in debate with his predecessors is the topic of the soul. He successfully

brought about a revolution in this field using the new theoretical foundations of his philosophy, thereby surpassing his forerunners. He developed his new approach in these discussions by employing principles such as gradation of existence (tashkik al-wujud), mental existence, trans-substantial motion (harakat jawhariyyah), intensive substantial motion, the idea of the soul being corporeal in its origination and spiritual in its subsistence (nafs jismaniyat al-huduth va ruhaniyat al-baqa'), and more.

According to the author, this very act of thinking—Mulla Sadra engaging with his predecessors and, in essence, with his own tradition—and criticizing them, paved the way for the development of his own principles. It's through this intellectual struggle between Mulla Sadra's theoretical faculties and his tradition that thought evolves, and a tradition becomes dynamic and vibrant.

2. The Soul from Aristotle's Perspective

Aristotle defines the soul (Nafs) as "the first actuality of a natural body having life potentially, that is, for an organic body" (Aristotle, 2014, p. 78). For Aristotle, the soul is the substance or form that actualizes all the characteristics within a potentially living natural body. He illustrates this with an example: "Now what we have said applies to the parts of the living body. If the eye, in fact, were an animal, its sight would be its soul, for sight is the formal substance of the eye" (Aristotle, 2014, p. 81).

Émile Bréhier explains the soul in Aristotle's philosophy as the first actuality for a potentially living natural body, or, in other words, the form of the body. By "potentially living," Aristotle means a body equipped with the necessary organs to perform vital functions. Thus, the relationship between the soul and the body is akin to the

relationship between the sharpness of an axe and the axe itself. The soul is the primary principle of activity for a living body, much like a scholar's knowledge is the primary principle of their thought for discovering truth. Therefore, for Aristotle, the soul is the origin of vital activity and the unmoved mover of this activity. Understanding the soul can serve as a prerequisite for studying all other living beings, just as, in Aristotle's philosophy, knowledge of God is, in a way, a prerequisite for understanding the world (Bréhier, 2014, Vol. 2, p. 294).

In other words, for Aristotle, the soul is the form of the body—an entity that actualizes matter and gives it existence. There is a type of unity between the soul and the body in Aristotle's philosophy, as they cannot exist without each other; they gain meaning only in conjunction. One could even argue that both the soul and the body come into being and perish together. As Émile Bréhier states, "Just as sight is dependent on the eye, the soul is also considered to be in relation and unity with the body" (Bréhier, 2014, Vol. 2, p. 294). However, there are differing interpretations among commentators on this point, with some believing that Aristotle posited a separate (immaterial) soul.

From Aristotle's perspective, one can conclude that a type of conjunctive composition exists between the soul and the body, or between form and matter, through which an entity becomes actualized. However, what's crucial for us is the kind of duality observed here. Neither side of this relationship is derived from the other; rather, they gain meaning only in relation to each other. In the author's view, this might still retain the duality present in Platonic philosophy, depicting the external existent as bifurcated.

Since many aspects of this section are not our primary focus,

we'll only elaborate on Aristotle's theory of sense perception from his discussions on perception to eventually draw comparisons with Mulla Sadra. Regarding the soul, sense perception, and the alteration (استحاله) that occurs in the soul, Aristotle writes: "Alteration and growth are also caused by the soul: sensation, in fact, seems to be a kind of alteration, and no being is capable of sensation unless it partakes of the soul..." (Aristotle, 2014, pp. 104-105).

Émile Bréhier, in explaining sense perception in Aristotle, states: Sensation, for Aristotle, is not a mere passive inherence in the perceptual organs, where the organs simply receive the qualitative effects of constantly changing and moving sensibles. While the sensitive faculty is actualized only under the influence of the sensible object on one of the sense organs, sensation cannot be reduced solely to the action of the sensible object. Therefore, sensation must somehow be a joint act of the sentient and the sensible, similar to the combined action of color and sight, or sound and hearing. It must be emphasized that sensation cannot be attributed to only one of the two factors, namely the sentient or the sensible (Bréhier, 2014, Vol. 2, p. 298).

Here, it appears that even in the discussion of sensation, Aristotle does not consider the sentient faculty to be merely passive. Instead, in sense perception, the sentient faculty plays a role in actualizing the sensible object. In reality, sense perception is an alliance achieved through an active process between the sense and the sensible.

However, it's important to bear in mind that Aristotle's approach to knowledge occurs through the abstraction of the form of the external object from its matter. As Ali Morad Davoodi writes: "In the act of sensation, the sensible form is abstracted from its matter to

reach the sense organ and become homogeneous with it" (Davoodi, 2010, p. 53). It is through this process of abstraction that you gain knowledge of the external object.

On this point, Aristotle writes: "Generally, regarding every sense, one must grasp that sensation receives the forms of the sensible without their matter, just as wax receives the imprint of a signet ring without its iron or gold. In sensation, too, an affection arises under the influence of an object that has color or flavor or sound, insofar as they have such qualities" (Aristotle, 2014, pp. 170-171).

In fact, Aristotle believed that the process of sense cognition occurs through acquiring the form of the external object within our soul. The more you perform this act of abstraction, the more you ascend to higher forms of knowledge, including imaginative and intellectual understanding. In other words, Aristotle's theory relates to the famous correspondence theory of mind with reality; that is, for the mind to acquire knowledge of an external object, it doesn't create it within itself but rather receives it from the outside. Even the function of the sense faculty is nothing more than the actualization of sense perception.

Another weakness of Aristotle's theory, beyond explaining knowledge acquisition through abstraction, is considering the faculties of the soul as material. This can be easily understood from Émile Bréhier's comment on Aristotle's *On the Soul*: "[Here, Émile Bréhier was explaining the difference between intellectual and sense perception] But the difference is that the sense organ, when affected by a sensible object of extreme intensity, like a light that blinds the eye, ceases to function, whereas the stronger—that is, the clearer—the intelligible object, the greater the power of intellectual thought"

(Bréhier, 2014, p. 301). Aristotle attributes weakness to the faculties of sense perception when encountering external objects, a point that can be helpful for our ongoing discussion. As he writes:

> From this, it can be clearly understood why sensations of great intensity destroy the sense organs. In fact, if the movement of the sense organ is too strong, the form (which, as discussed, is the sensation itself) is dissolved, just as when one strikes the strings of an instrument with too much force, the harmony and rhythm are disrupted. (Aristotle, 2014, pp. 171)

3. The Soul from Avicenna's Perspective

As mentioned, Aristotle, in explaining the soul, uses terms like potency (qūva), form , and first actuality (kamāl awvalī) for a natural body. Following him, Avicenna also attempts to explain the soul using similar terminology. He, too, considers the soul the first actuality for a natural body. Regarding this, in his *Treatise on the Soul*, he writes:

> "It is called a potency because actions arise from it, and it is called a form perhaps because matter comes into actuality through the soul. It is called actuality (kamāl) to signify that the meaning of 'body' becomes a 'species' through the existence of the soul. If we wish to define the soul, the soul is a first actuality, more fundamental than definition and description. Among other meanings, the term 'potency' is applicable to the soul because it adds action to it in one respect, and affection in another. The human soul possesses both an active potency, which is the power of movement and stirring, and an affective potency, which is the power of perception and reception. The term 'potency' applies equally to both cases. If we focus on only one side of the

> relationship, one part is left out, and the definition becomes incomplete." (Avicenna, 1952, pp. 5-9)

Avicenna is significantly influenced by Aristotle in his treatment of the soul (Nafs). The definition of the soul, as articulated by Aristotle, largely holds true for Avicenna as well. As mentioned previously, Avicenna, following Aristotle, defines the soul as the first actuality for a natural organic body.

He refers to the soul as a "potency" (qūvah) in relation to the actions that emanate from it, meaning it's the origin of action. Considering its capacity to receive sensible and intelligible forms, he also terms it a "potency" in the sense of being the origin of reception. When likened to the matter in which it inheres, he calls it a "form", and because it perfects the genus, he calls it a "specific differentiator".

Consequently, much like Aristotle, Avicenna considers the soul to be the form and perfection of the body, through which potential capabilities are actualized. Furthermore, he views the soul as passive in perception, meaning the soul receives material and intellectual forms either from matter or from the active intellect.

Avicenna attempts to prove the existence of the soul through two main arguments. The most famous is the "floating man" thought experiment. His second argument posits that there must be something within a human being that is the source of actions and effects, as the body alone cannot be the origin of movement and sensation; otherwise, all bodies would possess these abilities.

A significant difference between Avicenna and Aristotle lies in the issue of the soul's immateriality. Avicenna explicitly states that the

soul is immaterial (mujarrad) and survives the death of the body, whereas Aristotle believed only the intellectual part of the soul persists. Ishaq Taheri explains Avicenna's primary reason for proving the soul's immateriality as follows:

> "We can intellect our own essence, and whatever intellects an essence will have the quiddity of that essence present to it. Therefore, the quiddity of our essence will be present to us. Now, this intellection of the essence either occurs through another form identical to the form of our essence, which would necessitate the impossible conjunction of two identical things; or the essence itself is present to us, which is the desired and correct conclusion. Then we say that whatever has its essence present to itself is self-subsistent (qa'im bi al-dhat). On the other hand, every body and corporeal thing is not self-subsistent. Therefore, the soul is an incorporeal substance." (Taheri, 2014, p. 102).

This proof is not based on the imprinting of intelligible forms in a substrate but rather focuses solely on the essence of the soul itself. Thus, whatever has its essence present to itself is self-subsistent, and our soul is self-subsistent, but bodies are not; therefore, the soul is not a corporeal substance.

It's clear that for Avicenna, the soul (Nafs) is considered an immaterial (mujarrad) entity from its very inception. As soon as a body is created, a soul simultaneously comes into existence for it. In common terms, one could say that for Avicenna, the soul is spiritual in its origination (ruhāniyat al-ḥudūth) and spiritual in its subsistence (ruhāniyat al-baqā'). Thus, the Peripatetic belief regarding the origination of the soul posits that this substance is devoid of any matter and will persist after the death of the body, never

decaying or undergoing a movement toward perfection.

In the third *Namaṭ* of his book *Al-Ishārāt va al-Tanbīhāt* (Pointers and Reminders), after proving the existence and immateriality of the soul, Avicenna delves into the human faculties of reception and moving powers:

> "To perceive something means that its true form is obtained by the perceiver and the perceiver observes it. So either that reality, when perceived, is identical to the reality outside the perceiver. This possibility is not correct; because it would cause something that does not exist externally to have reality; like many geometric shapes, many impossible hypotheses—when they appear in geometry—among things that have no realization whatsoever. Or else, perception is that the form and reality of that thing is imprinted upon the perceiver in such a way that it has no discrepancy (in essence) with it, and that is a form that remains." (Avicenna, 1994, p. 83)

As quoted from Avicenna, he believes that perception is the attainment of the form of something in the mind, which essentially means the soul's passivity in relation to an external object. Avicenna maintains that the form through which we acquire knowledge is not the exact external reality of the known object, but rather a likeness or a form of that external reality. If the first case were true, then many impossible hypotheses or things that lack external reality would have to become real.

In his *Al-Ishārāt va al-Tanbīhāt* (Pointers and Reminders), Avicenna elaborates on sense perception:

> "...when Zayd is perceived, he is encompassed by accidents (which are far from his quiddity) that, if removed from him,

> would not affect his quiddity; such as having a specific place, position, quality, or quantity. If there were a substitute for these, it would not create a problem for the truth of his human quiddity. The sense faculty perceives Zayd in a state where he possesses these distant accidents, which are attached to him due to the matter from which he was created. The sense faculty does not separate Zayd from these accidents; it perceives him only in conjunction with these accidents. For this reason, when this connection is severed, the sense form will no longer exist" (Avicenna, 1994, p. 84).

As cited, Avicenna believes that a sense is a form imprinted upon the soul, and it remains dependent on all its material accidents. As soon as this connection is severed, no trace of sense perception remains.

We can analytically summarize Avicenna's view on sense perception into these five key points regarding his method of perception, which we believe clarify the discussion significantly:

1. The external world has reality and exists.
2. The perceiving subject (or "we" as the perceiving agent) also exists. This subject receives the forms of external objects into its soul, where they are actualized. Even realities that do not exist in the external world, or even those whose existence is impossible, are present within the soul.
3. The external world influences our mind. During perception, it leaves an impression as the perceived object within the perceiver.
4. These received impressions are referred to as examples,

forms, or specters. That is, when the soul encounters the external world, it undergoes an impression from outside, which is referred to by these terms.

5. This received form is similar to the realities of the external world and is not distinct from them.

Avicenna's theory of perception, like Aristotle's, is achieved through abstraction and the correspondence of the mind with reality. He believes that we gain perception through the process of the external object's form being imprinted upon the soul. As Dr. Yathribi quotes Avicenna, human perception and reception mean that the form of the reality of objects becomes present in our perceiving and apprehending faculties, in such a way that these faculties observe those forms (Yathribi, 2013, p. 63).

However, our discussion here focuses primarily on sense perception and how it is imprinted upon the soul. This, too, is achieved through abstraction, which also leads to imaginative and intellectual perception. As Avicenna states: "Imagination abstracts itself from the positional relation that exists between the sense and material accidents, and the intellect can abstract the quiddity that is intertwined with distant individual accidents, and present it in such a way as to prove that it has treated the sensible as if it had rendered it intelligible" (Avicenna, 1994, p. 84).

Our sense faculties can only provide us with an image of an external object if they are in proximity to it. If they distance themselves from the external object, they no longer perceive it. This is because sense perception carries material accidents, and without them, it lacks the power to form an image and cannot establish a correspondence between the sense form and the external object. Thus,

the sense acquires the form from matter with its associated accidents and through a relation occurring between these accidents and matter. When this relation established between the soul and the external existent is dissolved, this type of perception also vanishes, because the sense has not acquired the form with all its accidents, and if the matter moves out of reach, it cannot preserve the form.

4. Mulla Sadra's Departure from Previous Theories

Mulla Sadra expresses his position regarding Aristotle's and Avicenna's views on perception as follows:

> "This objection applies to the theory of one for whom imprinting means the perceived form inhering in the essence of the perceiver. But with us, it is not so; rather, it is through the subsistence (qiyam) of the perceived form *to* the perceiver. And subsistence does not necessitate inherence (hulul) or descent, but merely presence." (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 2013, Vol. 4, p. 215).

The discussion of mental forms subsisting in the soul through inherent subsistence (qiyam-e hululi) predates Mulla Sadra. Mulla Sadra, however, has repeatedly expressed his opposition to this approach, a topic we will delve into further later. This is because, from Mulla Sadra's perspective, the subsistence of mental forms to the soul is a matter of emanative subsistence (qiyam-e suduri), and the soul itself is the agent or intellect that creates mental forms.

Avicenna, like Aristotle, doesn't consider the soul's faculties to be immaterial; rather, he sees them as material. It's through the passivity they experience from external objects that they become aware of them. Similar to Aristotle, Avicenna believes that we gain

knowledge of the external world through the inherence of the form of the external object within our sense organs.

Dr. Nasrullah Hikmat further explains how the material intellect (aql hayulani) transforms into the intellectual world (alam aqili) in Avicenna's philosophy:

> "The transformation of the material intellect into the intellectual world is realized through the attainment of the forms of existents. Now, every existent is either intrinsically devoid of matter and intelligible—in other words, a pure form—or it is intrinsically unintelligible and a form within matter. Where a form is within matter, the intellectual faculty abstracts the form of that object from its matter and attains intelligibility. The abstracted form, its existence is its intelligibility, and if it is not intelligible, it does not exist... What prevents intelligibility, intellectuality, and being intelligible is matter. Anything that becomes abstracted from matter becomes intelligible. Also, an object becomes an intellect when it becomes abstracted from matter, and whenever an immaterial form is attained for another immaterial form, this attainment is intellect" (Nasrullah Hikmat, 2011, p. 321).

To summarize, Avicenna, on one hand, believes the soul is immaterial and undergoes no change until the end, a point that Mulla Sadra disputes. In essence, Avicenna ultimately succumbs to a duality within the human being, considering the body separate from the immaterial soul. Furthermore, we observe that he adheres to the correspondence theory of knowledge and the abstraction of the external form into the soul, rather than its creation, which is also a point of disagreement for Mulla Sadra.

In this regard, Avicenna struggles to explain the acquisition of

perception and ultimately concedes only to the abstraction of the external object and the soul's passivity in receiving it. This mode of external perception also dominated the views of most medieval philosophers. As Dr. Ilkhani states regarding Thomas Aquinas: "For him, the human mind is an unwritten tablet upon which information is imprinted through sense experience" (Ilkhani, 2011, p. 396).

5. The Soul from Mulla Sadra's Perspective

Mulla Sadra, unlike Avicenna, does not dedicate a separate section to proving the existence of the soul, nor did he find it necessary to provide an extensive explanation on this matter. Thus, we will present excerpts from the beginning of the eighth volume of his book *Asfar* (The Four Journeys), which addresses this topic, followed by necessary explanations.

In proving the soul's existence, Mulla Sadra offers an argument quite similar to Avicenna's second proof. Mulla Sadra writes: We observe bodies in the external world that emanate effects such as sensation, movement, nutrition, growth, development, and reproduction. However, the source of these effects cannot be the body itself, as it is purely receptive and lacks actuality. Nor can it be the common corporeal form shared among them. Therefore, these bodies must possess other principles, distinct from their corporeality, which have the power to initiate these actions. In his discussions of potency and act, Mulla Sadra previously explained that any active potency from which effects—not in a uniform manner—are emanated, we call the soul (Nafs). This term refers to this potency, not according to its simple essence, but in terms of its being the origin of such actions as mentioned. Hence, the discussion of the soul has become part of the natural sciences. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, pp. 7-8).

Mulla Sadra, like Avicenna, uses the phrase "first actuality for an organic natural body"[1]to define the soul, but he imbues it with a different meaning compared to Avicenna. Due to his concept of intensive substantial motion (harakat ishtidadiyyah fi al-jawhar), he explains the term "organic" in a way that encompasses plant, animal, and celestial souls. Since he equates potency with instrument (ālah), he defines the soul as a potency in a natural body that, by utilizing another potency, has the capacity to perform an action. As Mulla Sadra writes: : It is clear that the soul is the first actuality for a natural body, but not for every natural body. For instance, the soul is not the actuality for fire or earth. This is because the soul in this world is the actuality for a natural body from which secondary perfections emanate, with the aid of organs that assist in vital actions like sensation and voluntary movement. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, p. 16).

It's clear that the characteristic of the first actuality for any natural body that performs actions through an instrument is the soul. Therefore, any power of a natural body that performs an action by bringing another power under its command, we refer to as the soul.

1. "It is clear that the soul is the first actuality for a natural body, but not for every natural body. For instance, the soul is not the actuality for fire or earth. This is because the soul in this world is the actuality for a natural body from which secondary perfections emanate, with the aid of organs that assist in vital actions like sensation and voluntary movement." (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, p. 16)
In essence, Mulla Sadra emphasizes that the soul is not just any animating principle for any natural body. Rather, it's the specific **"first actuality"** that brings a **natural** *organic* body to its potential. It's tied to bodies capable of vital functions like sensation and voluntary movement, which require specific organs or faculties to manifest these "secondary perfections." This distinguishes the soul of a living creature from the inherent properties of inanimate elements like fire or earth.

This definition—"first actuality for an organic natural body"—is comprehensive and encompasses all souls, because the "instruments" mentioned in the definition of the soul do not refer to organs like body parts, but rather to faculties. Examples include the nutritive, growth, and reproductive faculties in the plant soul, and imagination, sensation, and appetitive faculties in the animal soul—not organs like the stomach, liver, heart, brain, or nerves. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, p. 17).

Mulla Sadra further explains that the attribute of "life" in defining the soul for both animals and celestial spheres holds the same meaning. He states that if we consider life as the origin of perception and movement, and define perception broadly to include sensation, imagination, and intellection, then these apply to both. Even if we consider only sensation[1], its condition for existence is not the passivity of an organ. As he writes:

> If by "perception" in the definition of life we mean only sensation, it can also encompass the celestial spheres, because for Mulla Sadra, the meaning of sensation is not the passivity of the organ. Even if a particular form does not achieve realization and stability for the sense faculty, sensation will still undoubtedly be created. Therefore, the truth of sensation is the presence of the particular form, not the organ being affected by it, nor the imprinting or engraving of the form within it. This is because Mulla Sadra believes that even sight is nothing but the soul's creation and origination of another form, distinct from the form in external matter, yet similar to it and suspended in a non-

1. "And also, if by perception taken in the definition of life is meant only sensation, it can encompass the celestial sphere, for it is not a condition of the meaning of sensation that the organ be affected" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, p. 20).

> material place. The celestial spheres are likewise sensitive in this manner; their sensitivity is a type of action, and Mulla Sadra does not consider them passive in this regard either. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, p. 20).

It's evident that Mulla Sadra does not understand the soul and its faculties as passive, as the Peripatetics did. Instead, he sees them as the agents of their own knowledge and perceptions. They do not acquire knowledge through passivity or the inherence of the external object's form within the cognitive organs. Regarding sense perception, Mulla Sadra explicitly states in the preceding paragraph that it is an action of the soul, not a passive affection of it. He considers the truth of perception to be the presence of the particular form to the soul, and in future chapters, we will explain what he means by "the particular form present in the soul."

We must also address the issue of whether sense forms are particular or universal. Unlike his predecessors who considered the soul a fixed essence and merely a receptacle for the imprinting of intellectual forms, Mulla Sadra believes that the soul's intellectual perception reaches the stage of immateriality (tajarrud) through the perfection of its faculties. Since in this state the soul and its intelligible forms possess an immaterial existence, they have an existential encompassingness (sa'at wujudiyyah) over their material instances and maintain a uniform relation with them. It is this uniform relation of the immaterial intelligible concept with its material instances that constitutes the universality of this concept (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 3, p. 322). Therefore, we arrive at our argument: if the universality of an intellectual concept depends on its immateriality and existential encompassingness, then sense and imaginative concepts must also be immaterial, because they too possess existential

encompassingness and encompassment over their material instances, and are thus universal in this sense.

Mulla Sadra diverges from his predecessors regarding both the soul and the mode of knowing the external world. His views on the soul are fundamentally different due to his prior theories, namely principiality of existence (asalat al-wujud), gradation of existence (tashkik al-wujud), unity of existence (vahdat al-wujud), trans-substantial motion (harakat jawhariyyah), and the union of the intellect and the intelligible (ittihad al-aqil va al-ma'qul). He expresses his belief about the soul in this paragraph from *Asfar*:

> You have known that the human soul ascends from one form to another and from one perfection to another. So, in the beginning of its manifestation and establishment, it progresses from complete corporeality to elementary form, and from that to minerality and plant life, and from that to animality until it fully grasps all the animal faculties, culminating in that essence which is the first thing that does not relate to bodily matter. And when it further progresses from that state, it ascends to the first rank of existents that are entirely separate and distinct from matter, and that is the acquired intellect (aql mustafad), which has a close resemblance to the active intellect. The difference between the two is that the acquired intellect is a separate form that was once paired and intertwined with matter and becomes abstract from it after its transformations and changes through various stages and states. Whereas the active intellect is a form that was never in matter, and such a thing is not possible unless it is separate.1(Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 3, p. 461).

1. Mr. Obudiyat has identified four stages for the soul's intensive substantial motion, which he describes as follows: "First, the **natural stage (nash'at al-tabī'īyah)**, in which the soul has not yet attained immateriality and lacks any perception or →

We've explored the different stages of the soul's movement, from its most rudimentary and material state to its most abstract, as presented by Mulla Sadra. Throughout these stages, the soul undergoes intensive substantial motion, replacing its previous state with a more perfected one. Crucially, it retains all its past states while expanding and developing itself.

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, when a human being perceives something, it triggers a potential, moving the soul from a hidden state of potency to actuality. This actualization is a perfection for the soul, and thus, the human s'oul becomes more complete with every perception (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 462).

Regarding this expansion and development, Professor Motahari, in his comprehensive commentary on *Manzumeh*, draws a comparison between Mulla Sadra and Avicenna:

> Avicenna believes that the essence of the human soul remains unchanged from early childhood until the moment of death. The soul's essence remains what it was, merely burdened with additional emanations and having acquired a series of patterns and designs. Mulla Sadra, however, in contrast to Avicenna,

---

←

voluntary movement, including the elemental, mineral, and plant stages of the soul, all of which are material. Second, the **animal stage (nash'at al-ḥayawānīyah)**, including all stages where the soul possesses a kind of imaginative immateriality but still lacks the rational soul. In this stage, the soul is the same as the imaginative body that has particular perception and voluntary movement. Third, the **human stage (nash'at al-insānīyah)**, in which the human possesses the rational soul but still lacks pure intellectual perception. Fourth, the **intellectual stage (nash'at al-aqliyah)**, in which the soul also possesses pure intellectual perception, including all stages where the soul has a kind of intellectual immateriality." (Obudiyat, 1392, Vol. 3, p. 433).

> believes that the soul is initially a small reality, and as it gains knowledge, it expands its own reality. This expansion and perfection *is* the very reality of the soul. The soul *becomes* what it knows; it *becomes* what it understands (O brother, you are that very thought). (Motahari, 2015, Vol. 9, p. 379).

Here, we've clearly explained Mulla Sadra's step-by-step evolution of the soul from pure corporeality to the acquired intellect. Of course, Mulla Sadra could not have reached this foundation without his discussions on the principiality of existence, the gradation of existence, intensive substantial motion, and the union of the intellect and the intelligible.

In other words, Mulla Sadra masterfully manages to create an internal connection between the body and the soul, no longer considering them as two separate entities merely added to each other. Instead, he believes the soul is corporeal in its origination and spiritual in its subsistence (jismaniyat al-huduth va ruhaniyat al-baqa'). It is precisely from this premise that he would later be able to prove the corporeal resurrection. Furthermore, as explained by Martyr Motahari, the very reality of the soul expands and develops with each new piece of knowledge it acquires.

On the other hand, Mulla Sadra considers the human soul capable of ascending to the Acquired Intellect (Aql Mustafad), meaning it can gain knowledge of all matters just like the Active Intellect. For Aristotle and Avicenna, however, the Active Intellect was merely considered an external agent.

Allameh Hasan ZadehAmoli, in discussing the theory of the soul in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, writes:

> "The soul, at the beginning of its origination, is a corporeal form

> and faculty imprinted in the body, and this is the lowest rank of the soul. But after that, due to intensive substantial motion, it changes and gradually transcends the physical world through its existential intensification, creating an affinity with the transcendent realm. It reaches the stage of intermediate immateriality (tajarrud barzakhi), and thereafter intellectual immateriality (tajarrud aqlani), and then the supra-immaterial rank. He also writes that, according to Mulla Sadra, the soul has no limit (hadd-e yaqf) and lacks numerical unity, which the Peripatetics affirmed. Instead, it possesses a true, divine, shadowy unity (vahdat-e haqqah-ye zilliyah-ye ilahiyyah) " (Hasan Zadeh Amoli, 2014, p. 79).

In the paragraph above, Hasan Zadehalso points out how a material, corporeal substance transforms into an immaterial substance. The answer is that this occurs through intensive substantial motion. Thus, the soul is no longer merely subject to accidental changes, as was previously imagined before Mulla Sadra.

One of Mulla Sadra's unique conclusions in his theory of the soul is the power of actualization and inventiveness of the mental form. From his perspective, sense and imaginative forms are not imprinted upon and inherent in the soul, as the Peripatetic philosophers claimed. Instead, for Mulla Sadra, the soul is the agent and creator of sense and imaginative forms. Therefore, with this view, the relationship between forms and the soul is one of action to agent, not one of acceptance to recipient. As we mentioned before, just as God emanates creation, we too emanate our knowledge in the form of mental images from within.

As we've stated, the quidditative form of the external known object is not what we gain knowledge of. In reality, this is somewhat simplifying the issue, because the fundamental question here is: what

is the relationship between the specific external known object and its form in my mind, and where does knowledge occur? Mulla Sadra attempts to articulate that there is a mode or aspect of existence that is neither the external object nor merely what is in my mind. Rather, I construct a form in my mind and gain knowledge of it; it's an image that my mind creates with its own internal faculties. This is precisely what Mr. Obudiyat means by the "reality of knowledge," as he also states that both the form of the external known object and the external known object itself are, for Mulla Sadra, only known or intelligible per accidens. Therefore, that known object must acquire another mode to become known to my mind.

It is here that Mulla Sadra expresses his unique view: the soul's power of origination or emanation of knowledge (insha' or sudur), rather than mere passivity. Mulla Sadra writes:

> "However, as per our approach, imaginative and sense knowledge do not inhere in the imaginative or sense organs. Instead, these organs are like mirrors and manifestations for them; they are neither their locus nor their position. Consequently, their essences are substances that are abstract and separate from matter, and their accidents are accidents that subsist in these substances, and all of them subsist in the soul, similar to the subsistence of possibilities in the Divine Presence" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 3, p. 305).

In this paragraph, Mulla Sadra explicitly demonstrates that he does not accept the theory of the inherence of forms into cognitive organs. Rather, these organs are merely mirrors, and knowledge is not created within them. He emphasizes that the sense and imaginative faculties are not material; instead, they are emanaated by the soul, just as God brings possibilities into existence. Furthermore, Mulla Sadra

points out that the soul's faculties are independent of a locus, considering the locus merely as a ground for the emergence and actualization of the faculty. Elsewhere, regarding sense perception, Mulla Sadra explicitly states:

> "And sensation is not as the common philosophers believe, that the sense abstracts the sensible form in its very essence from its matter and interacts with its encompassing accidents, and imagination further abstracts it. This is because you know that the transfer of imprinted entities—with their quiddities—from matter to non-matter is impossible.
>
> Nor does sensation mean the movement of the sense faculty towards the sensible form existing in its matter—as some have imagined regarding sight—and it is not merely due to the soul's relation to these material forms—as the author of *Talwihat* (Sheikh Ishraq) imagined—because it has been said before that a positional relation to bodies is not their perception. An epistemological relation (idafah-ye ilmi) cannot be in relation to objects with material positions. Rather, sensation is achieved in this way: a luminous or cognitive form is added from the Giver, and by this, perception and consciousness are realized. Therefore, the sentient is actual, and the sensible is actual, whereas before this, there was neither sentient nor sensible—except potentially. However, the existence of the form in specific matter is among the enabling conditions for the emanation of a form that is actually sensible and sentient. And to speak about this form, which is sensation, sentient, and sensible, is precisely to speak about the intelligible form, which is intellect, intellectual, and intelligible" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 3, pp. 316-317).

Since Mulla Sadra's theory of vision (bāṣirah) is closely

related to our discussion of the soul and sense perception, and he sometimes explains these together in *Asfar*, it's important to include a section on this.

Mulla Sadra categorizes previous theories of vision into three main groups and briefly outlines them:

- Naturalists believe that vision is the imprinting and engraving of an image onto a part of the vitreous humor (rūṭūbat jalīdī), which resembles ice or hail, acting like a mirror reflecting a colored object.
- Mathematicians contend that vision occurs due to the emission of rays from the eye.
- Sheikh Shahāb al-Dīn Suhravardī argues that vision is neither ray emission nor imprinting. Instead, it arises from the confrontation of a luminous object with the receptive organ that contains a gleaming moisture[1]. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, pp. 178-179).

Mulla Sadra then explains his own theory regarding how the external object's image forms in the faculty of vision:

"The truth, in our view, is that vision is distinct from these three

1. According to him, visible forms seen in the manifest world without mirrors are obtained through **presential knowledge (ilm-e huzuri) by illumination (ishraq)**. This illumination occurs when a luminous body confronts the eye, and the eye is healthy and free from defects and ailments, and other conditions that are part of the complete cause for the attainment of presential illumination. Since the visible object has an external quiddity, after the conditions are met and obstacles removed, presential illumination is achieved, and the soul, through this illumination, perceives that external object. (Muhammad Sharif Nizam al-Din Ahmad ibn Harawi, *Anwariya*, p. 141).

> theories. It is the origination and creation of a similar image—by divine power—from the mundus imaginalis (ālam-e malakūt-e nafsānī), abstracted from external matter, present to the perceiving soul, and subsisting in it—a subsistence of action to its agent, not a subsistence of reception to its recipient." (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, pp. 179-180).

In the context of the faculty of vision, as with other faculties and perceptions, Mulla Sadra asserts that we are not passive in receiving the form of the external object. Instead, the soul, along with the faculty of vision, actively emanates and originates what it sees in the act of seeing. This is how Mulla Sadra distinguishes himself from the three preceding theories, emphasizing the active role of the soul[1]. Mulla Sadra further highlights another crucial point, which we will elaborate on after quoting him:

The proof for this is derived from the arguments we have established for the union of the intellect and the intelligible, and it applies precisely to all sense and imaginary perceptions. We cautioned and drew attention to this matter in the discussions of the intellect and the intelligible, stating: Sensation, absolutely, is not as is famously

1. Martyr Motahari, in a footnote to his book *Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, writes: "Mulla Sadra, the renowned Islamic philosopher, has a distinct view on the reality of vision. This scholar stated that neither of the two aforementioned theories, even if correct and complete, can explain the reality of vision, because both theories relate to the natural function of the eye, while vision transcends natural science. This scholar, by proving the theory of the **union of the intellect and the intelligible** and the **union of the sentient and the sensible**, demonstrated that **seeing is a type of creative activity of the soul**, for which the natural (physical) act is a (precondition). After the completion of the natural act, the soul, by its active power, invents and originates a similar form of the sensible object within its own domain." (Allameh Tabataba'i, undated, p. 76).

held by all philosophers who say:

> "The sense abstracts the sensible form in its very essence from its matter and interacts with the accidents that encompass it; similarly, imagination further abstracts the sensible form from its matter, as this is understood from the impossibility of the transference of imprinted entities." Rather, perceptions, absolutely, are obtained in such a way that a new form, luminous and perceptive, emanates from the True Giver, and by it, perception and consciousness are realized. Thus, that (form) is actually sentient and actually sensible, but the existence of the form in specific matter is neither sentient nor sensible, except that it is the precondition for the emanation of that form—upon the fulfillment of conditions—which is actually sensible and sentient. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, p. 181).

In the preceding paragraph, Mulla Sadra clearly states that all types of perceptions are formed in the same manner he explained in the discussion of the union of the intellect and the intelligible in the third volume of *Asfar*. There, Mulla Sadra posits that every type of perception becomes comprehensible through the soul's invention and origination (ibdā' va inshā'). The subsistence of mental forms to the soul is one of emanation (qiyām-e ṣudūrī), not inherence (ḥulūlī).

Mulla Sadra clarifies that the form existing in the external material object is neither the sense itself nor the sensible, and he doesn't acquire knowledge of *that*. Rather, as will be discussed further, he gains knowledge of the sense perception (idrāk ḥissī) that is sensible *per se* (maḥsūs bi'l-dhāt)—meaning it belongs to the very nature of his own psychic faculties. The same applies to the faculty of vision, and for this reason, Mulla Sadra also disagrees with the Peripatetics on this point. Mulla Sadra continues:

> Secondly: Other senses perceive the sensible, meaning that the sensible form comes to them, not that something goes out from them towards the sensible. Vision is also like this.
>
> It has been answered: This is an analogy without a comprehensive principle.
>
> I say: In other senses, there is neither coming nor going out. Rather, it is through the emanation of a form appropriate to the sensible that is represented to the soul. Thus, the comprehensive principle is realized, but what they desire from the imprinting in the visual organ does not necessarily follow. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, pp. 183-184)

In this section, Mulla Sadra emphasizes that just as sense perception is not formed based on imprinting, neither is the faculty of vision. Its formation isn't through abstraction and imprinting, but rather through the soul's creation or origination (ījād or inshā') that we see something, and its form is imprinted in our soul.

Conclusion

Both Aristotle and, subsequently, Avicenna explain the process of knowledge through inherent subsistence (qiyām-e ḥulūlī). A key requirement for acquiring knowledge in this view is the abstraction of the form from the matter of the external object. Knowledge is then gained through the form imprinted upon the soul. The more this act of abstraction is performed, the higher levels of knowledge, including imaginative and intellectual, are attained. In other words, Aristotle's theory is linked to the well-known correspondence theory of mind with reality, meaning the mind does not create the external object within itself to gain knowledge, but rather receives it from outside. Even the function of the sense faculty is nothing more than the

actualization of sense perception. Therefore, both philosophers must have believed in the materiality of the soul's faculties, as it's through this materiality that they are affected by and receive impressions from external objects. Avicenna, like Aristotle, does not consider the soul's faculties immaterial; he views them as material and perceives objects through the passive impressions received from external things. Like Aristotle, Avicenna also believes that we gain knowledge of the external world through the inherence of the external object's form within our sense organs. Mulla Sadra fundamentally disagrees with all these points.

Avicenna and his commentators believed that the form that inheres in our sense organs and which we perceive is the mental form that we call the sensible *per se* (maḥsūs bi'l-dhāt). This is because if it weren't itself directly known, it would lead to an infinite regress of mental forms, which is impossible and negates acquired knowledge. Thus, the mental form of an object is known immediately and by itself; it is the sensible *per se*, while its external reality is the sensible *per accidens*.

However, Mulla Sadra holds that what is meant by the sensible *per se* is something that originates in the sense faculty and is actualized in the soul, while the sensible *per accidens* is something that does not. Therefore, for Mulla Sadra, anything referred to as sensible either yields an effect in the sense faculty or it does not. If it doesn't yield an effect, it's sensible *per accidens*; if it does, it's sensible *per se*. And for Mulla Sadra, this sensible *per se* is the form present in the soul itself, not an external object that merely corresponds to it.

Furthermore, for Avicenna, the soul is considered an immaterial entity from its very beginning. As soon as a body is created, a soul simultaneously comes into existence for it, meaning the

soul is spiritual in its origination and spiritual in its subsistence (ruhāniyyat al-ḥudūth va ruhāniyyat al-baqāʾ). In contrast, Mulla Sadra does not agree with this. Rather, based on the foundational principles of his philosophy—the principiality of existence (aṣālat al-wujūd), the gradation of existence (tashkīk al-wujūd), the unity of existence (vaḥdat al-wujūd), and intensive substantial motion (ḥarakat jawharīyyah ishtidādīyyah)—he believes that the soul is initially material and gradually becomes spiritual through its intensive motion, thereby transforming itself from within. Therefore, as we explained in the section on Mulla Sadra, he fundamentally differs from his predecessors regarding the formation of knowledge and the manner of sense perception. He does not agree with the correspondence theory of mind with reality (as understood by his predecessors), nor with the theory of abstraction and the inherence of cognitive forms in the soul. This is because he perceives no inherent affinity between them in this context and does not believe that our knowledge of an external object is formed in the manner described (i.e., through the soul's passivity in the face of an external material form)[1].

Instead, by utilizing the premises he introduces, Mulla Sadra aims to establish an initial affinity between the soul and our

1. "The sense abstracts the sensible form in its very essence from its matter and interacts with the accidents that encompass it; similarly, imagination further abstracts the sensible form from its matter, as this is understood from the impossibility of the transference of imprinted entities." Rather, perceptions, absolutely, are obtained in such a way that a new form, luminous and perceptive, emanates from the True Giver, and by it, perception and consciousness are realized. Thus, that (form) is actually sentient and actually sensible, but the existence of the form in specific matter is neither sentient nor sensible, except that it is the precondition for the emanation of that form—upon the fulfillment of conditions—which is actually sensible and sentient. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 8, p. 181).

immaterial cognitive faculties with the external material existent. He explains this affinity through mental existence (wujūd dhahnī), which resides within the gradations of existence. Moreover, he considers the reality of knowledge to be of the genus of existence, not of accidents or quiddity, unlike his predecessors. This allows him to establish an affinity between the entity in the mind and the external entity, both being degrees of existence.

Finally, Mulla Sadra does not believe that the subsistence of mental forms to the soul is through inherence. Rather, he asserts that the subsistence of mental forms to the soul is through emanation (qiyām-e ṣudūrī). As he explains in *Asfar*, this act of the soul's origination of cognitive forms is analogous to God's origination of creation. If we examine Mulla Sadra's theory more closely, we see that the object he places as the object of knowledge, through which all perceptions are attained, is neither the external object nor even the abstracted form of the external object in my mind. Instead, I perceive or gain knowledge of something that is created and originated by my own soul. In the author's opinion, this foundation holds immense potential and could have opened the door for various discussions leading to a new perspective on knowledge or cognition.

References

Avicenna. (1952). *Risalah-yi Nafs* (Treatise on the Soul). With an introduction and annotations by Dr. Musa Amid. Tehran: Anjoman-e Athar-e Melli.[In Arabic]

Avicenna. (1994). *Isharat va Tanbihat* (Pointers and Reminders) (Vol. 1, 1st ed.). Qom: Nashr-e Balagheh. [In Arabic]

Aristotle. (2014). *Dar Bareh-yi Nafs* (On the Soul). (A. Morad Davoodi, Trans., 6th ed.). Tehran: Entesharat-e Hekmat.[In Persian]

Ilkhani, M. (2011). *Tarikh-e Falsafah dar Quroun-e Vusta va Renaissance* (History of Philosophy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance) (4th ed.). Tehran: Entesharat-e Samt. [In Persian]

Bréhier, É. (2014). *Tarikh-e Falsafah* (History of Philosophy) (Vol. 1). (A. Morad Davoodi, Trans., 2nd ed.). Tehran: Entesharat-e Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi. [In Persian]

Hasan ZadehAmoli, H. (2014). *Ittihad-e Aqil be Ma'qul* (The Union of the Intellector and the Intelligible) (4th ed.). Qom: Entesharat-e Boostan-e Ketab. [In Persian]

Obudiyat, A. (2013). *Dar-amadi be Nezam-e Hekmat-e Sadraei* (An Introduction to Sadra's Philosophical System) (Vol. 3, 2nd ed.). Tehran: Entesharat-e Samt. [In Persian]

Sadr al-Muta'allihin. (1981). *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah* (The Transcendent Philosophy in the Four Journeys of the Intellect) (9-volume set, 3rd ed.). Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath. [In Arabic]

Sadr al-Muta'allihin. (2013). *Asfar Arba'ah* (The Four Journeys) (set). (M. Khajavi, Trans., 4-volume., 1st ed.). Tehran: Entesharat-e Mowla. [In Persian]

Hikmat, N. (2011). *Darsnameh-ye Hekmat-e Mashsha'* (Textbook of Peripatetic Philosophy). Tehran: Nashr-e Elm. [In Persian]

Tabataba'i, M. (n.d.). *Usul-e Falsafah va Ravash-e Realism* (Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism) (Vols. 1, 2, 3). Tehran: Sherkat-e Offset Sahami Am Daftar Entesharat-e Eslami. [In Persian]

Taheri, I. (2014). *Nafs va Qova-yi An* (The Soul and Its Faculties) (3rd ed.). Qom: Entesharat-e Boostan-e Ketab. [In Persian]

Motahari, M. (2015). *Majmou'eh-yi Athar* (Collected Works) (Vol. 9, 17th ed.). Tehran: Entesharat-e Sadra. [In Persian]

Yathrebi, Y. (2013). *Falsafah-yi Mashsha'* (Peripatetic Philosophy) (4th ed.). Qom: Entesharat-e Boostan-e Ketab. [In Persian]