Man

on the Path of Being

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**Man on the Path of Being**

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Preface

Man and being are two realities that have always accompanied each other. The first truth that man learns in the world is the reality of his own existence and, later, he learns about the reality of other individuals, the environment, and the world around him, which increases his initial knowledge.

In an exact view, being functions as a road that man has to travel while having one eye on himself and another on the way ahead of him. Man’s scientific and holistic view of the past, present, and future and, in fact, of the whole world is called philosophy. Hence, in this collection of philosophical articles, we sometimes deal with man himself and sometimes with certain world phenomena and, generally, with the manifestations of the world. Accordingly, the title “Man on the Path of Being” seems to be appropriate for this book.

During the last two decades, in my articles and speeches in various philosophical conferences I have talked about and discussed certain issues which I believed to have been ignored previously or were necessary to be dealt with.
Although each of these articles has been published at least once in a different source, they were not accessible to scholars, philosophers, and students in a collection. Therefore, I decided to gather all of them in one book. Of course, the insistence of my colleagues and friends on doing so played a great role in this regard.

I hope that I have been successful in presenting some new points and ideas and introducing Islamic philosophy, particularly, Mullâ Sadrâ’s school of thought, in some of these articles.
Chapter One:

Epistemology
Sense Perception*

Mullā Sadrā’s doctrine of perception, including sense perception, imaginal perception, and intellectual perception, begins with and is based on external concrete objects.¹

Mullā Sadrā regards all the stages of perception, consisting of a series of immaterial bodily and psychic phenomena, as being originated in the external material object. Unlike some idealist philosophers, who view mental categories as the main source of perception, or rationalist philosophers, who believe in innate ideas, or Hegel who takes the “idea” or spirit as the origin, he believes in the correspondence between mental knowledge (known-by-essence) and the external object (known-by-accident). He also maintains that there is a relation between man’s perceptions and external realities and that our knowledge and ideas have their roots in our senses.

* This paper was written for and delivered in the Congress for the Commemoration of Mullā Sadrā (The Issue of Perception in the Transcendent Philosophy and other Schools) held on 12 May 2000 at SOAS University of London.

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Sensualists maintain that sense perception culminates here and some of them consider awareness as one of the prerequisites for the truth of perception. According to Mullà Sadrà, however, the reflection or impact of external objects on the senses is like the reflection of a picture in a mirror (or on a photographic paper) and that it is too trivial to be called perception.

According to Mullà Sadrà, the object’s affecting our senses is only half of what is required for perception and those who like sensualists have not gone beyond the stage of experience and sense have, in fact, contended themselves with going half the way and, naturally, cannot deny the complete process of perception.

Man’s senses (for instance, sight) are too weak to reflect the external reality in the mind and result in the acquisition of knowledge. The signals that our eyes transmit to the brain are nothing more than a phantom (a vague and colorless picture) and this does not count as knowledge or cognition. In Mullà Sadrà’s philosophy, knowledge should possess representative qualities, while this is not the case with the phantoms and pictures of material objects. For these representative qualities to be realized, knowledge and perception should deal with the quiddities of external objects. The difference between phantom on the one hand and quiddity and form on the other is that if the mental form is given an external existence, it will remain the same external thing while phantom is not so.

Like a computer, the brain is also a data processor system which takes man’s commands and is not capable of doing anything out of the framework of the data it is fed. It is aware of its own functions and cannot manipulate them without being commanded to do so. It goes without saying that no perception will be realized without awareness.

Therefore, we accept that our senses are involved in perception as a prerequisite but not as a sufficient condition. The material products of these senses do not constitute our perception and the impressions and sensible forms in the brain cannot be automatically transmitted to the

2. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 305-317.
mind. Rather, after the senses do their duties and the sensible forms are produced in the nervous system and the brain, it is time for the soul and mind to create an immaterial phenomenon, called perception or knowledge, from that material phenomenon through employing the two important elements of attention and awareness. Mullā Šadrā refers to this immaterial phenomenon as “illuminative form” and believes that attention and awareness are the main two bases of knowledge and perception.

“Attention” is a psychological phenomenon and a psychic factor and is not possible for the body and material organs. It requires an essence which possesses simple truth (basīṭ al-ḥaqīqah). None of the signals transmitted by the senses can be regarded as perception unless the perceiver’s attention interferes with the functions of the senses. In practice, we see that, while crossing a street, man does not perceive all of what his eyes see or what his ears hear unless he pays attention to and concentrates on them.

Like “attention”, “awareness” is not a material phenomenon. It has nothing to do with matter but refers to the soul, which is free from matter. In Mullā Šadrā’s eyes, awareness means the “presence” (or recall) of quiddity in its totality or the main quiddative characteristics of the phenomenon or the external object in mind. The presence of the self and other objects for the self only deserve the simple and immaterial soul, since an essential characteristic of the matter is its unawareness (or in Mullā Sadrā’s words, absence) of everything including itself.

According to Mullā Šadrā’s philosophy and his theory of trans-substantial motion, matter is always moving along a hypothetical temporal and straight line (the trans-substantial motion of the matter) and its past and future are “non-existence” and “non-existent”. Therefore, matter is absent and is even unaware of itself, which is a combination of non-existence and existence, let alone of others. For example, how could the image recorder of the eye’s retina or the nerves of the brain, which does not even know itself, be aware of

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an external reality? Awareness is basically an existential and positive thing, thus the material impressions of the brain, consisting of both non-existence and existence, cannot be equated with awareness and perception.

Therefore, awareness is the same as the “presence” of the external object (known-by-accident) in man’s mind and also the same as representativeness, which Mullā Sadra regards as the prerequisite for perception and acquisition of knowledge. Such “awareness”, “presence” and “representativeness” are the only factors which guarantee the truth of each perception and can mark the difference between real and false perceptions of mental patients. As mentioned before, revelation can only be found in the quiddity of external objects.

The soul’s awareness of the soul is what Mullā Ṣadrā calls the soul’s “knowledge by presence” (al-‘ilm al-ḥuḍūr) of its faculties and the forms imprinted on them. Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory of knowledge is based on these two factors.

In Islamic philosophy, knowledge and perception are divided into two independent types: acquired knowledge and knowledge by presence. Acquired knowledge is obtained by means of the mediation of the five senses and going through different mental stages. This knowledge transfers the quiddity of objects to us; however, it does not involve their existential characteristics (such as temperature, humidity …). In other words, acquired knowledge is an unproductive kind of knowledge.

Knowledge by presence directly comes to the inner self and, in other words, it is a kind of “intuitive” perception. Unlike acquired knowledge, this knowledge or perception is accompanied by existential and external effects. Through a union with the external object, man’s soul penetrates this kind of knowledge and becomes aware of the depth of its existence.

Man’s knowledge by presence is manifested in different ways:

1. Self-perception: Man’s self-knowledge is intuitive and by presence. Even if his five senses are paralyzed, he will still be able to perceive his essence. This is consistent with the fact that he can
Sense Perception

sometimes know himself through acquired knowledge (for example, through seeing, touching, or the like).

2. Man perceives all his inner faculties, motivations, desires, emotions, thoughts, actions and mental principles through knowledge by presence.\(^5\)

3. The perception of all the input given to the five senses, which are man’s informants, is completed through knowledge by presence. The analysis and understanding of all the input is thoroughly done in the mind and through the soul’s knowledge by presence. The purpose of the present paper is to elaborate on this issue.

4. Unusual methods of perception and knowledge acquisition, which are mainly based on intuition, such as perceptions obtained through ascetic practice, during sleep or in dreams are perfect references for knowledge by presence. This kind of knowledge plays the most important role in perception in Sadrian philosophy.

After paying attention to the product of its senses and gaining awareness of the forms imprinted on them, the soul reconstructs the quiddity of the external object through its creative acts. This is the most important stage of perception.

In addition to possessing the ability to become aware of what goes on in the senses and in the brain and its other inner faculties, the soul has the power of creativity. It is through this essential creativity that it can construct a form and grant it a kind of existence which is called “mental existence”. Man’s soul is also capable of incarnating impossible and non-existent images and judgments and even “non-existence” itself in the mind and issue positive or negative judgments for them.\(^6\)

In certain places, Mullà Šadrā likens man to God concerning his creative power and argues that the forms which are created in man’s mind


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have not entered it from the outside (have not transmigrated); rather, they have been produced in that workshop and emanated from there. In Mullā Sadrā’s words, the relationship among the forms in the mind and their dependence on each other is emanative and not immanent.⁷

Therefore, unlike other Muslim philosophers, Mullā Sadrā does not regard perception as the immanence of the direct image of the object in the mind and as a passive and reflective process. Rather, he views it as the creation of the forms of objects and the product of the mind’s activity and creativity. This is because, unlike Ibn Sinā and other philosophers, he believes that perception is immaterial and that, unlike Kant’s categories, the mind’s activity and creativity do not add anything to the data of the senses, but construct their similars with a mental existence (not an external existence) and do not impose any specific mould or color to the mind’s own percepts.

As a result, through the reconstruction of sense impressions, the mind creates quiddities and some kind of second-order knowledge, like that which Hume calls ideas, and attains acquired knowledge. To put it more clearly, he builds up acquired knowledge and in ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī’s words: “… is after the ‘known’ but obtains ‘knowledge’ in return.”⁸

In the process of perception, the sensible forms and the impressions of the senses merely play the role of tools and preparatory causes responsible for preparing the soul and mind to create the acquired knowledge or a form and quiddity corresponding to what exists in the external world.

After becoming familiar with the process of sense perception as introduced by Mullā Ṣadrā in his Transcendent Philosophy, it is also useful to refer to Mullā Sadrā’s other theory on perception. As we know, Ibn Sinā and all his followers conceived of knowledge as a “soulish quality”. They believed in Aristotle’s theory and maintained that the mind or the perceptive faculty is a fixed tablet upon which are printed perceptions to which they happen by accident and are saved therein. Such supervened forms are

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⁸. Rawish-i re’ālizm (The Method of Realism), vol. 1, p. 130.
Sense Perception

considered as “secondary perfection” for man and have nothing to do with his essence.\(^9\)

Mullâ Šadrâ agrees with Aristotle in dividing the quiddities of all objects into ten categories. In the first half of his philosophical life, like all other philosophers, he regarded knowledge as a kind of soulish quality (one of the kinds of the category of quality); however, it seems that he put away with this idea later\(^10\) and came to the conclusion that “knowledge” does not belong to any of the Aristotelian categories and, like the very “existence”, it is beyond the categories.

He does not even content himself with this and by referring to the well-known principle of the principality of existence claims that perception and knowledge are among the levels and modes of existence. Therefore, unlike the philosophers before him, Mullâ Šadrâ does not view knowledge as the supervening and the mind as the supervened. He does not view the mind as the container and perception as the contained, either. Rather, he maintains that knowledge cannot be separated from the “knower”\(^11\) and that the mind is the same as the soul and is one of its faculties.

Mullâ Šadrâ argues that knowledge is not divorced from the existence and essence of the knower but is a part of him, and that is why man’s existence gradually develops with the increase of his new knowledge and perceptions. In this way, the level of his existential perfection goes higher, exactly in the same way that the height of a building increases with the addition of more bricks and stones to its frame. Thus knowledge and awareness comprise the “primary perfection” of the soul rather than the “secondary perfection”, as maintained by Ibn Sinâ and others.

According to Mullâ Šadrâ, when man perceives something, in fact, he causes a quality to emerge and move from the hidden state of potentiality to actuality, and this actuality is a perfection for the soul. Hence, with each

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perception, man’s soul becomes more perfect and the substance of his soul, which, according to the principle of trans-substantial motion is in a state of becoming, accelerates its perfection and, in philosophical terms, its “matter” accepts a new “form”.

It is to be emphasized that the becoming and the trans-substantial motion of the soul differ greatly from the trans-substantial motion of the matter in the simplicity and indivisibility of the entity of the soul (unlike the matter which is divisible and is a composite of different parts). It is this very simplicity of the soul, all separate things and immaterials which is equal with the awareness of the self and its states and surroundings.

Mullâ Sadrâ’s theory of knowledge and perception comes to its peak in the principle of the union of different levels: perception, the perceiver, and the perceived. He maintains that since perception is nothing but the “acquisition” of the form of the perceived for the perceiver, and because “acquisition” is the same as “existence” and the existence of everything is the same as its “self”, perception and knowledge are the same as what is known-by-essence and perceived by man. In other words:

(1) Perception (Knowledge) = Perceived (Known) \[12\]

Second, as we know, perception or knowledge is the same as the perceiver and the knower and is not separate from it. This is because knowledge is the same as awareness of the self, and awareness of the self is the same as ourselves and essence. That is:

(2) Perception (Knowledge) = Perceiver

A comparison of equations (1) and (2) results in obtaining the following:

(3) Perceiver = The Perceived or Known-by-Essence

This theory of Mullâ Sadrâ is a part of his general theory on all kinds of perception. As mentioned before, philosophers classify perceptions into sense perception, imaginal perception and intellectual perception. This theory is known as the theory of the union of knowledge, the knower, and the known, or as Mullâ Šadrâ says, the union of the intellect, the intelligent and the intelligible. He believes that like the sense, the sensor and the sensible, imagination and the imagined, as well as the intellect, the intelligent and the intelligible, are united each at their own levels. The significance of this theory is better revealed in its intellectual version.

Generally speaking, this theory indicates that perception is generally the same as the perceived and there is nothing called perception which is separate from the perceived object in the outside (unless man’s mind makes a mental distinction between the two). On the other hand, as the action cannot be separated from the agent, perception (which is the same as the perceived), too, cannot be separated from the perceiver, since perception is the action of the soul and not its passivity. And both of them (and those three) are all dressed in the same thing which is man’s soul and does not possess three external existences.

Wherever there is a known, there is knowledge, and when there is knowledge, there is a knower. These three are correlated, and correlated things, according to the rational rule of correlation, correspond with each other. Therefore, knowledge, the knower and the known, or perception, the perceived and the perceiver are all nothing more than the same thing, since they possess only one existence. The perceived does not mean “a quiddity or something possessing perception”\(^\text{13}\) to be considered in separation from perception and what it has perceived; rather, it is the same as perception, since the perceived form and perception are inseparable.

\(^{13}\) *al-Shawâhid al-rubûbiyyah*, p. 244.
Thus the sense, the essential sensible and the sensing individual or soul are altogether one truth but are considered three different things according to our assumptions and mental considerations in philosophy. However, in terms of existence, all three of them are the same and are of the kind of existence and existence and exist through one existence. Mullâ Şadrâ refers to this relationship as the “union of the sensor and the sensible” and the “union of the intellect, the intelligible, and intelligence”.

It is now crystal clear why the human soul and existence grow with the expansion of his knowledge and awareness, and why man’s existence, while possessing stability and an external real entity, is continually in a developmental motion. And it is in relation to this point that Heraclitus says, “you can never smell the same flower twice.”

The principle of the union of the perceived, the perceiver by essence and perception, or the union of the intellect, the intelligible and intelligence holds a very important place in Mullâ Şadrâ’s philosophy. According to him, he was successful in proving this principle by philosophical demonstrations and through long hours of ascetic practice and prayer at last when he was fifty-eight years old. Originally, this theory is very old and had been devised by the Illuminationist sages of ancient Iran and Alexandrian philosophers and, particularly, Porphyry has discussed it in his book. Ibn Sinâ and his disciples could not find the necessary proof for the truth of this principle and as a result refuted it, but Mullâ Şadrâ succeeded in demonstrating it based on a series of premises and arguments.

It is quite clear that by the perceived he does not mean the external object but a concept that the mind has received (or constructed) or the same “known-by-essence”. The meaning of union here is the unity and oneness of two things, such as the union of motion with the moved, potentiality with actuality or the matter and form, but certainly not the union of the substance and accident.

The important issue which has occupied the minds of many philosophers and should be dealt with here is the correspondence of the mental concept to the external reality (subject and object) or, as Mullā Ṣadrā says, the “correspondence between known-by-essence and known-by-accident.” Realist philosophers believe in the correspondence between the subject and object; however, there are others who do not agree with this and believe in the separation of mental concepts from external realities or even view external realities as images of mental concepts. In the Transcendent Philosophy the correspondence between the subject and object is considered as the cornerstone of philosophy, without which there would remain no subject to be discussed in philosophy, rendering all the efforts in this field into a verbal game.

As mentioned before, Mullā Ṣadrā refers to knowledge and perception as “light” (which illuminates the objects) and regards them as being the representation and manifestation of the external reality in the mind and, as a result, calls it the “unveiling”. In Mullā Ṣadrā’s school of philosophy, the key for the correspondence between the subject and object and the guarantor of the real relationship between them is the unity of quiddity in “known-by-essence” and “known-by-accident”, since the “quiddity” of objects in the outside and in the mind is one and the same.

In acquired knowledge man constantly deals with quiddities. No one could ever claim that acquired knowledge means the presence of objects in the mind; rather, it is only the quiddity and the limits and boundaries of external objects which come to the mind.

Quiddity is the same as the external reality dressed in “mental existence”. When stating that knowledge has an unveiling aspect, it means that it represents the external quiddity: A triangle is a triangle and not a square or something else, whether in the mind or in the outside. Thus quiddity is both knowledge and the known.

We can perceive all the primary and secondary qualities, quantitative aspects and states of objects, which are the manifestations of the
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essence of objects, by means of the sense and proceed from them to quiddity. That is why this relationship is referred to as “the saving of essentials” (inḫifāz-i dhātiyāt) in both subjective and objective quiddities in Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophy.

The distinction Mullā Ṣadrā makes between the external and mental objects pertains to the difference in their degrees of existence. The external existent has a stronger existence and can affect other objects (for example, fire can burn things and water can moisturize them); however, the mental existent possesses a weak, shade-like and pale existence and lacks such effects. That is why gnostics believe that ascetics and those who have strong will power are capable of granting strength and effects to the same mental existents and have them realized and incarnated in the outside world through their own spiritual power and strength.

Meanwhile, Mullā Ṣadrā emphasizes that the abstraction and stripping of the quiddity of the external object from the matter and materiality is necessary for sense perception; otherwise, the quiddity of the external object will not come to the mind. Accordingly, Mullā Ṣadrā concludes that man’s mind, too, is abstract (immaterial), since it has the power of “abstraction”, which is a sign of immateriality.

Abstraction (tajrīd) is the mind’s tool for hunting external objects and transferring them to the mind itself. Here, he concludes that each perception is basically accompanied by some kind of abstraction. Sense perception abstracts less than imaginal perception; therefore, its abstraction is less, too. Likewise, imaginal perception abstracts less than intellectual perception and, thus, its degree of abstraction is less than that of the latter.

From another perspective and in line with Muslim mystics, Mullā Ṣadrā divides the world of existence into three types of sensory, imaginal and intellectual worlds. In some other place, he divides it into four types: the corporeal world, the world of sensory souls and all sensible forms, the world

15. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 245.
of immaterial souls and the world of intellects. In these three-fold or four-fold worlds, the quiddities of all material existents are the same and correspond to each other. In spite of the significant differences among these worlds, every quiddity existing in the corporeal world can also be found in all other worlds, although the kinds and degrees of existence in those worlds are different.\textsuperscript{17}

What was discussed above could be considered as a confirmation of the correspondence of the material sensible by accident to the ideal and mental sensible by essence and as a guarantee for the unity of the quiddity of everything in the external world and the worlds of the mind and soul, even to the level of intelligible by essence.\textsuperscript{18}

It goes without saying that a thorough study of Mullâ Şadrâ’s theory of perception requires more time. Nevertheless, for the sake of brevity, we will content ourselves with referring to a few important points in this regard.

The first point which deserves to be discussed here is the errors of the senses which might endanger the validity and truth of the forms imprinted on the senses.

It is a proven fact that all the senses are prone to errors. For example, our eyes view a straight rod as a broken one when it is placed in water. Or, the senses of hearing, taste and touch sometimes report things which are against what they really are in the external world. For this reason, some philosophers consider man’s perceptions other than what is there in the outside and introduce them all as the ideas and creations of the mind.

The issue of the error of the senses or perceptions has been carefully studied and discussed in Islamic philosophy. It is said that error has no way in the senses since they do their job correctly and that errors are actually the same mistakes of man’s mind in making adjustments and passing judgments. Philosophically speaking, man’s faculty of imagination gets involved in

\textsuperscript{17} al-Asfâr, vol. 3, pp. 363, 506 and vol. 4, p. 245.
\textsuperscript{18} The correspondence of the three-fold corporeal, imaginal, and intellectual worlds to each other. C.f. al-Asfâr, vol. 6, p. 277 and vol. 7, p. 18.
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recognizing the error, and as Ibn ‘Arabi states: “the senses are the witness and the intellect is the judge.”

The errors made by mental patients have another reason, too. Melancholic patients see and hear things which apparently lack external existence and are the creations of the faculty of estimation, that is, their very disordered mind.

It is also possible for universal statements to give way to errors and this is because of the interference of the faculty of imagination. Following Ibn ‘Arabi and mystics, Mullà Şadrâ refers to such erroneous statements, issued by the sick mind and causing skepticism and sophism, as the “devil’s interferences” and considers them as evil phenomena.

Nevertheless, Islamic philosophy does not yet claim that all of man’s perceptions correspond to reality and just contents itself with saying that, all in all, perceptions can correspond to external objectivity and man is intrinsically of the same view, too.

The second point is that man’s perception is not limited to sense perception; rather, it is accompanied and followed by two other types of perception, called imaginal perception and intellectual perception, which together constitute the chain of man’s perceptions (Mullà Şadrâ does not agree with and almost rejects estimative perception, which held a special place in Islamic philosophy).

Sense perception is defined as the presence of the form of every particular and material thing which has accidents before the perceiver, yet without the matter and materiality. Imaginal perception means the presence of the form of every particular but immaterial thing without the presence of the matter. And intellectual perception means the presence of the universal form of every sensory and imaginative thing. This thing is called the

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20. Ibid.
“intelligible”; its perceiver is called the “intelligent”; and the universal perception itself is called the “intellect”.

Mullâ Sadrâ divides this intelligible into the “primary intelligible”, the “secondary philosophical intelligible” and the “secondary logical intelligible”. Generally speaking, the degrees of perception consist of sense perception, imaginal perception and intellectual perception (including the primary intelligible, the secondary philosophical intelligible and the secondary logical intelligible) in the order given here. There is a real and connective relationship among these different degrees of perception; that is, these degrees function like the changing degrees of water temperature rather than the fixed degrees of a ruler. What is more, the origin of all of them consists of external existents and sensibles.

The third point is that, according to Mullâ Sadrâ and Islamic philosophers, the Arabic word of *dhîhn*, which is sometimes translated as mind and sometimes as understanding, refers to one of the faculties of the soul which can perceive external objects and entities or man’s internal psychic states. It is the same “perceptive power” of the soul that includes “perception” as well as the “sense”, and we might even say that it is different from understanding in English (or *verstand* in German or *entendement* in French). It does not have its Kantian meaning, either, and is not limited to understanding and the “power of understanding”.

Evidently, in Mullâ Sadrâ’s view, *dhîhn* is not the same as the brain or any other material body organ. Moreover, as mentioned before, it should not be considered as a container for knowledge and perception to pre-exist their acquisition. Rather, it is actually the same as man’s acquired knowledge and is simultaneous with it.22

The fourth point is that, previously, philosophers defined philosophy as “man’s becoming an intellectual world, similar and corresponding to the sensible and external world.” At the end of his theory of perception, Mullâ Sadrâ concludes that according to the principle of the unity of the sensor and

the sensible, as well as the union of the intelligent and the intelligible, and also according to the principle of the unity of knowledge and existence, man is a knowledgeable existence who at each and every mode and stage of existence (sensory, imaginal, intellectual) unites with the existents of that mode and stage on the basis of his perception and knowledge.

The conclusion is that through his perceptions of this material world and also through transferring the quiddities of external existents to his mind and spirit, man, in fact, becomes a mental and intellectual world similar to the material world, and in Plotinian terms, the microanthropos, due to his perception of the realities of the world, becomes the same as the world and the universe (or the macroanthropos). Thus the intellectual perception of realities and objects, i.e. philosophy, means correspondence to the external world. This is a realistic correspondence which is exactly the opposite to the idealistic correspondence that Hegel and his followers advocate.

The fifth point is that there are a series of distinctions between man’s perceptions and those of animals, which possess sensory and even imaginal perception. One of these differences is man’s possessing intellectual perception and the ability for the perception of universals which lead to rule formation and philosophy and from which other sciences originate.

The other one is man’s perceiving his own perceptions or knowing that he knows, which is called “appreciation” by Leibniz and “compound knowledge” by others.

The abstraction, generalization and analysis of perceptions and the classification of concepts to universal and particular, as well as concept and judgment, are all among the characteristics of human beings. This paper is devoted to “concepts”; however, the perceptions which have statements or judgments require a separate study. It must be emphasized that Mullâ Sadrâ has revealed the peak of the elevation of his thoughts in this regard and has portrayed the most delicate and beautiful scenes of man’s power of perception and thought through the magic of his art of writing.
Muslim philosophers have divided existence into two types: objective (or external) existence and mental (or psychological) existence. Mental existence represents the existence of subjects in the mind when they are imagined or function as subjects for predicates in propositions. Such subjects or mental existents might have an extension in the outside, as well as not.

For example, we sometimes consider “non-existence” as the subject, and pose a number of judgments for it in the mind and in propositions which are true but lack external objectivity. Besides, concerning non-existent and impossible objects (agreement of opposites), we sometimes imagine the universalities (as well as existents, completely detached from all their characteristics) in the mind. A universal thing, whether a concept or a judgment, is created in the mind, and, as we know, is of an abstract existence; however, since it has no existence in the outside world; it exists in another place, i.e. in the mind. The existence of such existents is called mental existence. The perception of such an existence is instinctive, and
everybody perceives and accepts it by his inner sense (this issue supports the idea of mental existence).

The division of existence into mental and external ones could also be generalized to the division of quiddity. Accordingly, it can be said that quiddity or essence is of two types: external and mental.

Available evidence suggests that this important philosophical issue has no record in Greek philosophy, and is among the findings of Muslim philosophers and Islamic philosophy. Apparently, the first person who devoted an independent chapter to mental existence in his book was Fakhr Razi, the well-known Iranian theologian (in his *al-Mabâḥith al-mashriqīyyah*). In the Introduction of his book, he states that he has been inspired by the ideas of his preceding philosophers in writing this book.

The issue of mental existence has two aspects. On the one hand, it has an ontological dimension, since it is a kind of existence which has been weakened to a great extent and lost the features and effects of external existence. However, in its own turn – and not in opposition to external existence – it is an external existence (since man and his soul and mind possess such an existence), yet, when it is contrasted with an objective external existent, it is called mental existence.

On the other hand, this issue is an epistemological one and deals with the formation of knowledge and awareness in man and his relation with the outside world.

In occidental philosophy, epistemology is separated from ontology and appears in a different horizon, so that, unless the problem of knowledge is clarified, there will logically remain no context for ontology. Nevertheless, these two disciplines have been intermixed to some extent in Islamic philosophy, where man’s knowledge is related to the knowledge of existence. In systematic philosophical discussions, however, epistemology comes before ontology and other philosophical issues, and is considered as

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their threshold. Mullâ Sadrâ has discussed the topic of knowledge – of which mental existence is a part – in different places for specific philosophical considerations. We will refer to a part of this issue in the discussion of the unity of the knower, the known, and knowledge.

The issue of mental existence can be viewed as a link between ontology and epistemology, clarifying the relation between man and the world. The issue of the correspondence between the external world and the mind is posed and analyzed in this part. Most Muslim philosophers believe that what is formed in the mind is the very essence or quiddity rather than an image, so that if a quiddity refers to an external existent and, in fact, belongs to the category of knowledge, it will be the same as the quiddity of the external object which has been transferred to the mind without its objective existence and external effects.

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In the past, a number of important and technical criticisms were targeted at the problem of mental existence which many philosophers were unable to respond to or solve. For example, they said that knowledge and perception are qualities (which are called mental qualities) that occur to man’s mind (and the soul), while if the essence of an external object enters the mind, it is necessary for it to turn into a mental quality, and the changing of essence into accident is impossible.²

Second, when we gain the knowledge of a thing in terms of its quantity or other accidents (except for its quality) and internalize it, we have, in fact, transformed it into a mental quality. However, as we know, according to philosophical-logical definitions and data, the ten-fold categories (Aristotelian categories) are completely different from each other in essence and quiddity, and can never turn into each other. Some Muslim

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² Due to conservation of essences and the impossibility of categories’ transforming into each other.
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philosophers and theologians tried to respond to this objection through resorting to false justifications, and some others, due to not knowing the answer, completely denied the issue of mental existence. However, to solve the problem, Mullâ Şadrâ propounded one of his philosophical masterpieces which could also be employed in solving other related philosophical intricacies. Therefore, the issue of mental existence can be considered as one of the innovations of Mullâ Şadrâ’s school of thought.

To disentangle this problem, Mullâ Şadrâ resorted to logic and started analyzing “predication” in propositions. Normally, when a predicate is predicated on and attributed to a subject, it is intended to demonstrate or express the existence of the predicate in the subject. Generally speaking, this could be true only when the predicate embodies existence, and the subject is an extension for it, as in the proposition, “*Man is greedy*”.

Mullâ Şadrâ maintains:

There is another kind of predication which can be found in propositions such as “*Man is a species*”. Here, the intention is to state the identity between the subject and the predicate; that is, referring to the unity of two apparently different quiddities. This kind of predication is called *ḥaml-i awwâlī / dhâṭî* (primary and essential predication), since it is only true about essences, and since it is “primary in truth /or falsity”, and the proposition given in the previous paragraph is called *ḥaml-i shây’-i ṣanâ’î* (prevailing technical predication).

The other important logical point which Mullâ Şadrâ has referred to in the same place is that logicians commonly believe that for the realization of the “contradiction” relation between two things, it is necessary to observe unity in eight conditions (subject, predicate, place, time, potency and act, general and particular, condition, and relation). Nevertheless, he adds a ninth condition and states that for contradiction to be realized, in addition to unity in the above-mentioned conditions, unity in predication is also necessary. In

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Mental Existence

other words, both of them should be of the type of either common or primary essential predication; otherwise, there would be no contradiction.

He solved the problem of mental existence in the same way and said that when the external essence or quality (or any other accident) occurs to the mind and develops mental existence (and is, in fact, denied external existence), we can conceive of two different kinds of predication: 1. This mental existence is conceptually and essentially in unity with the external existent in terms of quiddity and, as a result, is predicated on it through the so-called ĥaml-i awwalî (primary and essential predication); 2. However, when we examine its status and existence in the mind, we see that it is a “mental quality”, and, therefore, of the type of the so-called ĥaml-i shây’î șanâ’î (prevalent technical predication), since we are, in fact, faced with its existentiality. When we imagine an essence or accident in the outside, we attend to its external effect; nevertheless, when the external effect is negated, i.e. when it enters the mind, it is only a quality, and this is the key to solving the problem.

Mullâ Šadrâ uses the word “particular” in his example: The proposition, “The particular is not applicable to multiple things”, must be viewed in two ways: 1) since in practice and in the outside, the particular is not the universal, it is an extension for the label “particular”. However, as in the above proposition the word “particular” is considered to include all the particulars of the world, it is a universal (an extension for universal) and by no means a particular (in other words, it is a universal existentially and practically, but a particular conceptually and essentially).

Thus the “particular” is, in a sense, not universal and an opposite for it, 2) in another sense, it is a universal, including numerous extensions. However, there is no contrast between these two propositions: “particular is particular” and “particular is universal”, since one is of the type of primary essential predication, and the other of the type of prevalent technical predication.

Concerning the problem of mental existence, it should be said that all the essences and accidents that occur to the mind are mental qualities,
since their existence in the mind is realized through prevalent technical predication. Yet, comparing to each other, they are either the external concept of essence or an accident which is predicable to it (through primary essential predication). Moreover, essence is the same essence and accident which exist in the world.

Unity of the Intellect, Intelligible, and Intelligent

This issue partly pertains to the relation between man and his knowledge. Mullā Ṣadrā’s epistemology has been scatteredly discussed amid the different parts of his philosophy, and, in every part, one of its dimensions has been introduced. In his tackling of this issue, Mullā Ṣadrā responds to the following questions:

1) Is our knowledge separate from us and only a mirror-like reflection of external objects in our mind and senses?

2) Is the way knowledge reaches man similar to the pouring of something into an empty container, and their relation like the one between the container and the content, or is it a function of man’s mind (and soul) and its effect?

As we know, there are several ideas about knowledge in preceding and modern philosophical schools in the West which suffer from certain shortcomings and are not supported by any logical arguments. However, to demonstrate the essential relation between knowledge, the knower, and the known, Mullā Ṣadrā has presented a number of rational arguments.

In the light of his theory, and on the basis of a series of philosophical arguments, Mullā Ṣadrā proves that the perceiver, the mentally perceived object, and knowledge, itself, are the same and one. As he, himself, says, “the intellect, the intelligent, and the intelligible”, or “knowledge, the knower, and the directly known (subject)” are in unity with
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each other. This issue is known as the “unity of the intellect, intelligent, and intelligible”.

It should also be added that, here, by the perceived object (or the intelligible), he means the same form which has been produced in man’s mind, which is technically referred to as the directly known (subject), rather than the external object which is called the indirectly known (fact / object).

The issue of the unity of the intelligent and intelligible is basically related to the unity of the knower or the perceiver (the knowing agent) with the directly known, i.e. the same mental existent and the same intelligible and known in man’s mind, rather than its external existence. This is because it is a certain fact that objects never enter our mind exactly as they are through our perception and knowledge of them.

Philosophers’ disagreements in this regard center around the question of whether the picture-like quiddity of objects in the mind (the so-called directly known by each individual in the process of perception) is in unity with his intellect and soul or not.

If the answer to the above question is positive, knowledge, the knower, and the known, all, refer to the same reality, and analyzing this reality into three different things is only the product of man’s mental power. In other words, the relation among them is of the type of the one between the creator and the created, rather than the one between the container and the contained.

* * *

This issue has a long historical record, and we might be able to find its roots in Ancient Iranian philosophy. It has been said that it was Porphyry (232-304 AD), Plotinus’s student, who for the first time wrote a book in this regard, and that is why this issue has become famous in his name. Before Mullā Ṣadrā, no one had posed any argument for it, or, at least, we do not know of any.

4. Mullā Ṣadrā, Treatise on the Unity of the Intelligent and the Intelligible. Direct reference has been made to this point at the end of the first essay of this treatise.
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Ibn Sinā and a group of Peripatetic philosophers did not agree with this theory, since, in their opinion, there was no rational and demonstrative method for proving it. At last, Mullā Sadrā found it of interest, started studying it, and in the course of a revelation he received during his period of ascetic practices in the suburbs of Qum (in 1037 AH, when he was 58 years old), he found the related arguments and, following a philosophical approach, proved his theory.

In addition to an extensive explanation of this issue in his al-Asfār, Mullā Sadrā has also dealt with it in some of his other books, and written an independent treatise on it. Obviously, the philosophical demonstration of this old and obsolete theory was of high importance to him, and we might even say that it was the most important theme in his epistemology, since he conceives of his success in demonstrating this issue as a miracle, the result of the direct assistance he received from God and the Holy Lady (Ma’sūmah, the daughter of the 6th leader of Shi’ites, who has a shrine in Qum in her name), and the fruit of his ascetic practices, worships, and lamentations in God’s Presence.5

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Mullā Sadrā’s arguments concerning this issue have been based on his other principles, the most important of which perhaps include “the principality of existence”, “the trans-substantial motion”, “soul’s creativity”, “gradation of existence”, and “the difference between primary and prevalent predications”. In order to understand Mullā Sadrā’s arguments in this regard, one should first perceive the meaning of “unity” (ittiḥād). Obviously, unity in the sense of having two different existents, objects, concepts, or quiddities becoming one is impossible and absurd. Clearly, two separate things or two contradictory concepts are always two things and will never become one. This is the same objection that Ibn Sinā and others

advanced against this issue, because they assumed that the unity between the intelligent and the intelligible is of this type.

Moreover, the meanings of “perception” and “knowledge” or rationalization need to be clarified here. The perception of things means “presence”, and presence means the “existence”, rather than appearance, of that thing before the perceiver, since “presence” is other than appearance.

Now the question is whether the “existence” of each “form” of the perceived object is separate and independent from the “existence” of the perceiver (or the intelligent), or in unity with it and has come into existence through that existence.

The answer to the above question is that if the existence of each were different from the other, each of the two had to be conceivable without the other (while it is impossible to have perception without a perceiver or a perceiver without perception). Accordingly, perception and the “form” that is perceived and enters the mind are not anything other than the mind and the soul, so that they would have to appear before it. Rather, they are a part of it, and are made by the mind itself; they are the same as the existence of the soul and have presence for it. Again, it is emphasized that there is a difference between “presence” and “appearance”.

* * *

Another argument here is that there is a mutual relation between the perceived object and the perceiver, which is technically referred to as correlation. Related examples include the relation between a child and his father, the owner and his property, or a husband and wife.

This mutual relation, at all times and in all cases, makes it necessary for one side to come into existence or be assumed if the other side is in existence or is assumed; in other words, their separation from each other is impossible.

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6. This difference is the same as the one between nomen and phenomenon.
According to Islamic philosophy, two correlatives are identical and commensurate in terms of their existence, non-existence, and potency and act.

Therefore, if there is a perceiver, there is also a perceived, and it is absurd for one of them to exist actually while the other is non-existent. Besides, since this relation is merely an “existential relation”, it is absurd for it to involve more than the existence of one of the two. Thus, since the relation between the perceiver and the perceived is of the type of correlation, both of them have the same existence.

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Let’s review this argument once more: As mentioned previously, perception means the presence and existence of the “form” of the perceived object, and there exists nothing like “perception” in separation from the form of the perceived object in the mind (unless we separate them from each other through mental analysis). “Perception” and “the perceived” or the cognitive form are two different things in concept, but the same thing in existence.

That is,

Perception (Knowledge or Intellection)↔ Known and the Perceived (Directly Known)

On the other hand, “perception” is the act (or passivity) of the perceiver; no act is ever separable from its agent, and their existences are the same as each other. In fact, the existence of acts or passivity in man is no different from the existence of the agent or the patient.

Thus the existence of the perceiver (the knower or the intelligent) is not separate from the existence of his knowledge and intelligence, and both of them exist through one “existence”, i.e. they are in unity.
Accordingly, wherever there is knowledge, there is inevitably a knower, too, and both are interdependent and correlative, so that if the existence of the knower fades away, there would remain no existence for the perceived, either. Thus,

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Perception (Knowledge or Intellecction)} \leftrightarrow \text{Perceiver (Intelligent or Knower)} \\
\end{array}
\]

A combination of the above two relations leads us to the conclusion that the knower and the known (and knowledge) exist through one existence, and are in unity with each other. Therefore:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Perceiver} \leftrightarrow \text{Perceived} \\
\end{array}
\]

Clearly, what is intended by the perceived is its mental concept and quiddity rather than its external equivalent.

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There are certain subtleties in knowledge that require profound analysis and careful treatment, and cannot be discovered through the simplistic approaches that some philosophers might follow. Pre-Sadrian philosophers viewed knowledge and its consequences as accidents that occur to the mind (or the soul) exactly in the same way that dust covers the surface of a table.

Mullá Sadrá rejected this idea, since he believed that, firstly, the soul is creative and can negate external existence to quiddities existing in the outside, create them exactly as they are in itself, and grant them mental existence.

Secondly, “the form of knowledge”, i.e. the knowledge whose form is made in the mind, like any form (as in Aristotelian philosophy), requires
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matter (*hyle*), and the matter of the form of the mind and knowledge is the very human soul. In fact, man’s knowledge or intellection is a part of his identity (a part of his soul) and “develops his existence”.

According to Peripatetics, matter or *hyle* is a potency for the “form”, and form plays the role of the cause for the *hyle*. *Hyle* and the faculty of the soul, through receiving or creating certain forms of perception and knowledge, grant actuality to themselves and, as a result, grow more, and with every step they take towards intellection and perception, they come one step closer to perfection.

In other words, man’s soul is like a *tabula rasa* (while tablet) which is the same as pure potency: the more its intellect (and intelligible), which is created (and caused) by itself, the more its actuality, and the higher its perfection.

Pre-Sadrian philosophers believed that the relation between knowledge and intelligibles, on the one hand, and the soul, on the other, is like the relation between the container and the contained (and its secondary perfection)\(^7\); however, Mullâ Šadrâ proved that the intellect and intelligibles of the soul are the product of its own endeavors, as well as the developmental motion of man’s existence, and that with every bit of knowledge that is gained, something is added to man’s existence (and the primary perfection\(^8\) of the soul); it is more like adding a brick to a building in its process of completion, rather than splashing some paint on it or filling a container with its content.

The more knowledge reaches man’s soul, the grosser and the more perfect his existence. Thus man’s knowledge (and perception which is the introduction to knowledge) is a part of his existence, rather than one of the accidents that might occur to him.

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7. Final entelechy.
8. First entelechy.
Chapter Two:

Ontology
Perhaps one of the most important and difficult philosophical issues is the quality of the relation between created existents and the Timeless and Everlasting Creator. This subject has always been discussed under the topic of “the quality of emanation” or “the quality of creation”, and Muslim philosophers and gnostics have granted it great depth.

Apart from the Illuminationist (Ishrāqi) method of ancient Iran and pre-Socratic philosophers, the Peripatetic method, and the Aristotelian method, two theories are the firmest and subtlest of all. The first is that of Plotinus, who believed that the first created or “the first emanated” was the intellect and “the second emanated” was the soul. The second is that of Islamic gnostics (Sufists), who divide existence into three levels. These three levels, manifestations, or stations of being are as follows:

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* This paper was first delivered as a speech at the “Ibn ‘Arabi and Rūmī” Conference in Complutense University (Spain-Madrid) in 1999.
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1. A Being that does not accept any attribute and characteristic. It is so absolute that it does not even accept “absolute” as one of its attributes.

2. The beginning of the epiphany, i.e. manifestation, of this pure and infinite Being and the appearance of its numerous perfections in the form of unfolded being (wujûd-i munbasî), in spite of having external reality and not being a logical universal, includes all existents, and is absolute. It is like the rays of the sun, which cause the existence of objects but are different from them.

3. External existents, from the intellect and immaterial soul to the material bodies and objects of the world.

Here, we are dealing with two absolute realities called “absolute being”. In one of them, “absolute” means being free from any attribute and characteristic. It can never be known or even seen by means of a gnostic eye. In the other, “absolute” means being all-inclusive. Unlike the former, the latter enjoys several attributes and all kinds of beauty and characteristics.

Perhaps, it is the reason why the expression (absolute being) has been used in both the above meanings in gnostic (mystic) literature. As will be explained later, when reading Rûmi’s poetry, we have to deal with the same issue and must, therefore, try to understand which sense was intended by the poet.

The above mystic classification concerning the issue of emanation and creation and its quality presents practically the best and most perfect theory in this regard. This is because, in addition to observing the principle of “nothing is emanated from the one except for one,” which cannot be ignored and is considered valid by all Peripatetics, Illuminationists, and even the followers of Plotinus’ Alexandrian mysticism, it does not suffer from the defects of previous methods and theories. Moreover, its philosophical analysis is quite logical, fluent, and acceptable.
According to Islamic gnostics, the first “effect” or “act” that is emanated from the pure, absolute, specific, and attribute-free Being (the First Being) and is necessary for it is a general, all-inclusive, and absolute being or the so-called “unfolded being”, “flowing existence”, or “emanation”, which, unlike the first level of being, embodies not only all the realities of the world but also all the perfectional attributes of God’s Essence. Here, we are referring to those attributes or names each of which alone can be the cause of the appearance of a phenomenon or a number of phenomena in the world.

This absolute being is the origin and source of the existence of all the existents of the world, ranging from the intellect and the soul to bodies and matters. However, such an emanation, which involves so much plurality, from the One God is not in contradiction which the principle of “nothing is emanated from the one but one”. Neither does it lead to another problem that is usually seen in philosophy; namely, considering the emanation of temporal or renewing and originated objects from God Almighty to be absurd.

This Absolute Being, while being one of the manifestations of God’s hidden and unknowable Essence and His Station of Oneness, accompanies all existents at all levels and in all quiddities.

This very unfolded being is the beginning of the first “multiplication” and plurality (while enjoying unity) in the world. It is only later that existents appear in vertical and horizontal manners at different ontological levels. This theory, which was developed in the light of the Qur’an and hadith in Islamic gnosis, presented a comprehensive and flawless view of the emanation of existents and “multiples” from the One God and an artistic and beautiful worldview.

However, the application of the term “absolute being” to both grades of being created some problems for gnostics and mystics concerning the perception of the issue in practice. In his magnum opus, *al-Asfâr*, Mullâ Şadrâ has presented some examples of the problems arising from the
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ambiguity of this univocality. These examples have been taken from the words of Muḥyaddīn Ibn Ṭarabī and the commentator of his Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah, ‘Alā’ al-Dawlah Simnānī.

Since this issue marks the meeting point of the views of the three distinguished Islamic gnostics, Muḥyaddīn Ibn Ṭarabī, Rūmī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, it was chosen as the main theme of this paper.

The ambiguity arising from using the term “absolute being” in two meanings can be witnessed in Rūmī’s poetry.¹ We read as follows in the Mathnawī:

We and our existences are non-existences;
(while) You are the Absolute Being;
which causes (our) transient (existences) to appear.

A related couplet has also appeared a little differently in some places.

“Absolute Being” in this poem refers to the very famous expression in mysticism and Ibn Ṭarabī’s works which was quite common in Rūmī’s time and taught by Qūnawī.

By “we”, he might have meant all existents or all human beings, and by “pseudo-existence non-existences”, he might have meant possible things and quiddities, which are considered “existent” on the surface. However, in reality, they have no existence of their own, and as long as the breeze of being does not blow into them, there will appear no trace of being in them. Rūmī has assimilated this false, unreal, and dependent representativeness of existence to the motion of the picture of a lion on a flag which starts moving when the wind blows.²

2. Ibid., couplets 603 and 604.
Absolute Being

We (are) all lions, but lions (painted) on a flag; their charge (forward) is (only) because of the wind, moment by moment (And) their charge (forward) is visible, but the wind is not visible May that which is invisible never be lost (to us)!

In other words, if there is no wind, the lion on the flag cannot display its “self” or “existence”. If Almighty God’s making is not at work, and if He does not grant existence, the “existence” and “is” of the existents of the world will not be realized, and they will cease to exist.

Our wind (which moves us) and our existence is (part) of Your gift; Our existence is entirely from Your bringing (us) into existence. You made non-existence (to become) Your lover; (and then) You showed the delight of existence to non-existence.

Here, like other gnostics, in order to portray the existents’ true need of the Creator and the Main Cause of their existence, Rûmi has to assume a personality for their non-existent ipseities. This is as if the Absolute Existent and the Source of Being, due to His Absolute Beauty, which is necessary for His Absolute Being, is a beloved and has granted the pleasure of His Love to non-existences and non-existents (which only exist in God’s Mind and Knowledge), so that they fall in love with the Beauty of the Truth in the “receptacle of their non-existence”, are fascinated by the Source of Being and the Core of Beauty, and, in the light of their indigence and need to existence, are entitled to “being”.

Rûmi has presented this point very clearly in his Mathnawi and says that the manifestation of being lies where “non-existence has come for begging. This non-existence, which is in contrast to existence, can lead to attaining the gift of “existence” when it knocks at the friend’s door and uses its indigence as a mediator.”
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Existence can be shown in non-existence, (just as) those possessing wealth bring generosity to the poor…

… The alchemical elixir can never be shown (to be effective) if the inferior and base quality of copper items is not made public. Imperfections are the mirror for the quality of perfection, and that lowness is the mirror for the Glory and Majesty (of God). Because opposite makes opposite truly perceptible, (and) because (the nature of) honey is evident with (the taste of) vinegar.³

Now, considering the fact that the “Absolute Being” is the poet’s addressee and the beloved of all existents and quiddities, the question is which meaning of “Absolute Being” and which level of being he had in mind when writing these couplets.

If by Absolute Being he meant “conditioned by no condition” (bi šarṭ-i la, i.e. the signless station of Oneness), one might object that the level of being has nothing to do with creation (making, innovation); it is hidden behind a veil beyond which no person, thing, wisdom, and thought has a way. ‘Aṭṭār Nishābūrī has also referred to this point in his Manṭiq al-tayr.

The prominent contemporary mystic, Imam Khomeini wrote in his famous book Miṣḥāh al-hidāyah as follows: “This Hidden Truth has no relationship with the created and creation. His Truth is other than that of others, and there is no commensurability and similarity between Him and them. Even His Own Names and Attributes have no way into this station.”⁴

However, if we believe that by Absolute Being he meant the very “conditioned by no condition”, unfolded, and flowing Being (what Sufis call, “the truth mediating creation”), the previous problem will be removed.

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3. Ibid., couplets 3202-3211.
Absolute Being

However, one might object that this does not conform to the poet’s interpretation, in which he calls it “pseudo-mortal”. This is because Absolute Being is the same as manifestation and theophany, and one can detect its effects in all the entities of the world and existence.

Secondly, according to researchers and gnostics, this might lead to “undesirable consequences” and create greater problems. As a result, it would be necessary for the Necessary Being to be qualified with the various modes and attributes of possible things, which is far from the sanctity and purity of Almighty Truth’s Essence. Thirdly, according to some Sufis (Simnâni in Sharh Futûhât al-makkiyyah, for instance), this Absolute Being is the Divine Act rather than the Divine’s Essence. Simnâni also said, “The Creator is the very existence of the Truth rather than Absolute Being or limited being.”

In his al-Asfâr, where he deals with the three-fold levels of being (of course, what is intended here is the truth of external being rather than its concept), Mullâ Şadrâ quotes some of ‘Alâ’ al-Dawlah Simnâni’s encounters with Ibn ‘Arabi and the latter’s mistakes in using the phrase “Absolute Being”. He also pays attention to Rûmi and explains as well as defends his poetry.

In this book, Mullâ Şadrâ says that applying the term “Being” or “Absolute Being” to the Essence of Almighty God – i.e. Absolute Being in the first meaning, which is a single essence, and, as we said, does not create anything without the mediation of unfolded being (or holy emanation) – can be seen in the poetic words and phrases of many gnostics. The distinguished gnostic, Rûmi, has used this term is one of his couplets: “We and our existences are non-existences, (while) You are the Absolute Being which causes (our) transient (existences) to appear.”

7. Ibid., p. 334.
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Perhaps, he means that although this term is apparently contrary to what is commonly said, it is not wrong. The reason is that when the gnostic looks at unfolded being, which is the same divine emanation, in his \textit{tawhidi} (related to oneness) view, from among all those infinite emanations he merely sees one thing (invisible), i.e. the very truth of the Necessary Being and the Essentially Self-sufficient rather than quiddities that are “pseudo-existence non-existences” and have directly obtained their existence from the Unfolded, Pre-eternal, and Everlasting Being.

If we pay careful attention to Muslim gnostics’ words, we understand that even quiddities, which are the moulds of existents and are called immutable archetypes in Sufism – while lacking external existence – are not pure non-existence, either. They are, rather, fixed in divine knowledge, exist due to God’s Being, and enjoy certain principles. His Being is a non-differentiated one and is not related to the differentiated existence of quiddities in the external world. Perhaps, what we read in the following \textit{hadith} refers to this point: “God first created the creatures in darkness and then radiated (sprinkled) light (existence) upon them.”

Therefore, all the existents of the world, before coming into existence in their objective form, have a kind of “cognitive existence” in a non-differentiated form before God (like the design of a building in an engineer’s mind). Moreover, according to Rumi, these existences, on whose behalf our poet speaks, even love the source of existence, which is the very Absolute Being, and with the very language which is their essential pre-disposition talk to Him.

You made non-existence (to become) Your lover;
(and then)You showed the delight of existence to non-existence…
… We did not exist, and there was no demand (from us), (but)
Your Grace was hearing our unspoken (prayer)!
Accordingly, the sentence, “You are the Absolute Being of our existence,” is not wrong. It does not even go against what Sufism says in this regard.

However, if we read Rûmi’s poem as recorded in the version in Konya (“We and our existences are non-existences, (while) You are the Absolute Being which causes (our) transient (existences) to appear.”), the previous problem does not arise. Rather, the related couplet might refer to another issue in gnosis and Sufism according to which all external existents, concrete entities, and essences of objects, while enjoying existence, are “non-existent” before Almighty Truth’s Being.

This gnostic insight, which is very famous, is based on the idea that being in the real sense of the word means “the Necessary Being” or the “Pre-Eternal Essential Necessity”. If we pay attention to them themselves, the existence of other existents is an “objective and real existence”; nevertheless, in comparison to that Necessary Absolute Being and Essential Necessity, they are nothing but “samples”, “shadows”, and “metaphors”. They are the same as the relation to the source of existence; in other words, they are the “manifestations” of that Principal Being. Although in man’s common and ignorant view (in contrast to a gnostic one) all objects exist because our senses perceive them, true existence, which is beyond man’s power of perception and feeling, is considered “non-existent” and “mortal” by common people.

God, Who grants existence seems “pseudo-non-existent”; however, objects and existents, which are mortal and non-existent, unless they have an ontological relation with God and are given an existence by Him, are “pseudo-existence” and appear to “be” and “exist”.

Therefore, Rûmi’s poem is not limited to the level of “emanation” and primary creation of the world and embodies all the levels and grades of the existence of all existents even after the beginning of creation and the level of “emanation”.

**Absolute Being**
Man on the Path of Being

This theory, which views everything to be non-existent before God, is intended to demonstrate “oneness”; an issue that Islam and the Qur’an have demonstrated and strongly defend.

According to gnostics, believing in the independence of the existence of existents is a kind of polytheism. For, it means a creature does not need its creator, which is absolutely rejected in gnosis and Islamic philosophy.

Therefore, if the existence and existents – whether human or any other thing – needs God, it permanently, naturally, and necessarily depends on Him. This is what gnostics call “connection”, “pure connection”, or being the “manifestations” and “shadows” of the one True Being.

Rûmi beautifully assimilated this “relation” or “connection” and “dependence” to the blowing of the wind. When looking at the picture of a lion on a flag moving in the wind and apparently attacking something in different directions, a fool or a child might assume that it moves and attacks according to its own free will. However, a scholar or an experienced person is well aware that the lion’s motion is due to the wind rather than itself.

In these couplets, Rûmi assimilates himself and all other existents to the same lion on the flag and lovingly asks his God not to deprive existents of the gift of existence:

We (are) all lions, but lions (painted) on a flag; their charge (forward) is (only) because of the wind, moment by moment (And) their charge (forward) is visible, but the wind is not visible May that which is invisible never be lost (to us)!

We, too, say with Rûmi and other lovers of Absolute Being and the Truth of Being, as well as with the worshipers of the Source of all beauties, to this Many-Faced Invisible Beauty:

May the Invisible be not denied to us; We sacrifice our souls to the Invisible.
The theory of contingency through perpetual duration is one of the most famous philosophical theories and ideas of the well-known philosopher, Seyyed Muḥammed Bāqir Husseini Astarābādi, nicknamed Mir Dāmād (1041 AH). He introduced it in order to solve the problem of the relation between contingents and the eternal (that is, the pre-eternal existence of the Almighty). According to Mir Dāmād himself, no convincing response had been provided for this problem until his time, and even Ibn Sinā and Aristotle considered it an antinomy.

The philosophical and rational difficulty was that it was rationally necessary for each cause and effect to bear a link, such as correlation in potency and act, as well as commensurability and relation, to each other. However, these links and relations were not acceptable between existents.

* This paper was written for the Mir Dāmād Conference in Gorgan in February 2004.
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and possibles, which are all originated, and the Essence of Almighty, Who is eternal and pre-eternal. This is because they should have considered either all possibles to be pre-eternal or Almighty God’s Pre-eternal Essence to be originated. This conclusion led to some other rational problems and was accordingly unacceptable.

In order to solve this problem, Peripatetic philosophers viewed the first firmament, which dominated the world and is itself a contingent but stable and single entity, as the intermediary between Eternal God and other contingents. This is because it was related to the Eternal (Almighty God) through its stability dimension and to other existents through the dimension of its essential and passionate motion, which creates time.

Mullâ Šadrâ, too, introduced the essential motion of substance as the criterion. The reason was that motion in essence and substance has a rational and scientific divine form due to its stability and is related to changing things, i.e. the world, due to its being essential.

In order to solve this problem, Mir Dâmâd posed the issue of origination (coming into being) in perpetual duration (which is known as contingency through perpetual duration). Accordingly, the temporal existents of this world are placed in time as a receptacle, and the world is continually in motion and change; however, it is a fixed existent as a whole; a fixed existent with an interior full of change and evolution.

There is another world (or receptacle) dominating this temporal world in which all the existing realities and entities are fixed. All the events, which are linear in the material world and exist on the surface (of history), exist there in the form of points. Mir Dâmâd calls this world the world or receptacle of time or perpetual duration. There is another world dominating all these worlds called the everlasting (sarmad) world in which nothing but the Essence of Almighty God and His Absolute and Necessary Existence has a way. Its relation to other existents is indirect and established through the
Contingency through Perpetual Duration …

mediation of the world of perpetual duration. According to this theory, the Almighty Truth initially creates existents in time, and the world of perpetual duration triggers the temporal world and presents it as something changing and flowing to us.

According to Ibn Sinâ’s definition of these three worlds or receptacles, the intellect can conceive of three worlds of being:

The first is being “in” time. This kind of being is inside the flow of time. It has a beginning and an end and experiences birth and death. It is continually in flux and renewal, links all the existents of the world of matter, and never rests.

The second is being “with” (not “in”) time. In other words, this kind of being pulls time behind itself and dominates it. However, the world itself is fixed. It is a relation between fixed and changing things because, although it is fixed, it is the cause and origin of the temporal world and all contingent existents. This world is called the world of perpetual duration.

The third is being out of and “far” from time. It dominates perpetual duration and, as a result, the temporal world; it is purely fixed and called the world of the everlasting or sarmad. The relation between this world and the world of perpetuation is between two fixed things; however, the relation between the world of perpetuation and the world of matter is between a fixed thing and a changing thing.

In other words, there are three types of world:

The first is the world where we live and which we know. Time and motion dominate this world, and quantity, amount, mass, and matter exist in it. Objects and events appear in it one after the other and then leave it, and the collection of this coming and going is called “history” and the “process

1. This is because it is impossible for time to be in need of time; otherwise, infinite regression will result.
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of life”. We know it as the temporal world and one that exists in temporals. It can also be called the “world of creation”.

The second is a world entailing the collection of time with all of its parts not in a continuous form but in the form of a fixed and compact existent and like a point on a surface. The collection of the existence of all existents, whose life is a collection of quantifiable motions, exists in it in a single, fixed, timeless, and unchanging form. The name of this place is the world of perpetual duration (‘ālam-i dahr). It can also be called the “world of innovation”.

The third is the world of sarmad or the everlasting world. It is pure existence and far from non-existence and origination; it is a fixed, pre-eternal, and eternal being which dominates perpetual duration and is the cause of it. No being has a way into this world except the Necessary Being, and it is the source of all existences and existents.

Mīr Dāmād calls these worlds receptacles (wi’à’). The everlasting receptacle is the cause of the existence of the world of perpetual duration and all other fixed things. The everlasting world is the receptacle of fixed things and the cause of temporal changing things and dominates the world of time.

As we said, since time is, on the whole, a fixed existent externally and a changing one internally, it is in time. Therefore, all changes and motions in the world of time and temporals (that is, the same material world) are the effects of the world of perpetual duration. This world, on the one hand, is related to the material world (efficient relation) and, on the other hand, to the everlasting world (effect-based relation). Non-existence

2. Ibn Sīnā says in Ta‘līqāt, “The faculty of estimation allocates time to everything, and it is impossible for time to have time, too.” In another place, he says, “Being in time is different from time itself. Neither the existence nor the non-existence of time is in time.”
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has no place in the everlasting world because, unlike the world of perpetual duration, which is the receptacle of making, it is the receptacle of existence.

The relations of these three worlds and hypothetical receptacles are as follows: in the world of “time”, the relation exists between changing things and changing things; in the world of “perpetual duration”, the relation exists between fixed and changing things; in the everlasting the relation is between fixed things and fixed things or between eternals and eternals.3

By considering the “world of perpetual duration”, Mír Dámâd purifies the Eternal and Pre-Eternal Essence of the Almighty from any kind of change and maintains that all changing things, whether contingent or created, exist in the world of perpetual duration, which is the main workshop of creation and coming into being from non-being. In this way, he has demonstrated the solution to the most important problem of philosophers following a philosophical approach and based on axiomatic preliminaries which are acceptable to all theosopers.

Another focal issue in this theory is the issue of “origination” or “contingency”, which theologians emphasized and Mír Dámâd studied extensively in order to solve.

The origination of everything means its existence after its non-existence and its being created. By benefiting from Ibn Sinâ’s definitions, as given above, Mír Dámâd says, “Origination is of two types: Sometimes it happens in other than time and sometimes in the chain of time (as what we see in this world).” He calls the latter “temporal origination”.

One of the characteristics of temporal origination is that prior to the time point at which an object originates and comes into being, some other points have been realized before. This kind of origination in prone to time,

quantity, amount, priority, posteriority, and division into parts. Basically, time is of the type of extension; therefore, when it is originated, any of its point is considered non-existence in relation to the next point. The world of temporals is a mixture of existence and non-existence. However, non-temporal origination is of two completely different types:

1. Essential Createdness

In order to know and define this type of createdness, one must pay attention to the essence of every thing as it is before and after its existence. According to Ibn Sīnā, “Quiddity (effect) is non-existence by itself; however, it comes to existence due to its cause.”

In other words, if we study any existing quiddity considering its cause, it will be an actual existent. Nevertheless, considering its nafs al-amr (fact-by-itself) and essential possibility, it is nothing but non-existence. This non-existence is not in contrast with its being an actual existent and can come together with it. Thus it is called “parallel non-existence” and interpreted as “essential createdness”.

2. Atemporal Createdness

Atemporal createdness means that before the existence of any existing object, there is a real and “absolute non-existence” (not relative or abstract) – and according to Mīr Dāmād, “explicit non-existence”. It is a non-existence which has no parts and quantity in separation from the existence of existents. In Mīr Dāmād’s words, it is a “separate”, “opposite”, and true prior non-existence (of that existence).

Therefore, atemporal createdness should not be mistaken with essential createdness, since the priority of non-existence in it is due to its existence rather than the existence of quiddity. That is, when we consider
the quiddity of existence in essential createdness, non-existence is born with it, accompanies it and is parallel to it. However, this consideration is completely different from the consideration of atemporal non-existence and createdness. This is because, here, we compare the existence of “an existent” with its true and “explicit” non-existence, and existence and non-existence cannot come together at the level of the existence of objects and in the receptacle of existence. Therefore, true non-existence is prior to the existence of each existent, and this priority is neither essential nor temporal. Thus we are seeking for something else which Mir Dâmâd calls “atemporal non-existence”. He also calls its precedence “atemporal precedence” and its succeeding existent “existent through existence and atemporal createdness”. Obviously, this absolute, explicit, and atemporal non-existence is in contrast to existence and the createdness of that existent. If we assume that they can come together, agreement of opposites will result; hence, this kind of non-existence, in contrast to parallel non-existence, is called “preceding non-existence”.

What is important in demonstrating Mir Dâmâd’s theory is the image of “unquantifiable separable priority”, which stands against quantifiable separable priority (temporal priority). According to what was mentioned above, in its real sense, createdness is neither essential nor temporal; rather, it is one that occurs in a receptacle other than time, i.e. a fixed receptacle that is free from quantity, amount, continuity, and motion. It is nothing but “atemporal createdness”, and its receptacle is neither time nor consideration in the world of mental quiddities; it is, rather, in a “fixed exterior” or receptacle which contains time and all temporal and non-temporal objects and existents in a fixed form. Mir Dâmâd calls this receptacle “dahr” (perpetual duration).

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The theory of atemporal createdness is an efficient one that agrees with other well-known philosophical principles. Hakim Sabzivâri says in this regard: “Atemporal createdness, which the master believes in, is a supreme theory which embodies both theories and enjoys both advantages. However, the author’s theory (temporal createdness) conforms more to the principles of the divine law.”

Nevertheless, due to some reasons such as believing in the outward of transmitted proofs, the principle of continuity of emanation, and the transsubstantial motion, Mullâ Sadrâ did not favor his master’s theory. However, he never discussed or rejected it explicitly.

Without paying attention to Mîr Dâmâd’s definition of ḍahr and sarmâd, he defines them in other forms. For example, in a place he quotes from philosophers as follows: if we evaluate the essence of time, which is the gathering place for changing things, in terms of the everlasting holy essences, it is called “sarmâd”; “If we evaluate it in terms of something in which the changes and existence are realized, it is called “dahr”; if we consider it in terms of its internal changes, it is called “time”.”

In another place, he says, “According to the great men and pillars of wisdom, a fixed-fixed relation is ‘sarmâd’; a fixed-change relation is ‘dahr’; and a changing-changing relation is ‘time’.”

Then he interprets the above as follows:

By the first, they mean the relation between the Almighty Necessary, His Names, Attributes, and Knowledge; by the second, they mean the relation between God’s fixed Knowledge and changing knowledge, which is the same as the existents of the corporeal world with ontological simultaneity; by the third

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they mean the changing-changing relation with temporal simultaneity.\textsuperscript{5}

It can be inferred from Mullâ Şadrâ’s words that \textit{dahr} in the sense used by Mir Dâmâd has no place in Sadrian cosmology and is included in \textit{sarmad}. It is the relation between the material world and the divine region of the same divine effusion. This is because “effusion” has the two necessary features in order to mediate between the fixed and the renewing. It is fixed from the aspect that is necessary for the divine essence and is related to changing things, such as time, from the aspect of time in the form of repetition, renewal, flux, and diffusion, which exist in it. There is nothing in this world except the Almighty Truth and His Effusion: “There is no one at home but Him,” and, like immaterial things, all the existents and renewing things are the emanations and manifestations of the Truth.

Perhaps the difference between the two theories (those of Mullâ Şadrâ and Mir Dâmâd) originates in their different views of the permeation of existence and the fundamental principles of existence. It seems as if Mir Dâmâd was inspired by Illuminationist Wisdom (\textit{Ishrâqi} philosophy) and Divine Ideas, while Mullâ Şadrâ was inspired by Islamic gnosis, simple existence, and created truth. The master solves this philosophical problem through the difficult method of philosophical reasoning, whereas Mullâ Şadrâ solved it through intuition and gnosis. However, he also employed philosophical reasoning and rational argumentation in order to demonstrate it in a stepwise fashion.

Mullâ Şadrâ solves the problem of the relation of the originated to the eternal, and the changing to the fixed through the trans-substantial motion of the world of nature (a motion that creates time). However, he also argues that anything that is assumed before time and prior to it is either time

\textsuperscript{5}Mullâ Şadrâ, \textit{al-Ḥudūth al-‘ālam}, p. 130.
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or temporal. This requires time and, thus, regression will be necessitated. Hence, we must accept that nothing apart from God’s Knowledge and Will precedes nature and time:

Nothing precedes time but God… It is sometimes interpreted as God’s Differentiated Knowledge… sometimes as Attributes… as rational angles⁶… Thus the cause of time and temporal things, which change and unite with non-existence, is either only God’s Essence or the mediation of His Higher Command, which is called the “exalted spirit”. It is His Kingdom and Divinity⁷.

He sometimes calls the divine knowledge specific realities and says:

This corporeal world is completely originated and preceded by temporal non-existence… They enjoy gradual essences and changing existences; however, the existence of specific realities in God’s knowledge is fixed… Therefore, God’s Knowledge of objects is fixed and unchanging; however, knowledge is changing.⁸

Moreover, on demonstrating the necessity of the opposition of the pre-eternal substance to material flowing substances, he says:

When we judge that there is essential motion in all bodily natures … we inevitably judge that every nature, whether spherical or elemental, has a rational substance which, like origin, is fixed and a changing substance. The relation between this rational substance and bodily nature is like the relation between perfection and

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 imperfection, origin to branch, and close differentia to far differentia. And Almighty God is nearer to us than anything else. ⁹

And, those rational substances function as rays of light for the One First Light (Almighty God) because they are the forms of things that exist in God’s knowledge. They have no independent existence of themselves and are the same existences the essence of which depends on the First Truth (God). ¹⁰

In another place, he says:

Any sensible nature, whether spherical or elemental, has another rational nature in the divine world. They are immaterial forms (Ideas) because they exist in God’s Knowledge. Apparently they are the same things that Plato and his followers call “divine Ideas”. ¹¹

According to above-mentioned points, in order to relate the created to the eternal, Mullā Sadrā does not believe that he has to view the objective world of created things in need of another fixed objective world called daḥr or receiving the flowing existence of created things from that fixed existent. Rather, he maintains that the closest point of the origin of effusion to the world of being is the world of divine knowledge, and the divine fixed and cognitive forms, which are the source of all essences, are the direct cause of the effusion of being to the world of the sense.

Mullā Sadrā considers the theory of luminous Ideas to be very close to or the same as his own theory and conceives of Ideas as the forms of divine knowledge. In his books, he has sometimes referred to the divine luminous and cognitive forms as “predestination” and defined it as follows:

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“Predestination means the general existence of all existents and their universal realities and rational forms in the rational form based on creation.”

In another place, he says:

However, according to philosophers, “predestination” means that the momentary and timeless existence of the rational forms of all existence has been emanated from Almighty God in a creative form (making out of non-existence). This is because, for them, these rational forms are a part of the world and among His effects and are in contrast to His Essence. Nevertheless, we believe that they are cognitive forms that are necessary for God’s Essence without making and causation being at work. They are not a part of the world because they truly lack a non-existence or possible aspect. Therefore, the divine predestination, which consists of the same cognitive forms of God, is essentially pre-eternal and subsists through His Subsistence.

Mír Dámād believes that the receptacle of perpetual duration is made in the light of the Almighty’s Making, is the place of creation, and, as a result, is the place of God’s Acts in the form of creation and making. He considers it to be a part of all other than God and the world. It is also the place of existents that are separate from essence and precede real non-existence. Apparently, he believes that dahr is the receptacle of true existence and enjoys the mode of non-existence. For him, all of the existents of this world are prone to possibility. Mír Dámād also maintains that the atemporal world or the world of perpetual duration (wi‘ā’-i dahr) is the same as Platonic Ideas or macro-anthropos.

However, under the great influence of gnosis, Mullā Ṣadrā believes that the origin of existents and flowing and renewing worlds is in *sarmad* or the everlasting world rather than in *dahr* (*sarmad* is defined in different ways by these two philosophers). This is because the rational reality of existents is a cognitive form rather than act, making, and creation. Neither does it enjoy the mode of possibility because there is nothing but existence, and possibility is an attribute of quiddity.

In this way, we can say that, in Mullā Ṣadrā’s view, there is no world, apart from the world of matter, which is temporal and dynamic. Dominating this world is a world-like place called *sarmad*, which is the abode of the Essence of Truth and His Manifestations (in the form of rational forms). However, it cannot be called a receptacle or place.\(^\text{14}\)

This theory could have been derived from gnostics’ ontological worlds, the ontological grades of negatively unconditioned existence, the unconditioned existence (or the created truth), unfolded existence, and the domain of the manifestation and epiphany of Names and Attributes. It seems that, based on these fundamental principles, Mullā Ṣadrā has omitted all other issues such as the Peripatetics’ first intellect, Plotinus’ intellect, Mīr Dāmād’s atemporal world, Plato’s separate and independent Ideas, or *macro-anthropos* in the sense of a material mediator between the Creator and the created. However, he has sometimes employed the same terms out of habit.

Concerning the rejection of Sufi archetypes and Mīr Dāmād’s fixed entities in *dahr*, Mullā Ṣadrā says that there is no place in the divine realm, which is the abode of existence, for quiddities, which are not essentially

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\(^\text{14}\) Mullā Ṣadrā believes that the Divine Knowledge enjoys certain descending levels which start with Grace, which is the same as Essence, and end with the pen, the table, cognitive decree and ordinance, and external predestination, *Asrār al-āyāt, fi ‘ilm ilāhi*. 
qualified by existence, non-existence, eternity, and createdness. In fact, quiddities are in no way related to Almighty Necessary,\textsuperscript{15} and all immaterial and disengaged things exist there far from quiddity and in the form of entities depending on the Entity of the Almighty Truth are drunk with the pure wine of existence and effusion of that arcade, and are the manifestations of that Infinite Beauty.\textsuperscript{16}

Mullà Sadrà also maintains, “The realities of objects are the very cognitive forms that exist before Almighty God; therefore, He knows about them through the same knowledge that He Has of His own Essence.”\textsuperscript{17} This idea is very similar to what Ibn ‘Arabi says in his \textit{al-Fuṣūṣ}: “The beautiful divine names themselves require the existence of the world. That is why God created the world.”\textsuperscript{18}

In spite of the obvious difference between the ideas of these two philosophers, there are still certain statements in Mullà Ṣadrà’s books which, if not considered in contrast to his previous ideas, pave the way for reconciling them with each other. For example, he says:

All existing things, including those which existed before time, temporals, place, and spatial things have inevitably been emanated from God, Who grants forms and enjoys Essential Priority, in a creative form in the atemporal world. The reason is that their essences do not stop against accepting existence.

\textsuperscript{15} Mullà Ṣadrà, \textit{Mafāṭīḥ al-ghayb} (\textit{ishārat, mashhad thāni, miftāḥ} 71: “Quiddities are the forms of God’s Perfections and the manifestations of His Names…”
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{al-Ḥudūṯ al-‘alam}, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Mafāṭīḥ al-ghayb}, miftāḥ 7.
\textsuperscript{18} The appendix of Jāmī’s \textit{A Critique of al-Fuṣūṣ}, ed. William Chittick.
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… and there is nothing that can stop Gracious God’s Emanation, Acts, Creation, and Innovation. Therefore, these species and kinds always emanate from him.¹⁹

If in the above sentence, by “emanation” he intends “creation” and existence, and if its receptacle is dahr, the meaning of the sentence, will be no different from Mir Dâmâd’s idea of “atemporal createdness”.

Concerning the demonstration of the substantial existence, which mediates between the Truth and creatures, he says:

… Thus what causes the existence of that nature, which requires a stable essence, is a rational substance, immaterial form, divine Idea, benevolent angle, and divine name.²⁰

Based on the principiality of existence, Mullâ Şadrâ believes that createdness is one of Almighty Truth’s effusions which desirably mediates between oneness and matter. Therefore, in addition to effusion, which is a kind of relation, he inevitably seeks for a copula that is a disengaged rational substance and classified under one of God’s Names. This conforms to atemporal fixed things and Platonic Ideas. In another place, he writes:

The forms of all the existents that exist in this world previously existed in the rational world through Almighty Necessary’s creation… It was mentioned before that these forms existed in separation from matter… and the making of the forms existing in matter through creation is impossible... ²¹

²⁰. Ibid., pp. 343-344.
²¹. Ibid., vol. 5, p. 315.
Here, while accepting a “rational world”, which is the receptacle of Almighty Truth’s “direct creations”, he has left the door open for accepting atemporal createdness. Since the last volumes of al-Asfār are related to the last decade of Mullā Sadrā’s noble (1040 AH) and after Mir Dāmād’s writing of al-Qabasāt (1034 AH), Mullā Sadrā’s early ideas belong to a time before the writing of al-Qabasāt (1028-1030 AH). Therefore, it is likely that he yielded to a kind of flexibility in his ideas and showed some interest in atemporal fixed things, provided that created things in the receptacle of dahr are considered to be of the type of existence and not quiddities.

In Mullā Sadrā’s theory, effusion and creation of objects without the mediation of a divine act (or the same direct creation) leads to ambiguity, and it would not be known to which of gnostics’ ontological levels or his own principles this level matches. Nevertheless, by accepting creation and the mediation of divine luminous forms, the ambiguity is removed, and the ideas come closer to each other. Moreover, the posteriority of divine acts and luminous forms to essence also conforms more to religious, rational, and transmitted principles.

In one of his other books, he refers to the unity of the world of creation and the receptacle of perpetual duration. For example, in his al-Mabda’ wa’l-ma’ād, he says:

We explained the truth of the existence of “Platonic Ideas” and said that any species of existence has a disengaged, rational individual in the world of creation which is of the type of the truth of this species…

He also writes in *al-Asfār*, “Plato has considered time, which is the same *dahr*, to be one of the bases (causes of existence) and demonstrated that there is an individual in the divine world of each species of existents...”\(^{23}\)

He also maintains:

Since the Hereafter has the capacity for all times, and this is the way it is... And what is rationally demonstrable is that, because of its continuous quantity, time is a single entity in the receptacle of “*dahr*”. Besides, “cutting movement”, due to its continuous extension, has a quantifiable entity that is present before the Necessary...\(^{24}\)

One of the ambiguities of Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory is the issue of cutting movement. Like Mir Dāmād, he also attributes a real and single existence to it and, thus, it must inevitably occur in a receptacle other than time. Mullā Ṣadrā solves this problems as follows: if we believe that “before the Necessary” (’*ind al-bārī*) is the same as the receptacle of perpetual duration or the atemporal world (wi’ā’-*i dahr*) in the arc of ascent, the place of the cutting edge as a non-temporal fixed thing will be in the atemporal world. Since, due to its stability, this world generally has a place in the divine knowledge and depends on *sarmad* or the everlasting world, it can be interpreted as “before the Necessary”.

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Given the above points, there are some other questions concerning Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory which cannot be posed and discussed in this short paper. The Transcendent Philosophy is an extremely deep and vast ocean. Mullā Ṣadrā studied various books and schools and quoted and discussed

\(^{23}\) *al-Asfār*, vol. 5, pp. 355-356.
\(^{24}\) Commentary on *al-Zīlżāl* chapter, p. 233.
Various ideas extensively. Moreover, his language was sometimes direct and sometimes secretive and brief. Therefore, one cannot claim that he can simply perceive the essence of this Eastern and divine philosopher’s school and ideas. Doing so requires extensive discussion and deliberation, along with a thorough study of all of his works. This, in turn, requires a lot of time and energy and a powerful scientific background. Accordingly, we will end our discussion here in the hope that we have opened a new horizon for inquiry and research before the eyes of interested researchers.
Sacred Art*

"Praise be to God, Who is both Beautiful and the Source of all beauty and glory in the world."

Various definitions for “art” in general and for “religious art” in particular have been propounded since ancient times in Iran, Greece and other lands. The writer’s definition of art is as follows: “Art is the symbolic embodiment of the secrets and beauties of nature and the unseen world.” This definition is based on the idea that one of the main elements of art is to visualize the beauties and secrets of both the visible and unseen worlds and make them sensible. The other element of art pertains to its symbolic nature, so that its theme remains hidden to the eyes of laymen. Therefore, there must be a secret unseen to the

* This paper is the written version of a speech delivered by Professor Seyyed Mohammed Khamenei in the World Congress on Sacred Art held by Seda wa Sima Organization (IRIB) in Tehran in 1994.
eyes of ordinary people, as well as a symbolic language through which the artist discloses the secret and delivers the message.

In some definitions, art is mistaken for, and equated with, “skill”. Thus it should not be defined so generally that it also includes each and every kind of skill. As we know, art is completely different from skill. There are many amazing things that not everyone can do or create; however, they are not art. In fact, restricting art to six or seven branches has a specific meaning. On the other hand, we should not assume it to be a product of habit and repetition and, in this way, deprive it of its spirit.

We should also know that art is separate from science and technology. It enjoys a particular substance which one must try to apprehend and discuss in order to find out about its meaning and true elements. One of the characteristics of science is to express the laws of nature in a general form. These laws can also be learned objectively and transmitted from one to the other. Moreover, they are experimental and deal with external senses and the relationships among objects rather than their beauty.

However, art is the opposite to science. It is not objective. Rather, it is completely subjective and related to the subject. Instead of being based on external and sense-related data, it is internal and intuitive. The other characteristic of art is that it does not need scientific premises. The writer even believes that the status of art is higher than this; for him an artist’s perception is a kind of presential knowledge. In philosophy, perception and awareness are divided into two types: “acquired knowledge”, which the mind obtains through the five-fold senses, and “presential knowledge”, which it obtains directly and without the mediation of anything. This kind of awareness is not possible for every one.

Science is based on acquisition and education, while art is based on inner observation and presence or unveiling; it cannot be acquired
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empirically. Artistic perception does not need the senses and reasoning and has nothing to do with the physical organs of the body. Artists transfer their perception to others by means of specific methods, and no two artists’ perceptions are similar to each other. They only see beauties and deal with aesthetics. In sum, art is a gift and illumination that is not attainable by every one.

There are also many differences between art, on the one hand, and technique and industry, on the other. Technique follows science and is at the service of its practical execution. Most importantly, there is a “message” in art, and a true artist is one who receives his art from beyond general human perception and presents it to others through his specific, code-like language.

In my view, sacred art and religions art are not two separate things, and each religious art is a sacred one. This is because religion in its Islamic definition is very different from that of its sociological definition in today’s world.

The writer believes that religion consists of a series of written laws and perceptions of nature and its physical laws, which are in conformity with man’s blissful and happy life. In other words, man is a natural existent and a part of the great nature, and, in order to live in this nature, he has to know its laws. Revelation and Heavenly Books are the written collections of these laws. According to our philosophers and scholars, revelation is the change of the law of “creation” into “divine legislation”. The Qur’an and Heavenly Books play a similar role.

Basically, religion is a collection of thoughts and methods of thinking, acting, and living with people. It has been created for mankind and is a reality having man at one of its sides at all times.

Any religion is related to God and the Creator of the world; it is sacred and never separate from sacredness. In the West, religious art is
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usually equated with such arts as painting and architecture as used in churches, temples, and similar places. On the other hand, Westerners usually approach religion from a sociological point of view and equate it with the same spiritual emotions of people, whether for a real object of worship or an imagined one. Therefore, we can assume that hundreds of religions can work alongside each other. Nevertheless, according to Islam’s definition, there has always been only one religion, and whatever its nature, it is called Islam, i.e. yielding to divine laws. Thus even the religions of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus are called Islam.

As a result, when religion is defined as the reflection of the visible and invisible truths of the world of being, the meaning of religious art will also become clear. This is because in this art, a perceptive individual unconsciously travels to the realm of the Kingdom, and his final achievement of this journey is called art; a religious art which unveils the holy secrets of the world of sanctity and grandeur and is sacred itself. Art is religious only when it is real and inspired by the realities of the unseen world. Of course, this happens when the artist possesses an analytic view of his surroundings; one who, relying on his religious worldview and behavior, follows inspiration.

Here, one might justifiably say that, alongside this definition and perception of art, which pertain to a specific form of art, there exists a kind of art in the general sense of the word. In other words, we can have two definitions for art: the first is for general art. This is what all the people of the world today call art and, to a large extent, is similar to skill. Sometimes people even use certain phrases such as the art of judgment, the art of teaching, the art of salesmanship, the art of dealership, and the like.

The second definition relates to art in a specific meaning. This kind of art must embody a message, of course, not a beastly, foolish, or human-related message; rather, one which talks about the unseen; something that is
not known or available to all. This message is specifically limited to the artist and promotes his spiritual status. In this art, which descends from the Dominion to the artist’s heart, there is a secret or mediating link that should not be ignored. This link is nothing but beauty. It is the secret of beauty that brings the strings of the artist’s mind into vibration. Then he presents this beauty in any form that he can. If there were no beauty in the world, there would be no art.

At the beginning of my words, I praised God with the attribute of “Beautiful” and said, “Praise be to God Who is Beautiful…” In the prayers of the dawns of the month of *Ramaḍān*, one of the touching attributes of God Almighty is His Beauty. Here, we say, “Oh, God! From among all Your Beauties, I want the most Beautiful of all, although all of your manifestations are beautiful…” As we know, wherever there is “Beauty”, there is also “love”, and loving, serving, and worshipping the Almighty originate here. This issue is viewed from two perspectives: philosophy and gnosis.

The above two fields consider “love” to be the main origin of art. However, they interpret it in different ways. In philosophy love means man’s interest in beauty and his passion for something that he does not have. Here, it is referred to as “perfection”. Man’s soul always tends to perfect itself, and beauty attracts him and leads him towards perfection.

In this “philosophical” view, each effect requires its “cause”, is originated in it, and, thus, loves it. The scientific and inferential formula in philosophy in this regard is as follows: The world is essentially built on the basis of cause and effect (the creator and the created, and the maker and the made) relationships. Almighty God is the Supreme Creator of all causes and effects, and He is the Cause of all causes. Cause and effect comprise a flight of stairs that descend from above to us. In order to discover the origin of existents, man’s intellect and soul must also climb up the same stairs to
reach the first cause.

According to Mullā Šadrā, there is a friendly relation between material things and non-material or disengaged things. This is because disengaged entities are more perfect and beautiful. They steal the material man’s heart and fascinate him. Immaterial or disengaged entities, which are also referred to as souls and intellects, sometimes unveil their faces and reveal a part of the hidden beauties of nature to the artist. According to philosophers, desire originates in the lack of perfection. That is why love exists in all the existents of the world; all of them tend to move towards perfection.

Therefore, causes also enjoy beauty, since they are the origin of existence and being. The more complete and higher the cause, the stronger its ontological grade and, thus, the more its beauty and attraction. In order to understand the relationship between being and beauty, we can analyze defect and ugliness philosophically. Here, we will see that ugliness is, in fact, rooted in the absence of certain attributes, privileges, and beauties.

The more and the stronger the existence of existents, the more luminous and beautiful they will be. The philosophers of ancient Iran believed that existence is the same as light. They maintained that the uglier and the more defective the existence of existents, the more they will lack in existence or a part of it. The absolute being and the most perfect of all existences, i.e. God, is the Cause of all causes and the most Beautiful of all beauties. Therefore, He is the Beloved of all beloveds and lovers, and all loves are directed to him.

There is a philosophical debate called “the flow of love in existents”. Accordingly, the world is essentially full of love and the same as love and fascination. The physical interpretation of this global love is the word “attraction”, which is used for physical matter. However, in the world of spirits and souls, the law of love is dominant. It is due to this very force
that the artist’s sensitive soul seeks for beauty, tries to hunt it, and expresses it verbally or non-verbally, and his expression of beauty pleases our eyes and hearts.

Of course, we should keep certain points in mind. First, the artist must, basically, have an enthusiastic heart and a sensitive spirit. As we know, primarily the twigs start moving and shivering when there is a breeze and not rocks and stones. Second, the artist’s loving and beauty-praising journey is not permanent and is, rather, like the appearance of a light in the sky.

In his *al-Ishārāt* (vol. 3, p. 407), Ibn Sinā says that when the five senses are at peace, the human soul has a chance to turn to the sacred unseen and imprint an image of that beautiful world on his heart. Then he uses his imagination to transfer what he has sought or seen to his senses and reveal it in the form of art or a gift from the unseen to people.

An artist is a sensitive spirit that is fascinated by perfection and, in the course of a loving wayfaring, moves from imperfection towards the Perfect like a lover who is seeking for beauty. He goes to the sacred Station of Beauty and, on his return, brings back a present in his heart. Since he cannot express it directly, he resorts to codes and symbols. If he is a poet, he uses similes and metaphors; if he is a musician, he uses specific notes; and if he is a painter, he uses his brush strokes in order to hide the secrets of his heart among them.

This artistic wayfaring consists of two parts or journeys; one is towards existence and beauty, which means falling in love and being fascinated, and the other is a return journey on which he brings back a code-like message.

Therefore, from a philosophical point of view, art originates in a place where existence or being is perfection; perfection brings beauty;
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beauty brings love and frenzy. Finally, this frenzy and enthusiasm leads the
artist towards all the beauty which inspires him to create art.

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The second approach is a gnostic one. Here, the basis is the very
being. Its advocates believe that there is only one Absolute Being, and
everything that apparently enjoys being is nothing but a shadow of His
Being and one of His Graces. The Holy Essence of God is the truth and
source of existence, and all beings are originated in Him. Therefore, He is
the Original Perfection and Beauty and the Source of beauty. Since beauty
and love are concomitants and inseparable from each other, the ebullient
source of love and creation of love is God Himself.

Man is the only confidant of the world of the unseen and can hunt as
much of the secret of beauty as he tries and shows his essential and acquired
potential and brings it from the above to the earthly world and among
people. Gnostics call “human beings” “însân”, since it means the pupil of the
eye. As we know, it is the crucial organ helping people to see and “observe”
things. The perfect man is the pupil of the world and the mediator between
God and the world (that is why he is also called kawn-i jâmi’ (the connecting
link), and as we read in holy hadith, “It is here that God turns into man’s
eyes and ears”).

In the science of gnosis, there are five levels for existence called
“the Five Divine Presences” or the five-fold manifestations. However, these
manifestations themselves can be portrayed in hundreds or thousands of
ways.

According to gnostics, God, Who is the Beloved of gnostics,
appears to His lovers and reveals a part of His Beauties to them. They
interpret this manifestation and unveiling as epiphany. One of God’s
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Names is the Outward (al-Ẓāhir). The sacred, divine manifestation is the same spiritual motion from one of God’s Names, the Inward (al-Bāṭin), to His other Name, the Outward. The secret of the world’s being lies in this very motion and manifestation which leads to the appearance of Absolute Beauty in nature. The last level of the five-fold presences (manifestations) is called the “world of the sense”, and before it comes the “world of imagination”.

At each of the above levels, Absolute Beauty reflects one degree of beauty. The artist is a human being whose subtle spirit and sharp eyes, even when closed, penetrate the inward of all existents in a spiritual atmosphere.

An art which does not originate in the love of unseen truths will not turn into an eternal work and will only remain at the level of a hobby. There is no trace of poets who have merely written about their worldly beloveds. However, those who have delivered spiritual messages, such as Rūmi, will always be alive in people’s minds. Of course, there have been a group of gnostics who have remained silent and believe that “those who know do not reveal their knowledge (a gnostic to whom God has appeared will not reveal this secret to anyone)”. They have sometimes turned this knowledge into a great power and performed some strange acts. Some others have also started wailing like a reed and revealed what they have seen to others through their art.

Nevertheless, it is still a question why a gnostic or artist should give his message through signs and symbols. There are various answers in this regard. Some say that it is because he is unable to express it directly. They say that the artist is like a dumb person who has had a dream but is not capable of describing it. Others say that it is due to “jealousy of love” or fearing the beloved and her revenge. The artist is afraid that a hand from the unseen stabs him in the chest or, like Maṣṣūr,
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takes him to the gallows.

However, “explicit art” is obviously a meaningless term, and art can never express its message explicitly. In the artist’s sensitive spirit and imagination, any explicit idea changes into a symbol and metaphor. In other words, when an artist or gnostic receives an inspiration from the Five Divine Presences – and we know that art is essentially an inspiration – any unseen that reaches the stage of intuition, turns into a secret or code.

We can define true art as a symbolic reflection of the secretive beauties of the world of the unseen, which is hidden to ordinary people. This is the same as the definition of sacred art. As a result, true art is the same as religious and sacred art.

Here, I wish to add two other points: true art is both responsible, and dynamic and efficient. We hope to be able to teach efficient art, which is rooted in the unseen world and the macrocosmos, to society. This is because future apparently belongs to sacred art, and the world of today is as tired of material art because it longs for spirituality.
Mystical Dance of Nature and the Eternal Melody

One of the causes behind the development of philosophical thought is the clash of the ideas of thinkers and philosophers in the course of the history of philosophy and wisdom. The good tradition of criticizing or rejecting others’ views and writing commentaries on their books are among the manifestations of that clash and the development of ideas. One of the scholars who, according to what he has written in one of his works, has tried to examine, analyze, refute, or confirm the thoughts of his predecessors is Āyatullāh Rafī’i Qazwini, the master of philosophers.

In his glosses on Jālāl al-Din Dawāni’s Sharḥ-i hayākil al-nūr, he has harshly attacked the commentator using an ascetic tone. However,

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* This paper was presented at a Congress on ‘Allāmah Rafī in Qazwin in 1997.
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following a particular style, he has also smartly accepted it in an acceptable and legitimate mould.

In his treatise of *Hayākil al-nūr* treatise, following the common tradition of the *Bāṭini* missionaries and the principles of the Peripatetic philosophy, Suhrawardi writes about the celestial spheres and their impacts on other existence as well as their mediation between Almighty Truth and His creatures as follows:

The celestial spheres are certain existents with noble forms and configurations and eternal faces… The radiation of the Divine Transcendent Light on them is never interrupted… and that is the dominant light… and it is an intermediary between him and the First Almighty (God)… Thus after each shining there is a motion… Therefore, the renewal of illuminations continues with the renewal of motions… and in the lower world, with the regression and continuity of motions, different events are originated one after the other.

Dawānī comments on the above as follows:

It means that the stimulus behind the motions of celestial spheres was not passion or anger; rather, they are intended for attaining something pleasant and sacred which is the very radiation of lights from the higher levels on them, and these motions are very similar to those of the disengaged souls to which natural interests are negated. That is, the souls from which holy flashes and intimate radiations are emanated so that the people of intuition (gnostics) observe them.

Verily man is susceptible to receiving the holy radiations by ritual observance. Sometimes the saints (i.e. gnostics) observe some sacred delight in themselves and come into motion by dancing, clapping, and turning around themselves… This is the same mystery of “dance” which makes theologians describe it… One of the great Sufists has said that is why “dance” is forbidden to novice people and those who are drowned in bodily pleasures.
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In his commentary on *Sharḥ-i hayākil al-nūr* ‘Allāmah Rafī’ī writes:

It is wrong to compare the motions of celestial spheres – those which underlie the order of the elemental world and the descent of the good and blessings – with the dance of dervishes and their cries which originate in the drunkenness of the animal soul and not in the rational human substance. This comparison is a kind of opposition against transmitted and scientific achievements.¹

Then he maintains that the assimilation of mystical dance to the tinder in the hearth is a kind of deceit and writes in his glosses as follows:

What this knowledgeable commentator has said is indeed... among surprising examples because, undoubtedly, both “dance” and “audition” were innovated by the Sufis and are in contrast to the necessities of the luminous *Sharī‘ah* (religious law), while this commentator has been trained in the school of *Sharī‘ah*.²

One of Dawānī’s contemporaries in Shiraz, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtaki, was the first to object to this idea of his and responded to it in his commentary on *Hayākil al-nūr*.³

The subtle point is that in spite of all these differences and disagreements concerning mystical dance, both philosophers, ‘Allāmah Dawānī and ‘Allāmah Rafī’ī, still agree that mystical dance and dance-like movements are of two different types: first, they can be some passionate and lustful acts rooted in the concupiscent soul intended to make man fall in the

2. Ibid.
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trap of sexual desire, second, they could be rooted in the frenzy of divine love and, in ‘Allāmah Rafī’ī’s words, “be emanated from the innermost of the rational essence” and, as a result, turn into a ladder for spiritual ascent and deserve holy illuminations and divine blessing.

Perhaps, what leads ‘Allamāh Dawānī’s mind from the loving and enthusiastic motion of celestial spheres towards mystical dance (Samā’) and the dancing of “the people of ecstasy and intuition” were the following: first, in both there are some regular, harmonious, and continuous movements which are motivated by the love of the Pure Beauty. Second, the natural consequence of these motions is the descent of blessings and receiving emanations from the treasure of divine grace and effusion. If there is no blessing, the act is nullified. Accordingly, it can be said that, by mystical dance, Dawānī means the same thing that ‘Allāmah Rafī’ī does not deny either, not a dance that, in his own words, “is rooted in the playful animal soul.”

The reason for Dawānī’s turning his attention from the motions of the celestial spheres to their dance and, in other words, interpreting their motion to dance is their love-orientedness and loving attention and motion towards the Absolute Beauty. Therefore, in spite of the common place meaning of dance, it shares some of the features and different meanings of mystical dance.

As the motions emanated from the “playful animal soul” manifest the animal spirit, the harmonious movements and music that man creates at the peak of the frenzy and ecstasy of divine love and possibly at the moment of witnessing some of the manifestations of true beauty are the manifestation

4. In the real sense of the word, mystical dance means listening to pleasant music and songs. While doing this, some mystics perform some dance-like motions. This word is also metaphorically used in the sense of the dance of dervishes. ‘Allamāh Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī has referred to this point in order to reject Dawānī’s words.
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of his transcendence-seeking soul and rational essence, which, in line with the macroanthropos and the eternal dance of the world and celestial spheres, come into motion, give something, and take something.

Whether the celestial spheres exist from a philosophical point of view, and whether the motions of the mystical dance of Sufists could be assimilated to their motions or not, it is certainly true that all the particles of the world and the infinitely small or big things praise and remember the truth and, following a dynamic path, continuously move towards Him. In fact, the human being is not the only existent who serves God, undertakes mystical journeys, and expresses one’s devotion to Him in words.

‘Speech’ commonly means expressing one’s inner intentions and manifesting the internal truth. It is of different types; if one uses words for expressing meaning, it is called verbal expression, and if this is done by movements and behavior, it will be non-verbal and non-conventional (logicians call it natural and rational indication). Since the nature of the world is based on the trans-substantial motion and continuous dance of its particles, the whole world is expressing its praise for God. According to Ibn ‘Arabí, “You see everything in the world of existence capable of speech.”

The quantum dance of particles in the core of matter, whether silent or aloud, is a kind of speech and expression of the internal secret of matter. What a physicist calls dance, a gnostic calls speech. Perhaps, the word “tashbih” (glorification, praise) which has appeared in the Holy Qur’an, refers to the same gnostic speech or expression and the physical dance of the basic particles of substances that has dominated the whole heavens, the Earth, and all beings.

According to the Holy Qur’an, “The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates

5. In logic indication is divided into conventional, natural, and rational types.
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His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbear, Most Forgiving!” (al-Isrà’: 44)

If the criterion for this practical and motion-based “glorification” and “praise” is the same quantum dance of the particles of matter, thus the whole world is moving towards its origin through its speech-like motions, its restless and immediate trans-substantial motion, and what shows the divine grace like a mirror (i.e. praise).

Therefore, Dawānī’s commentary on Suhrawardī’s words and his move from the motion of the celestial spheres, which is the cause of receiving emanations from the source of eternal emanation and emanating them to the lower world, to the natural motions (not artificial ones) of a human being in the state of frenzy and intuition is not irrelevant.

In both the celestial spheres and man, those particular movements are a necessity conditioned by the thing (i.e. on the condition of witnessing the divine beauty). Unlike Suhrawardī’s idea, they are similar to natural motion and even coercive, rather than voluntary, motion. This is because as love is not a voluntary motion, neither are the motions due to the frenzy of love. Likewise, all the trans-substantial motions of the material world are natural, and time and place are both peripheral to this essential motion of nature: a motion whose poetic interpretation is the same dance which Dawānī has called the mystical dance.

The motion of celestial spheres, as discussed by these philosophers and as Ibn Sinā and the Peripatetics believed, was a voluntary motion through which the celestial spheres, like obsessed and frenzied humans, made a move with each illumination, that is, witnessing the light of the beauty of the Truth. Then they sought another illumination with their motion, and from each illumination, due to the motions of celestial spheres, something happened; a creature was created; and a blessing was descended.

In this way, the Peripatetics solved the problem of the relation between the created and the pre-eternal because the motion of the celestial spheres was connected to the eternity of Almighty Truth in terms of its
Mystical Dance of Nature and the Eternal Melody

continuity and infinity and to pluralities and possibles in terms of its instantaneous nature.

When the first plectrum of the creation of the world (or the same holy emanation), although one and fixed, works in the process of continuous motion, it assumes a continuous and flowing state, and any new emanation and creation is like a plectrum that the fingers of Almighty Truth uses to strike the chords of the tār (a musical instrument) of creation and make a new song.

Here, we can consider the divine blessing in two ways: first, the pre-eternal blessing or the blessing of emanation or innovation, which is fixed, sudden, and pre-eternal, and the receptacle of which is perpetual duration (dahr, which is other than time). It is the same first epiphany. Second, the continuous and perpetual ‘creation’, which gnostics refer to as the renewal of images, and the Transcendent Philosophy calls the trans-substantial motion. The receptacle of this blessing is time, in which the first and pre-eternal manifestation of Almighty Truth appears in the form of the continuous manifestation and renewal of images of acts, and continuous and successive creations (extensions of images). At this moment, the hidden witness comes into the full view of the residents of the earth with hundreds of thousands of manifestations and removes the curtain away from His face before the eyes of beholders (in other words, God manifests Himself to the whole world).

It is in the light of these two types of emanation or manifestation that one can learn about the secret of motion or the same ‘mystical journey’ as intended by the people of knowledge. The reason is that the decline of pure existence to the station of innovation and the source of the creation of existents (or plurals) is a motion-like manifestation interpreted as “the arc of descent” and, as some philosophers say, brings the celestial spheres into motion. This loving motion becomes the source of the creation of existents and the occurrence of other events and incidents.

On the other hand, created things and pluralities, in the light of their dance-like trans-substantial motion and by appealing to the same blessing
descended from the above and through moving in the bed of continuous emanations, develop a new existence at each moment, take a step forward, and, in this way, follow the path of perfection. They move step by step towards God in a journey that is called “the arc of ascent”. This dance or upward motion of existents is a response to that dance or the motion of the world above.

Based on this view of motion in the world and human’s process of development, philosophers maintain that the trans-substantial motion of matter and the change of their accidents is the same as their dance. Moreover, its music which is produced by the drum of being is like the music that a musician creates by striking the chords of his tār with his plectrum. With any musical note that is heard by an existent in the form of a sudden emanation, that existent makes a speech or, in a sense, starts singing and dancing. As a result, one begins worship, and the gnostic, through each of his motions revealing a state of his life and being, like those who are involved in mystical dance, demands a goblet of blessing with one hand and, like a raining sky, pours it drop by drop on earth with his other hand.

According to ‘Allāmah Dawānī, religious acts and worship are loving motions similar to the motions of the celestial spheres. They mediate between the heavenly and divine emanation and this world and cause the descent of blessings for all. Hence, according to dhawq-i ta’alluh (intellectual intuition), any loving and willing motion which is not rooted in lust and wrath and is intended to “attain a pleasant and sacred goal and the illumination of rays of light”, whether in the form of mystical dance or religious acts, is like a tinder in the hearth, which creates a frenzy in the fire of heart. Since this act originates in the “innermost of the rational essence” and, even higher than that, in the substance of the love of the Truth, rather than in the lust and desire of the human soul, it is justified before Islamic philosophers. ‘Allāmah Dawānī and ‘Allāmah Rafī’i are unanimous in this regard and believe that all paths lead to the Beloved.
The issue of time and temporality has always been among the important philosophical topics occupying the minds of great thinkers in the course of history. It is also considered an important subject in Islamic philosophy and different ideas have been propounded in this regard.

In order to study the issue of temporal things, we must first begin with a definition and study of time itself. It appears from the history of philosophical thought and human cultures that the cognizance of time and its definition has a long record. For instance, in ancient Iran, centuries before the outset of philosophical discussions in Greece, they believed in “Zūrwān”, the goddess of time, and considered her the first and the eternal and pre-eternal existence, as well as the creator of the world. Greek philosophy was also influenced by this idea later. We understand from some of Plato’s words that he viewed time as being eternal and pre-eternal like God Himself, or, in other words, he held that time was created

* This paper was written for and presented at the Phenomenology Conference held by the American Philosophical Association in New York on 27 December 2005. Therefore, its language conforms to the western literature in this regard.
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simultaneously with the world (and the heavens) and would be annihilated with the annihilation of the mortal world.¹

After Plato, in the light of his naturalist and mechanical view of creation, Aristotle introduced time as the product of the circular and continuous motion of the first sphere (the mother sphere). He maintained that this motion was imposed upon it from the outside and, thus, demonstrated the existence of a creator. It is said that, before him, Archytas of the Tarentum (Pythagorean philosopher, 440-360 BC) believed in the same idea.² However, without referring to the spheres, he considered time the effect of motion. As we know, Plato, too, held that the world of Ideas is unchanging while the material world is prone to change and motion and, naturally, enjoys time. Perhaps, his view of time is, in fact, the continuity of the Pythagoreans’ ideas in this regard.

Although the Stoics did not believe in an essence for time either, it seems that their definition of time as “an entity coming into existence between the beginning and end of the world” is, in fact, the same as the Pythagorean definition that time is the result of the changes and motion in the world.

Plotinus believed in the stability of the One and the Intellect, but maintained that the Universal Soul (the third hypostasis) was in change so that it could be the source of the origination of the existents and events in the world. He considered time the continuity and extension of the soul’s life.

Most Muslim philosophers regarded time as the effect of the motion of a thing (or things) whose essence was fixed but enjoyed a rotary or spatial motion. Normally, they equated it with the first sphere and, thus, were in agreement with Aristotle in this regard. A few Muslim philosophers

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2. Simplicius (500), *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics.*
considered time an absurd issue. Some of the Christian theologians and philosophers of the Middle Ages believed in the existence of two types of time, namely, material time and spiritual time.

Among European philosophers of the modern period, Newton, too, believed in two types of time: pure (mathematical) time and relative time. Some have interpreted Descartes’ statements in this regard as indicating that he viewed time as a form of thought. Some others have also said that, in line with Aristotle, he considered time a product of motion.

Among philosophers of the modern era, Kant and Heidegger’s theories of time are more famous than those of others. Kant defines time as an a priori experience belonging to man’s inner and subjective nature and as a mental mould regulating sensibles (in his view, crude entities) and consolidating them. However, Heidegger believes that time and existence are connected to and inseparable from each other. This view is similar to what Ishrāqīs (Illuminationists) and Abūlbarakāt, the Islamic philosopher, and some other Iranian philosophers said in this regard. On the whole, early philosophers are divided into two groups concerning their theories of time:

The first group consists of those philosophers who abstract time from the accidental and sensible motion of objects or things. They believe that true time is merely limited to the “moment” or “present”. The second group consists of those philosophers who abstract time from the linear motions and changes due to the motion of the fluid and changing quiddity of objects or things and consider it a subjective issue.

According to Islamic philosophy, concerning its relation to time, motion is of two types:

1) instantaneous motion (ḥarkat-i tawassuṭiyyah), whereby the “present” moment is considered true time and the continuous and
conjunctive line of moments of time are viewed as abstractions existing in the mind;
2) continuous motion (ḥarkat-i qaṭʻiyah), whereby true time is considered the collection of points, states, and moments of the motion of the moving object. This motion is drawn as a single line. Here the “moment” or the “present” is considered an abstract and subjective issue.

Most Islamic philosophers believe that instantaneous motion is the criterion for the truth of time; however, some of them, for instance, Mir Dâmâd and Mullâ Sadrâ, hold that the continuous motion is the criterion here.

The difference between the above two theories is revealed in this classification. Almost all the thinkers who regard time as being originated in the external and horizontal motion of objects believe that instantaneous motion is real and that continuous motion is abstract. In contrast, those who abstract time from the fluid quiddity of the moving object hold that it is the instantaneous motion which is objective and real.

* * *

Temporal and Temporalities

Any temporal thing is an entity enjoying time, and such temporal entities are the very material and corporeal existents which are assumed to be in motion. Therefore, unmovable and fixed entities or, in other words, disengaged (abstract) existents are not prone to time and belong to the timeless world.

One of the important subjects in Islamic philosophy is “the timeless world” (in contrast to the physical and material world). Thus, here, existents
Time and Temporal

are divided into two general groups: temporal or changing existents and non-
temporal or unchanging existents.

Plato’s Ideas are of the type of time-less existents, and the world of
these Ideas must be regarded as the world of unchanging and timeless things.
This theory has been, more or less, accepted in Islamic philosophy through
some justifications and interpretations.

This issue, however, has no place in modern Western philosophy.
For example, following the usual tradition in the modern period, Heidegger
attributes time to being (Dasein) and holds that being is purely concomitant
with and necessitated by time. However, in his eyes, the very being is not an
object and, thus, is not “temporal”. He also believes that the non-temporal
presence of existence is impossible; therefore, we can conclude that he does
not regard non-temporal things as being in existence, and that for him the
world is limited to the material world.

However, Islamic philosophers maintain that there are, at least,
two worlds: material and non-material or temporal and non-temporal
worlds. Some thinkers, such as Mir Dàmâd (Mullâ Sadrâ’s master, died
in 1041 AH, 1631 AD) believed in the existence of three worlds. This is
because the non-material and non-temporal world is divided into two real
and independent types, namely, perpetual duration (dahr) and everlasting
(sarmad).

The world of perpetual duration abounds in existence, enjoys
stability, and is lacking in motion, change, and, as a result, time. It
reminds us of Plato’s world of Ideas. This world has come into existence
through God’s sudden making and creation (such a making is called
‘innovation’ in Islamic philosophy). The everlasting world is hypothetical
and limited to God.3 Neither do time and motion bear any meaning in this

3. Other Islamic philosophers use the term “everlasting world” in a more general
sense and do not limit it to God.
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world, nor is there a direct relation between it and the material and temporal world. The making and administration of the material world is done by the everlasting world.

Mîr Dâmâd refers to these three worlds as three receptacles. In his view, the material and temporal world is surrounded by the everlasting world, exists in it, and obtains its existence from the everlasting world gradually, that is, with time. While being stable and non-changing, the everlasting world, itself, is the source of change and the perfectional motion of material existents. On the other hand, the everlasting world itself is surrounded by a higher world, the world of perpetual duration, and is the origin of the sudden and innovative coming into existence of existents and their manifestations in the world of perpetual duration from pure non-existence into non-temporal existence. Accordingly, the everlasting world (or the hypothetical receptacle) is pure stability and merely stands in a making relation to stable and unchanging things (the world of perpetual duration).

Following Ibn Sinâ, Mîr Dâmâd analyses these three types of beings. If we evaluate the relation of these three worlds with time, we confront three different situations.

1. Being in the world of matter, which is being in time.

2. Being in the world of perpetual duration, which is being “with” time rather than “in” it, i.e. this being surrounds time.

3. Being in the everlasting world, which is a pure and stable being, bears no relation to time, and is free from any kind of change or transformation. Here, there is a relation between the stable and timeless.
Mir Dāmād interpreted the idea of another philosopher called Abūlbarakāt (5th century AH, 11th Christian AD), who held that time is the measure of existence, on equal terms with his own theory.

According to Mir Dāmād’s theory, temporal existents qualified with motion and change merely refer to those existents that exist in the receptacle of time, i.e. this very external world of ours. Their main property is change and movement towards perfection. Nevertheless, this very world, together with its motions and free from limits of time, is like a single point and a stable and non-moving phenomenon in the world of perpetual duration from which it attains its existence. By placing the world of perpetual duration between the world of matter and God, Mir Dāmād intends to solve the problem of the relation between the pre-eternal and eternal, on the one hand, and with the originated, on the other.

According to Plato,

Demigurge intended to turn the world into an eternal living thing; however, since it could not be everlasting, and since conformity between the pre-eternal and the originated (the unchanging and the changing) was impossible, He created a moving image of eternity (the material and temporal world). Thus time and the world have been created with each other and will also be annihilated with each other.4

From among all the ideas and theories given on time and temporal things, Mullà Șadrā’s philosophical theory (979-1050 AH, 1571-1640 AD) is the firmest and most logical of all. First, he harshly attacked Ibn Sinā and Aristotle’s Peripatetic theory stating that the substance of things is fixed and that motion is realized in four categories out of Aristotle’s ten-fold categories. Then he demonstrated that, as an

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esential characteristic, motion flows in nature and our material world, and that quantitative and qualitative motions follow their trans-substantial motion. He also proved that their motion originates in their own essence and nature rather than in the exterior, and that motion is an essential attribute, like moisture for water. Therefore, any body, due to its essence and substance, enjoys a state of becoming, renewal, and incessant perfectional change which is intertwined with its being. If motion is denied to matter, it will be annihilated.  

In Mullâ Šadrâ’s view, the existence of all material existents is in flux and never remains at a fixed point; therefore, it passes through various points in the course of its motion and divides the line of motion into the prior and the posterior, and the beginning and the end. As a result, time, which is the collection of the very points of the line of motion of bodies’ natures, originates in the motion of the substance of those objects. Moreover, time is nothing but the measure of trans-substantial motion. We divide this time into ‘moment’ and ‘present’ and assume that it is real. Time is abstracted from motion, but from one in the substance of nature rather than from anything else.

Unlike Mír Dâmâd, who attributes the existence of the changing world to the everlasting world and stable everlasting existents, Mullâ Šadrâ believes that the becoming of nature and, as a result, time is the effect of a direct act of “Divine effusion” that is related to the type of creation of existents.

In Islamic philosophy, creation is limited to a few types, the most

5. Mullâ Šadrâ, al-Asfâr, vol. 3; Seyyyed Mohammed Khamenei, Treatise of Mullâ Šadrâ’s Transcendent Philosophy.

6. Time is an abstract and subjective issue. However, if we do not measure it in terms of amount and numbers, and since amount, itself, is an external thing, time will appear like an objective entity.
important of which are sudden creation and creation out of nothing or “innovation” and gradual creation from another thing following temporal non-existence. This is called “creation”.

Both kinds of creation originate in divine theophany. The creation of non-material existents is merely the result of a perfect theophany, while the creation of material existents is the result of frequent and continuous theophanies or permanent and successive effusion. In other words, the story of creation can be retold as follows: Possible existents have been created in two types.

First, there are existents that have attained an existence deserving their quiddity all at “the same time” and lack potentiality. In other words, they await no more perfection and are actualized. They have suddenly come into existence and attained their real and permanent place in the world of being. Such existents, which the Peripatetics call disengaged intellects and souls are not temporal.

Second, there are existents whose attainment of their real and main place in the world of being requires traversing a long way and leaving a number of levels behind. Any level of their ontological perfection leads to another potential perfection, and with every step and at each level a little is added to their existence and perfection, until they reach their final point and ultimate perfection and settle down in the threshold of their “real place in the world”.

The passage through each level – which turns the imperfect material existent into a “perfect and actual existent”, the transient into a “perfect and actual existent”, and the transient and suspending quiddity into a real and ultimate one – can be called an “event”. This perfectional journey of material existents is the very change and renewal of nature and the incessant and permanent Divine emanation that exists in the nature of matter and is absent in immaterial existents.
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Time, which is the product of this renaissance and renewal of nature and the trans-substantial motion of objects, can be considered the very measure of the Divine and incessant emanations. Likewise, the renaissance and the trans-substantial motion of bodies can be likened to the “beats of existence”, an existence that oozes from God’s Knowledge and Will and from His Infinite and Pure Existence. By relating the flowing, time-generating, and material existents to the Divine effusion, Mullà Ṣadrā rejected the existence of the world of perpetual duration.

The critical point here is that, according to Mullà Ṣadrā, the trans-substantial motion of matter (and in its mystic sense, the incessant theophany and arrival of effusion) is never disjunctive. Thus one can never say that the object of motion (or effusion) changes at every moment, and that the first moving or object (A) is other than the second moving (B). Rather, we must say that at all points of the trans-substantial and continuous motions, there is only one object and one moving thing that moves following a conjunctive line. In this way we can abstract a mental and rational phenomenon called “time”.

Accordingly, the entire world of nature moves towards the final point on a straight line in its trans-substantial motion and creates an event at each moment. We call the collection of these events “history” and the continuous line of motion of nature “time”. In other words, the entire world is the continuous theophany of the Creator (or the very Pure Existence), and time is nothing but the mathematical and quantitative interpretation of the Divine effusion.7

Mullà Ṣadrā poses the theory of the trans-substantial motion of nature and its relation to metaphysics based on firm philosophical proofs in his well-known book, al-Asfār, and discusses all of its aspects.

7. Mathematics and numbers represent the demonstrative and explanatory aspect of the realities of nature or physics. This relation might have been intended by those who claim that, in Pythagoras’s view, number is the origin of the world.
If we cast a glance at the history of the theory of time and motion in philosophy, we can find some similarities between Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory in this regard and the related philosophical theories in ancient Iran and the ideas of Heraclitus, Plotinus, and St. Augustine, who were all in a way influenced by the Iranian Illuminationist (Ishrāqi) philosophy.

Plotinus’s theory, which introduced time as a product of the creating motions of the Universal Form, is, in a way, in conformity with Mullā Ṣadrā’s theories of effusion and trans-substantial motion. This is because, unlike the Peripatetics’ view of spherical motions, the soul’s motions do not belong to the category of quantity. Rather, they belong to the category of “act”. They consist of the gradual creation of the essence of objects and events and lead the material quiddities towards their ultimate perfection. This, itself, requires motion, instability, and the continuity and permanence of trans-substantial motion. The reason is that if the “Universal Soul” had created all material objects from the very beginning in a complete, actual, and non-potential form, they would have naturally enjoyed stability and been needless of motion and, as a result, of time. Thus history would have never come into existence.

The writer believes that Plotinus’s theory is the extension of Heraclitus’ and the idea of the continuity of the world, which Aristotle has disfigured and metamorphosized. The idea of the continuity of the world of matter is in conformity with the theory of continuous effusion.

St. Augustine’s (354-430 AD) statement in his *Confessions* and his idea of the relation of time to the soul can be considered as having been inspired by Plotinus (203-270 AD). In Europe in the Middle Ages, they had failed to look at the depth of this issue; however, it seems that, through being inspired by this theory, they divided time into material time and spiritual (soulish) time. The spiritual time was pre-eternal and fixed and the material one was changing. This is similar to Fayd’s theory in this regard.
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They assumed the existence of a copulative time between the two types that could rationally mediate between the originated and pre-eternal times (or between origination and pre-eternity) and called it *aevum*.

* * *

Mullâ Sadrâ’s theory of trans-substantial motion is not only related to effusion or metaphysics but also grants a specific philosophical and scientific impression to the issue of time and temporal things (world events) and reveals the truth and mechanism of history and social and natural changes following a philosophical approach. It also demonstrates the mode of existence of natural existents, which, according to his theory of trans-substantial motion, is a systematic collection of successive events, and its relation with history or the developmental journey of the soul and the intellect (Hegel failed to demonstrate and grant a logical form to this issue).
While thanking all the scholars, professors, and dear friends for their presence in this conference, I would like to congratulate you on the birthdays of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the sixth Imām of the Shiʿites, Imām Sādiq (‘a), which occurred this week. I hope that we have all benefited from their blessings.

What we take as a good omen is the simultaneity of these blissful days with the Commemoration Day of Mullā Sadrā, the day of wisdom, and the day of reminiscing over the values granted to humanity by all sages and philosophers.

As you know, today is 22nd May and the official Day of Commemorating Mullā Sadrā. Every year, on this day, we remember this great philosopher and speak about his Transcendent Philosophy. In doing so, we try to learn something new, follow a new path, and, if possible, remind our society and all noble people of the path to wisdom and show them that

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* This paper was presented at a Congress on Mullā Sadrā in Tehran in 2003.
this nation is the child of wisdom. Therefore, it will be a pity if it turns into the plaything of the period, or if it forgets its magnificent heritage.

Moreover, I also wish to thank all the scholars, literary experts, administrative staff, and all the other people who work in the Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute. I would like to point out that, fortunately, the activities and duties performed in this Institute are a part of our science and culture and, if I do not say that they are unique, I should say that they are rare. In this regard, I should particularly refer to our achievements in international fields. We hope that, in this way, not only the Transcendent Philosophy and Islamic wisdom but also Islam and Islamic values and culture are introduced to the world.

I would like to seize the opportunity to express my appreciation for the efforts of all the institutes, academic centers, scholars, and professors who follow the same line of work. However, it can be said almost with certainty that what we do in the Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute is not a repetition of what is done elsewhere.

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In the holy name of the Prophet (ṣ), I would like to make some preliminary remarks concerning the theme of this Conference. The subject of the presentations here is the “Macrocosm and Microcosm”. I do not wish and, perhaps, it is not the right place for me to enter the discussion here because that is what our distinguished scholars and philosophers will do. However, in order to open the discussion, I will say a few words on this subject.

The “macrocosm” is not a man who has grown big in terms of his flesh and body and turned into a giant. Rather, he is a pure and great human who is free of animal features and is as all-inclusive as the world. Whether this world is physical in nature or metaphysical has been a topic of discussion among philosophers. I believe almost certainly that this subject
existed in Oriental philosophy and wisdom, i.e. ancient Iranian philosophy, and was later inherited by Greeks. Four or five centuries later, some time after Christianity, it was transferred to Alexandria, as Plotinus, one of the prominent Oriental philosophers, has referred to it.

This topic did not grow much after Islam in Peripatetic-Aristotelian philosophy. The reason for this might have been that it was not compatible with the first emanated, later Peripatetic theories and ideas, and Aristotelian vertical intellects. Nevertheless, through their specific Islamic (Shi’ite) insight, our gnostics learnt about the truth of this matter and developed it. The focus of my words in this meeting is a poem attributed to Imám ‘Ali (‘a), saying “Believe thou that thou art a small mass, while a greater world has come together inside thou?”

In this couplet the world is not a big world but a bigger world, which I will explain later. This issue has been discussed by philosophers both in the East and the West, and I recommend that we also work on such issues and problems so that the ideas and theories in Islamic philosophy are introduced to the international circles of philosophy.

Although terms such as “macrocosmos” and “microcosmos” and similar terms also exist in the West, they mainly deal with the physical aspects of the world, the same thing that a Westerner perceives empirically but does not usually accept anything beyond it. In Islamic philosophy, in general, and in Mullá Šadrā’s school, in particular, the Almighty is the Origin of these worlds. In other words, here Almighty God first manifests Himself in the world and comes out from behind the curtain of absolute cloudiness (oneness). These loci of manifestations are the same loci of manifestations and epiphanies of the divine names and attributes and are generally included in the divine knowledge.

In its hierarchy, the divine knowledge is first the Manifest Book, which is the most comprehensive of all stages. Then there is the cognitive
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decree, and then the Tablet and Pen, which is the stage of pre-destination (cognitive decree and external pre-destination). Finally, it reaches the domain of the material world, that is, the external decree, matter, and the world of the senses.

In another form of division, the hierarchy of the worlds is as follows: at the top is the world of sovereignty, or the world of the intellects; at a lower and weaker level is the world of the souls or Dominion; and then there is the world of the sense and the world of human nature. Although different terms are used in different places, there is only one truth, and that is the macrocosm. All of these worlds, while being multiple, are mentally-posed concepts because everything returns to oneness. This collection is neither multiple nor single. Rather, it is what it is. That is why it has been called the macrocosm.

The macrocosm is something that is emanated. We can call it the first emanation from Almighty God, and we can consider the whole world and all of its existents and existentiality (the most supreme stage of which is the stage beyond the senses) to be included in it.

One of the important philosophical problems that can be resolved based on this view is the problem of the first emanated, which is a complicated one. Unfortunately, Aristotelian philosophy, due to its polytheistic view, and some other philosophies suffering from other defects have failed to resolve this problem. Accordingly, they have been forced to put forward the chain of vertical intellects.

In gnosis, only one thing emanates from Almighty Maker, which is a pure single truth. The problem of the emanation of the one from the one has also been solved. While being everything, the one existent is consistent with several multiple things. This is the macrocosm that arises from Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s school. However, the microcosm is indeed minor because, according to the text of the Qur’an, it reaches down to the lowest point. When man
begins to grow and reach the level of the macrocosm, what should he do? In Mullâ Šadrâ’s view, a human is essentially an example of the macrocosmos.

The human soul is equivalent to the divine decree. A human’s manifest book is the same soul and, at the next level, the intellect. After this, it is the heart, and then imagination is at the next level. Imagination is the realm of the embodiment and incarnation of truths. It is also the level of Almighty God’s creativity and man’s creativity. Therefore, exactly the same levels of the macrocosm or the world of creation exist in a human being, and he is, indeed, a small example of the great world.

God has created in human beings everything that He has created in the world. In other words, Mullâ Šadrâ introduces the world as the divine book; therefore, a human is one of God’s books and, in Mullâ Šadrâ’s words, a copy of the world. For example, sometimes we make a microfilm from a book or, at others, we make a table of contents for it. From this point of view, the microcosm is similar to the macrocosm.

In a poem, Imâm ‘Alî (‘a) says, “Do you assume that you are just a small existent (only a collection of skin, flesh, and bone)? This is not true because the greater world is hidden in you.” He further says, “You are the manifest book through the words of which hidden facts are revealed.”

He could not have used the same phrase “manifest book”, which has been used in the Qur’an, any more explicitly than this. Although, there are also some references to the supreme cognitive levels of God and existence or the hierarchy of existence, man is the manifest book too. In this book, there are certain words and letters each unveiling a secret: “Oh, man! You need not anything out of yourself.” “There is nothing out of you to make you aware of anything.” “Both the disease and the medicine are inside you.”

I would like to say a few words about the phrase “has come together” in the sentence “A greater world has come together inside you” because it implies a specific point. Some say that man is a knower and is
equivalent to the macrocosm. That is why whatever is inside man also exists in the outside; for example, his veins are like rivers. Likewise, everything that exists in the world also exists in man. Such similarities between man and the world are only physical and not perhaps enough for man’s status and dignity. However, given what we have said about the Transcendent Philosophy, “has come together” means more than this; i.e. the human being is a spiritual space as vast as the world but in a compact form.

Therefore, there is a world inside the human being and he is, in fact, a world: “A world sitting in a corner”. At the same time, it is inferred that what is inside a human is an actual being. I have a further idea which might also be inferred from our Imāms’ words: I believe that “has come together” here refers to a human’s potential because the potential for “becoming human” and “becoming a world” exists in him. According to the explicit text of the Qur’ān, “Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (al-Baqarah chapter: 277). It is good acts that lead man on his mystical journey from the nadir of the lowest point to the station of “becoming the greater world”.

In the definition of wisdom, it has been said that becoming a sage and philosopher demands that man create such an awareness of the world in himself that a world like the outside world not only is shaped but also comes into existence in him. This definition can, to some extent, lead us toward the relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm.

The faculty of imagination in humans can also be another guide. According to Muhyaddin Ibn ‘Arabi, the world is the realm of divine imagination. Imagination is a realm where creation and innovation are possible, and where being can be created out of nothingness. This is impossible except in the world of imagination. Thus the world of creation and innovation is the world of creation from pure nothingness. The realm of
the world of divine making is called disjunctive imagination, and human imagination is called conjunctive imagination. Hence, humans can connect to the world through the relationship between the conjunctive and disjunctive imaginations, learn whatever there is in the world, and create whatever they wish to have there. Heaven is the same. One can follow this route also in the world, and this is one of the ways of connecting with the macrocosm.

Therefore, I can say that one of the basic principles of philosophy is, in fact, to actualize potencies. In other words, a philosopher is one who is a world within a human being and can produce other philosophers in order to create some other worlds.

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We have some ideas and requests concerning this issue. I would like to ask the respected professors and scholars gathered here to deal in their speeches not only with the problem of the macrocosm from a scientific point of view, but also with the problems related to the learning of philosophy, spreading it, and the obstacles related to doing so.

If we wish to find a final cause and purpose for the question of the macrocosm and the microcosm, we can suggest the following: to place a greater emphasis on the teaching and dissemination of philosophy. Of course, it is also possible to solve other philosophical problems through finding the correct solution of the problem of the relationship between the macrocosm and microcosm. In this regard, we can refer to the solution of the problem of ethics and the reasons why it is not relative.

I believe that the basis of ethics, which we view as not being relative (ethical principles deal with real affairs), is hidden within the relationship between the microcosm and macrocosmos. I define ethics as “man’s assimilation to the macrocosm”; this is why ethical principles are
fixed. When we make an ethical recommendation and ask people not to perform a particular act but to perform another act, it is because we believe that the latter is consistent and in harmony with the nature of this world and, hence, brings happiness to the doer. As some say, the secret of happiness lies in being in harmony with nature. Of course, by nature they mean the same animal nature! However, as we know, all animals act naturally and unconsciously, while the human being is the only animate being that is not so.

Therefore, this problem constitutes one of the bases of ethics, and it is a very important point. As we read in the following hadith, “Humans should be endowed with Lordly traits.” Perhaps, this means that endowment is the same harmony with and assimilation to the macrocosm, which is the first locus of the illumination of God.

One of the other advantages of holding this discussion is to pay attention to the importance of human behavior, the same spiritual exercise that changes man from a boastful, proud, and corrupt animal into a world and endows him with Lordly traits.

Another point is the role of philosophy and ethics in guiding and teaching people, which is on the same level with divinity; the same act of teaching which has begun with God and is continued by the Prophets, Imāms, and then philosophers.

May our respected teachers and professors gain success in their endeavors and succeed in rendering our society into one endowed with Lordly traits. It is also hoped that they train people’s innate potentials in the way intended by Imām ‘Ali (‘a). If in this one-day Conference we can succeed in elaborating on this issue, even to a limited extent, we can claim that we have achieved a great goal.
between 979-1045 AH (1571-1635 AD) there lived a philosopher called Sadr al-Din Muḥammed, known as Mullā Šadrā. Later he was given the nickname Šadr al-muta’ allihin (Leader of Divine Philosophers), and his philosophical school was called the Transcendent Philosophy.

Mullā Šadrā was a philosopher who had complete mastery over all the philosophical, gnostic, and theological schools of his time. In addition, since he was a sublime commentator, a skilled muḥaddith, and a researcher in the field of ḥadīth, he was also a master of the Qur’an, ḥadīth, and the Prophet’s Sunnah. The vast knowledge and exceptional talents of this

* This paper is the written form of a speech presented by Professor Seyyed Mohammed Khamenei in the Mullā Sadrā Congress in Bosnia Herzegovina (Sarajevo University) in 2004.
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philosopher, his mastery over philosophy, and his creativity all assisted him in combining the philosophical foundations of all the philosophical schools of his time and, as a result, creating a new philosophical-gnostic school. This new school was completely independent from all of them; however, it was of a comprehensive nature and contained all the positive aspects of earlier schools.

He started developing his school of philosophy at a time when philosophy had been forgotten in almost all Islamic countries except for Iran and had been replaced by Ash’arite theology. In Iran, too, Peripatetic philosophy, which Ibn Sīnā had founded on the remains of Greek philosophy, prevailed in most seminaries and centers of philosophy. The ancient Iranian philosophy known as Ischrāqī philosophy was also taught in some seminaries (for example, in the seminary of Shiraz in Fars province), and gnosis and theology (kalām) were also foci of attention in some parts of the country. However, no one expected that a philosopher would appear who could reconcile all these apparently opposing schools with each other by means of philosophy, logic, and wisdom. Mullā Šadrā was indeed the philosopher who performed this miracle, the fruit of which was his Transcendent Philosophy.

Mullā Šadrā was a revolutionary who created a philosophical revolution and great changes in all philosophical and intellectual fields. Relying on the basic principles of his own school, he rejected some of the apparently solid theories of Peripatetic philosophy and replaced them by some new and comprehensive viewpoints which were more compatible and in harmony with both the intellect and the nature of the external world.

One of the celebrated ideas of Mullā Šadrā is the principality of “existence”. Although existence is one of the most obvious phenomena of
the world, the human being, who naturally chooses the easiest of all ways at all times, is used to regarding “existence” as the same “realization” of external objects and learning about this realization through the quiddative “differences” among things. In other words, a human always sees people, trees, mountains, tables, chairs, walls, the Earth, and so on, but he never sees their existence. Philosophically speaking, the human being knows objects through their quiddities (which distinguish things from each other) rather than their existence, which is shared by all of them.

Before Mullā Șadrā, even philosophers fell into this trap. They argued that every possible existent consists of quiddity and existence and, since everything is only one thing and not more than that, they considered the truth of objects to be the same as their quiddities. In other words, they believed in the principality of quiddity and maintained that “existence” was an abstract concept of those quiddities lacking in principality.¹ Many philosophical problems were rooted in this mistake and believing in the principality of quiddity and the abstract nature of existence had created some confusion for the philosophers that preceded Mullā Șadrā.

However, he bravely adduced some arguments and proofs to defeat his opponents and demonstrated that “existence” is an objective, rather than a mental, truth. He also proved that quiddity is nothing but a logical definition of the mental mould of objects; it is an answer given to the question: “What is this existent?”

In fact, what enjoys a real presence in the external world before us is the existence of objects. We construct some mental moulds from the differences among objects in order to know and identify them (for

¹. Rationally speaking, it is not possible for both quiddity and existence to be principal because, in this case, everything will be two things rather than one.
example, we say “tree”, “mountain”, “wall”, “human”...) and call them quiddities.

In other words, although it is the quiddity of things that underlies the differences among various existences, the common feature of all things, irrespective of their external differences, is the same “existent”. Therefore, we refer to all objects as existents, and an existent is something that reveals a form of existence to us.

However, the above discussion is very broad and extensive. Mullā Sadrā has written a book on existence called al-Mashā'ir and devoted one of the nine volumes of his celebrated work al-Asfār to the discussion of this topic.

Based on the earlier idea of the “principality of existence” and placing it at the center of his philosophy, Mullā Sadrā introduced a new foundation for philosophy and propounded and solved some other philosophical problems, which would not have been possible without resorting to this principle. In this regard, we can refer to his demonstration of God’s existence which he called the “argument of the righteous”. Moreover, he introduced the principle of oneness (i.e. claiming the oneness of God and denying any partner to Him), which is born out of the principiality of existence. According to him, only one thing in the world enjoys reality, and that is the eternal and pre-eternal truth which is exclusively for the Creator of the world or Almighty God. He has no like or alternate version, and the being of all existents has emanated from Him.

The other important philosophical principle is the unity of the world of being and the multi-lateral and systematic relationships among the components of all the apparently scattered existents of the world (which is called holism). This principle is not consistent with the principiality of quiddity.

Based on the principiality of quiddity, existents are separate substances and cannot have any essential relationships with each other. However, through
demonstrating and grading existence, or considering different degrees for it, he completely changed the face of the world. Moreover, he revealed the integration and, at the same time, the individuation and independence of objects by specifying a degree for each of them.

The philosophers of ancient Iran (or the same followers of Illuminationist philosophy) interpreted existence as “light”. Hence, when thousands of lamps are on in a place, in spite of the multiple sources of light, there is only one common truth there, which is light. All objects and existents, in spite of their apparent independence and separation from each other, are the same thing and have the same effect. That is, in the realm of being there is nothing but “existence”, although the external differences among the objects reveal their multiplicity to us.

In addition, in another of his philosophical principles and based on the principle of the principality of existence, Mullā Ṣadrā presents a clear interpretation of the scene of creation and the relationship which is known as the cause-effect relationship in philosophy. One might have a false understanding of this relationship and assume that the effect is a separate existent which depends on its cause and accepts it, whereas by “effect” Mullā Ṣadrā means an existent that not only has obtained its existence from a cause but also relies upon it for its survival. The principality of quiddity did not create a clear picture of this real and ontological need for the effect and the created to have a cause and a creator, but Mullā Šadrā corrected it.

If we assume that existence is principal and real, this relationship becomes clear. The reason is that the effect is nothing but an emanation from the source of existence, i.e. Almighty God Who is the Necessary Being. Based on this principle, the effect is nothing but “indigence”, ontological dependency, need, and pure non-existence before God, Who is
the Cause of all existents. There is no existent prior to God but His Will and effusion.

The other subject for which Mullā Ṣadrā presented a logical justification based on the principality of existence was the interpretation of the ontological layers of the world of being. He maintained that the world, due both to its proximity to and distance from matter, which was considered in the Illuminationist philosophy (Ishrāqī) to be the same as darkness and at the same level with non-existence, enjoys certain ontological levels. That is, the further it is from matter and its features and concomitants, and the closer it is to the source of light and existence, namely, Almighty Truth, the stronger and the more effective its existence will be. As a result, it will be prior to lower levels and layers. Thus the world is not limited to the world of matter, and we can assume certain layers for it, some of which are dominant over and prior to others and more real and stronger than them.

The world of matter represents the lowest level of all worlds; the highest level belongs to the world of intellects, which is completely free from material properties. Between those two worlds there is the world of images, which is free from matter, bodily features, time and motion. However, unlike the world of intellects, it is not free from quantity and form.

The human being naturally perceives only the world of matter and, if one attains spiritual perfection, one gradually becomes familiar with the world of images and then the world of intellects. The sequence and gradation of these worlds ranges from the highest to the lowest, while the human being’s sequence of knowledge of them begins from the lowest to the highest. In Peripatetic philosophy, these grades and levels were explained in another way (for example, based on the famous principle of the possibility of the nobler).
Mullā Šadrā’s Transcendent Philosophy

Mullā Šadrā demonstrated that, so far as the degrees of perception are concerned (which is an epistemological discussion), the same three layers exist within the human being. However, unlike the view of earlier philosophers, these three layers represent the ascending and descending aspects of a single reality, i.e. existence. Similar to the three levels of the material, imaginal, and intellectual worlds, there are three levels of perception for human beings which are systematically related to each other. Mullā Šadrā named them sense perception, imaginal perception, and intellectual perception.

The doctrine of the principality of existence constitutes the basis of almost all the problems that Mullā Šadrā has dealt with. By demonstrating and accepting it, it becomes easier to solve philosophical problems. That is why his school is not a closed and static school and does not become stale. It is, rather, a vivid, innovative, and dynamic philosophy that, even in the modern era, can solve the problems of modern philosophies which grow like mushrooms every once in a while in each corner of the world and are sometimes incapable of solving them by themselves.

Mullā Šadrā’s philosophy should be compared both with ancient schools of philosophy and modern philosophies that have been born after him over the last four centuries in the West.

* * *

Mullā Šadrā’s theory of the human soul is also a new, illuminating, and most perfect theory. Before this, there existed two theories belonging to ancient times: one was the Platonic theory stating that the human soul has been created before the body and will join it after its creation; the other was the Peripatetic theory stating that the human soul has been created in parallel with the creation of the body and co-exists with it.
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Mullā Ṣadrā demonstrated that the human soul is born after the creation and developmental motion of the body. Later, it gradually follows its own way through another kind of ontological development, and, finally, when it sees itself without further need of matter, it leaves the body upon its death, exits the world of matter, and becomes capable of living in the world of images. As is well-known, the human soul is material and corporeal in its origination but immaterial and independent in its survival.

Wherever there is a trace of development, there is existence; hence, without the doctrine of the principality of existence, it would have been impossible to solve the problem of the human soul. However, Mullā Ṣadrā accomplished this task in the light of this doctrine.

Time and the Trans-Substantial Motion

One of the other achievements of Mullā Ṣadrā’s school which originated in the doctrine of the principality of existence is the demonstration of natural motion in the essence and substance of the world. According to this doctrine, matter and the whole of the material world, contrary to appearances, are not at rest but are continually in motion and, in some way, in the process of development. Early philosophers assumed that the substance and essence of objects was fixed and believed that motion was limited to the four categories of quantity, quality, place, and position (in relation to the surroundings) and even Ibn Sīnā presented an argument on the impossibility of motion in substance.

Nevertheless, Mullā Ṣadrā demonstrated that nature is the cause of motion, and the cause cannot be inconsistent with the effect. Moreover, since some accidents are in motion, nature is also in motion, and motion in the category of accident is due to the motion in substance.
Mullā Ṣadrā’s Transcendent Philosophy

In this way, the world that Mullā Ṣadrā introduced, unlike the world of earlier philosophies, which was at rest and static, is dynamic and continually experiences change. It is these very changes that direct the world towards natural development and create time. Contrary to what some believe, time is not a real and independent receptacle; rather, it is abstracted from the evolutionary motion of nature and matter.

In Peripatetic philosophy, changes in the world are disconnected and stem from the death of one form and the creation of another. That is, the world is in a static state. However, based on his theory of the trans-substantial motion, Mullā Ṣadrā interpreted the changes of the material world as being interconnected and in the same mold as the development of forms. Such changes are rooted in the emanation of existence from the source of the true and main existence (God) in the world of nature which gradually descend to it, following the potential of matter and nature and in order to complete their existence.

Since the divine emanation is continuous and interconnected, nature does not rest either and changes face at each moment. We call these changes in substance and accidents, motion and becoming.

Hermeneutics

One of the important and noteworthy aspects of Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophy in which philosophy, gnosis, and the science of the interpretation of the Qur’an are intermingled is his theory of hermeneutics. In the West, hermeneutics once meant the literary interpretation of religious or literary texts. Later some philosophers (such as Heidegger and his advocates) brought it into the field of philosophy, and it turned into the science of the interpretation of existence and its expressions in language and time.
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Four centuries before them, Mullā Šadrā had established philosophical hermeneutics alongside the traditional and literary hermeneutics and granted it some philosophical and gnostic dimensions which have been extensively discussed in various articles and books.

* * *

A historical and comparative study of Mullā Šadrā and his school, and other philosophers and their schools reveals the following two realities:

**Mullā Šadrā’s Exceptional School of Philosophy**

Mullā Šadrā’s school, in addition to his innovative ideas, which he has estimated to be more than 170 in number, in the fields of philosophy, interpretation, and *ḥadīth*, is a unique and internally coherent school, rather than a combination of several schools. It is a living and dynamic school that can adapt itself to the philosophical problems of each era. Moreover, it is comprehensive; that is, it has involved itself in all contemporary philosophical fields and treated them on the basis of its founder’s principles and theories.

In his time, philosophy or wisdom was divided into two main sections: theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy. In a general classification, the latter included ethics, family management, and the management of the State. Although in most of his works, Mullā Šadrā emphasized theoretical wisdom, he also presented some important ideas and fundamental principles in relation to practical wisdom. Moreover, he developed a comprehensive worldview and philosophy in relation to theoretical wisdom. For example, he propounded some important principles on epistemology which were unprecedented in earlier and later
Mullā Ṣadrā’s Transcendent Philosophy

philosophies. In this regard we can refer to the philosophical demonstration of mental existence, the demonstration of the union of the intellect, the intelligent, and the intelligible (or knowledge, the knower, and the known), and so on.

In the field of ontology, in addition to demonstrating the principality of existence and its applications, he introduced some important principles in the field of philosophy (some of which we have briefly referred to above). He has also offered some invaluable ideas and theories in the field of philosophical psychology and even eschatology and the philosophy of logic which are extremely thought provoking in the field of philosophy. In eschatology, he managed to extend the field of philosophy beyond the world of matter and also bring the Hereafter, which is a part of the world of being, into the domain of philosophy, intellect, and logic without calling it theology (kalām).

Mullā Ṣadrā’s Exceptional Character

Mullā Ṣadrā enjoyed certain spiritual and individual characteristics that distinguished him from other philosophers. In addition to spending all his life on piety, ascetic practice, spiritual development of the self and attaining sacredness and supreme levels of spirituality, from a social point of view, he was extremely courageous in expressing his ideas and revolting against traditional views. Moreover, he was a pious and righteous man who was heedless of the world, never sought power around kings and government authorities, and cherished his independence from the court and rulers. In fact, in his books he always criticized those scholars who attached themselves to the court.

Mullā Ṣadrā was a revisionist and a social reformer and harshly opposed the social perversions of his time. He wrote a book against the
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deceitful pseudo-mystics of his time who were the origin of social ills. However, he himself was in fact a pious and righteous Sufi (mystic). Another book he wrote expressed disapprobation of the theologians and jurisprudents of his time who, in order to attain their worldly goals and purposes, tried to approach the king and state authorities through pretending to be scientists and philosophers. They opposed innovative scholars malevolently and indirectly tried to isolate science and the true scientists in society.

All in all, Mullā Ṣadrā was one of the figures who was extremely opposed to the undesirable conditions of his time and tried to show the way of reform to the authorities. When discussing the significance and importance of Mullā Ṣadrā’s character and school, we need say no more than that not only before him, but even four centuries after him, history has never witnessed a character or school at such a level. Indeed, Mullā Ṣadrā and his Transcendent Philosophy shine like the sun in the sky of science and philosophy.
Chapter Three:

Philosophy and Religion (Kālam)
Miracles and Charismatic Acts*

Although the issue of miracles (mu‘jizah) and charismatic acts (kirāmah) has various dimensions and can be viewed from different perspectives, it is mainly the concern of the science of theology (kalām). However, as we shall see later, even in this field, it has been discussed quite ambiguously and incompletely.

According to the history of Islamic theology, this branch of the transmitted sciences was generally controlled by three schools and three groups of Imamite, Mu‘tazilite, and Ash‘arte Muslim theologians.

1. Imamite theologians: Unlike what is known, Imamite is the oldest of all theological schools. During the early days of Islam and immediately after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), it sought shelter in the presence of the descendants and the Household of the Prophet (ṣ) and

* This paper was presented in the Conference of Commemoration of Mullā ‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhiji in Lahijan, 1370 AS.
obtained much precious knowledge from that accessible rich and fruitful source during the first three centuries of the history of Islam.

Concerning the issue of obedience to the intellect (‘aql) or transmission (naql) – which was the topic of debate between the Ash’arites and the Mu’tazilites – the Imamite benefited from both of these two God-given sources correctly and did not accept either of them at the expense of the other. Imamite theologians, while paying attention to the intellect and reasoning – and to some extent to the Greek philosophy that was translated into Arabic (at the end of the 2nd and during the 3rd centuries) – benefited first from the knowledge of the Infallible Imāms and then from the related texts and hadīths. That is why, on the whole, theology flourished more and culminated in the hands of Imamite theologians. This is the same heritage that later came into Islamic philosophy and separated to a great extent from Greek philosophy. However, if there are any deviations or contortions in the ideas of some Imamite theologians, it is only due to their bad taste or weak viewpoints.

The reason for Imamite theologians’ moderation in choosing between the intellect and transmission was that the words of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) and other Imāms enjoyed a rational substance, while being rooted in revelation and the teachings of the Prophet (s). Advocating these words and devotion to what had remained from their transmitted traditions and hadīths led to a kind of rationalism and reasoning.

In spite of this main aspect of Imamite theology, we must also say that the cause of the general dominance of the Ash’arite and Mu’tazilite theologies in the 3rd century (AH) and after the 4th century (AH) was that they also had their eyes on the other two rival schools. For example, we can see that concerning certain issues, such as miracles, Imamite theologians also treaded on the path of other theologians and, instead of more deliberation on
Miracles and Charismatic Acts

its infinite depth, merely dealt with a few superficial issues and responded to some well-known problems and criticisms.

2. Mu'tazilite theologians: This group of non-Imamite theologians, who can be claimed to have followed positivism, to use a modern term, never relied on non-rational (and non-empirical) sources except in cases where Islamic principles necessitated it. After the translation of Greek philosophy into Arabic, they started adapting and even adopting some parts of it and denied the matters that, in their view, did not conform to reason.

The followers of this school, under the pretext of resorting to the intellect and trusting it, rejected what their limited experience, knowledge, and personal wisdom did not allow them to perceive from the realities of the world. One of these realities was the truth of the existence of the charismatic acts of the God’s Favorites.

3. Ash'arite theologians: This group of theologians neither relied on the intellect and reasoning, like the Mu'tazilites, nor prized the invaluable hadiths of the Prophet’s descendants, which were treasured by the Imamites. The basis and main source of their teachings and the keys to their problems consisted of a few prophetic hadiths which they called Sunnah. All three theological schools accepted the Qur'an as a reliable source; however, because of the difficulties involved in the correct interpretation and use of its verses and the abstention of Imamites from accepting the interpretive hadiths of the people of the Household of the Prophet (s), it could not be used properly by these theologians. As a result, they were stranded in the meanders of the superficial conflicts of the interpretation of the verses and never discovered the reality.

Among Muslim theologians, the Ash’arites were the weakest of all in solving epistemological problems. This was because by denying the role of intellect versus Shar', they lost half of the tools necessary for understanding sciences. Moreover, because they took no heed of the
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Sunnah of the Prophet’s descendants, who were his true heirs, and failed to access the depth of Qur’anic teachings, they could not even use the other half properly in order to discover the hidden meanings of Islamic teachings.

Given the essential weaknesses of the two Mu’tazilite and Ash’arite schools and the problems created against the Imamite school, the science of theology (kalām) did not leave a noteworthy impact upon Islamic teachings and failed to gain any considerable achievement in this regard. Obviously, no convenient answer was ever given to the problem of miracles and charismatic acts by any of these schools.

The major issues that theologians dealt with concerning the above problem included believing in the existence of miracles or charismatic acts or denying them; whether doing miracles was limited to the Prophet (s) (which Mu’tazilites believed in) or whether the God Favorites were also capable of doing them; defining miracles and charismatic deeds and the difference between them; whether miracles appear in form of challenge; whether God denies the possibility of doing miracles to others; whether working miracles is one of the characteristics of a prophet; whether charismatic acts originate in prophets’ or in God’s power, etc.

The period in which researchers of Islamic teachings had no access to convenient answers to the above problems came to an end when, first, Ibn Sinā and his successors introduced Islamic philosophy, and then Ibn ‘Arabi and his students presented his gnosis to this field of research and learning. As a result, the answer to many of the complicated problems in rational sciences and divine teachings was found in the light of the original Islamic teachings embedded in the Book and Sunnah.

In other words, philosophy and gnosis undertook the responsibility for research on the issue of miracles and charismatic acts (like many other problems of the science of theology). As we will see later, Imamites, too,
sometimes under the name of kalām (and in the light of the ḥadīths of the Prophet’s descendants), gradually brought difficult theological problems to the realm of Islamic philosophy and freed them from the false ideas and illusions of preceding theologians. Consequently, Tūsī’s Tajrīd al-kalām, which was the bridge connecting theology to Islamic philosophy, turned into the major source and center of philosophers’ discussions between the 7th and 11th centuries (AH). It is said that more than a hundred commentaries and glosses were written by the philosophers of these centuries on this book as well as ‘Allāmah Hilli’s Sharḥ tajrīd al-kalām.

A thorough study of this issue leads us to the conclusion that Mullā Sadrā’s Transcendent Philosophy – which is apparently a synthesis of Peripatetic philosophy, Illuminationist philosophy, Greek gnosis, and Islamic gnosis – is in essence the developed version of Tūsī’s kalām, which during 14 fruitful centuries resulted in the development of the philosophy of the Shiraz School as represented by Seyyed Sanad, Mullā Sadrā, Dawānī, and some other prominent scholars. It even influenced the Isfāhan School and Mīr Dāmād’s philosophy. It filled Mullā Sadrā’s mind and soul and, by mixing with Ibn ‘Arabī’s gnosis and Suhrawardi’s philosophy, turned into his Transcendent Philosophy and unique school of thought.

Given the above historical realities about the interplay between theology and philosophy among the Īmamītes, we can answer the question of why Fayyūd Lāhijī turned his back on theologians in his book Gawhar-i murād and advocated the method and arguments of philosophers concerning the issue of miracles and charismatic acts.

If, as is commonly believed, we consider Gawhar-i murād to be a book on theology and view Lāhijī, who took some steps in the realm of theology, as a theologian, he might have been the first thinker who viewed this issue from a philosophical angle using a very different method from that
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of theologians. Unlike theologians, who discuss the meaning of miracles and their being in the hands of people other than Prophets and the like, he explained the quality and nature of this phenomenon.

In his invaluable book, *Gawhar-i murād*, Fayyāḍ Lāhījī discusses miracles and charismatic acts under the title “The Reality of Prophethood”, and, in doing so, as we said before, he followed the method used by philosophers rather than that of theologians.

Theologians commonly believed that miracle was one of the peripheral aspects and consequences of prophethood and naturally should be dealt with after the affirmation of the principle of prophethood. However, Lāhījī believed that a prophet was a person who, in addition to possessing a superhuman scientific knowledge, insight, and perception, which he called the faculty of perception, has a superhuman and supernatural effect on nature in the sense of doing miracles. He calls this ability the faculty of movement. When man reaches this degree of perfection and receives revelation, he has reached the station of prophethood. In fact, this station follows man’s attaining the theoretical and practical power of working miracles and performing charismatic acts rather than vice versa.

In the 5th chapter of the 3rd essay of *Gawhar-i murād*, Lāhījī writes about the truth of prophethood and the features of the prophetic soul as follows:

Beware that, according to philosophers, the rational soul must enjoy three characteristics so that it deserves the noble station of prophethood: He must be able to hear God’s Words and see the angel of revelation; he must know everything there is to know or most of them through God; according to God’s order, the three major elements comprising the world of nature must obey him. It means that the rational soul has two kinds of faculty: that of perception and that of movement.
Thus, in the view of philosophers, prophethood is the result of the combination of three elements: 1) revelation and spiritual connection to the origin, 2) the faculty of perception, and 3) the faculty of movement.

In other words, if a human being in the stage of perceiving and knowing the world reaches the highest level of perfection possible so that it affects his soul and illuminates and purifies it like a mirror in such a way that he develops the ability even to affect the matter of worldly bodies and objects, receives revelation, or deserves the potential of having a divine messenger descend to him, he has reached the station of prophethood and becomes a prophet.

When explaining the first condition, i.e. the faculty of perception, Lāhiji says:

Perception is of two types: rational (universal), which is attained through intellection and logical reasoning, and sense perception (particular), which is attained through the five-fold external senses or imagination. The three-fold characteristics, i.e. receiving revelation, knowing everything or most things through God and not learning them from a teacher or others, and having all the existents and elements of the world of nature to obey one, are rooted in the perfection of the three-fold faculties (rational perception, sense perception and, particularly, the faculty of imagination, and the faculty of movement). The perfection of the faculty of rational perception (universal perceptions) is attained when man obtains all the general knowledge that normal people learn from teachers over a long period of time in the shortest amount of time possible through speculation. And the perfection of the faculty of particular perception (sense and imaginal perceptions), particularly the faculty of imagination, is attained when imagination reaches infinite power and, at the same time, completely obeys the orders of the rational faculty so that whenever the human soul connects with the active intellect
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(which emanates knowledge and perfections on behalf of God and is called Gabriel), and the forms of intelligibles are imprinted on the soul, the imaginal faculty is attracted toward the rational faculty so that an image of any form that is disengaged and universal and imprinted on the soul with its own disengagement and universality is imprinted on the imaginal faculty as imagination and particularity (in contrast to disengagement and universality). In this way, the imaginal faculty narrates the perceptions of the rational faculty. If those rational perceptions are disengaged essences (rather than disengaged concepts and judgments), they will appear as a human individual (who is the most supreme substance that is perceived through the senses) at the height of beauty. If they are disengaged concepts and universal judgments, they will appear in form of words (moulds of disengaged concepts) at the height of eloquence, to be read and memorized. When these forms are strongly imprinted on the faculty of imagination, it gives them to the “common sense”, and then the forms of essences are perceived through the sense of sight and the forms of words through the sense of hearing. As a result, we observe a beautiful person standing before us speaking beautiful and eloquent words.¹

This is the same theory held by Islamic philosophers who believe that revelation is the stage-by-stage descent of the Prophet’s perception from the level of rational to imaginal perception. From this level and through the reverse presence of the rational known and imaginal known in the common sense, he moves to the level of sense perception and hears and feels his rational perceptions in the form of sounds in his ears.

The same is also true about “the vision of angels”. Here, the rational perception of disengaged essences and intellects, by going through

¹. Gawhar-i murād, pp. 257-258.
the reverse hierarchy of the sense to imagination and the intellect, moves from the intellect and imagination and reaches the sense of sight through the mediation of the common sense. As a result, a prophet sees the angel’s face (or the very disengaged intellect) with his own eyes (i.e. he feels that he sees it).

Lāḥiji believes that this form of connection to the realities of the world, which is naturally not in the form of acquired knowledge, is the same faculty of perception without which the station of prophethood cannot be attained, and it is impossible to work miracles. This is because as practical wisdom cannot be attained without theoretical wisdom, the human soul cannot dominate the world and affect it without becoming perfect through rational perceptions and, as we shall see later, through moving from the microanthropos to macroanthropos (and, rather, the inclusion of the world of matter and meaning in its own rational mould in the perfect man’s soul).

After this stage, Lāḥiji deals with the stage of objective effect in objects and says:

However, the perfection of the faculty of movement is when the rational soul reaches such a level of strength of act and intensity of effect that anything that it “conceives” and any form that is imprinted on its imagination comes into existence as soon as they are willed. This stage is sometimes realized when its relation to dominating the matter of beings is like its relation to the matter of its own body. And, if any soul can affect its own body at the moment of “conception” (as we see it most clearly at the moment of passion, anger, fear, hope, and shame), it can affect not only any body but also any matter immediately after “conception” and “will”. When this relation is realized, the body will become obedient to the soul; that is,
the matter of beings will come into existence in any mode that the rational soul wishes and God wills…

After explaining these two stages, affection and act, one being affected by the world and the other affecting it, he explains the third characteristic of the prophet:

When this level, which is the perfection of the faculty of movement, is realized, the third of the above three-fold characteristics will also be realized, and the rational soul will realize the truth of prophethood. Moreover, it will be qualified to receive “revelation”. The differences among the Prophets in terms of their levels of prophethood lie in their differences concerning the above characteristics and their levels of strength and weakness, and perfection and imperfection.

In order to clarify this issue, we should first give an introduction and keep some points in mind:

First, the rational soul has the power of effect. This effect is exercised sometimes indirectly and through mediators and material tools, such as the effect of man’s will on his muscles, body movement, and acts, and sometimes directly, such as man’s internal effect on himself and his effect on other individuals and objects in the form of performing miracles and charismatic acts or magnetism and the like. Each of these effects has been discussed in the related field of knowledge.

The origin of the soul’s power of effect is its conformity and similarity to disengaged entities (the intellects and the immaterial soul), which are themselves the shadows and images of the divine spirit and command. Accordingly, we will refer to the innovations of the soul as “command”. The Holy Qur’an, too, refers to the divine innovation and
composition as “command”. We will explain this point at the end of this paper.

Second, the effect of man’s soul on himself or other objects is of various degrees and levels, as follows:

A) The most vulnerable and nearest thing to the stimulation and effect of the human soul’s “command” and innovation is the central nervous system, which affects the body’s muscles and motor activities. Through its own secret and complicated methods and strategies, the soul makes the brain and the nervous system order the muscles to move. According to philosophers and theologians, the hierarchy of this order is as follows:

conceiving an object ⇒ affirming its benefits ⇒ developing great enthusiasm or desire ⇒ having a will ⇒ muscle movement

Such effects of the soul are among the simplest and commonest ways in which it affects the exterior. All human beings are capable of producing such effects, and this potential reaches perfection with puberty.

B) Affecting the nerves called the sympathetic and parasympathetic nerves, which usually send the brain’s order to internal organs such as heart, lungs, intestines, pancreas, and the like automatically, is another kind of the soul’s effects which are possible only in certain cases and in certain people. Man’s free will does not normally play a role in the functions of such organs. However, sometimes, through ascetic practice and spiritual efforts, some people develop the ability to give orders to one or some of their internal body organs and bring them, more or less, under their own control.

C) Affecting the organs and muscles of other people is one of the higher and stronger forms of the soul’s effects. This kind of effect first
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affects the soul of the subject, and thus his soul (which is, in a way, captured) affects his organs.

As an example in this regard, we can refer to indoctrination, magnetism, and the like. Here, the subject’s acts are not considered to be voluntary and are among the so-called produced acts, and their cause is other than the living doer. The condition for this effect is the strength and spiritual dominance of the agentive and commanding soul and the weakness and vulnerability of the subject’s soul.

D) Another effect of the soul which is more powerful than previous ones is its effect on the body of individuals or objects’ matter directly and without the interference of the individual’s soul. In this regard, we can refer to the Evil Eye, ill luck, interpretation of dreams, etc.

E) Yet, another higher level of the soul’s effect is affecting soulless matter and moving bodies, for example, man’s transforming wood or stone into living existents, the speaking of stones and trees, the coming into life of a picture on the wall, and its acting like a living being.

F) The highest of all these effects and movements of the soul is its affecting free (from matter) or freed souls. By freed souls we mean those human souls that become free from the body after death and live without a material body. They are different from separate souls which philosophers consider to be mediators between immaterial intellects and the material world and compare with spherical souls.

An example of affecting freed souls is their restoration in their dead bodies, which has occurred in the form of some Prophets bringing the dead back to life.

Some typical instances have been recorded in history. The effect on spherical souls is of the type of affecting their administrations, which is known as controlling the spheres and stars.
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With this introduction and the knowledge of the various stages and levels of the soul’s effect on beyond the body and through gaining familiarity with the concepts of “stimulation” and the “perfection of the faculty of stimulation” and their types in Lāhiji’s words, we can analyze his ideas in this regard.

According to his theory, as well as those of some other philosophers, it is naturally possible for man to bring anything that exists on the surface of his “conception”, mind, and “imagination” under the control of his “will” and, by means of this will, grant an external existence to that mental existent and bring it into existence.

Perhaps, Ibn Sinā was the first to have explicitly dealt with this issue in his book al-Ishārat following a philosophical approach. In the 10th namat, while referring to this point allusively, he says:

al-Ishārat: Whenever you hear that a gnostic, through his own power, has been able to do something, to move something, or to cause an act that is not possible for normal people, do not immediately deny it! Perhaps, learning about the ideas and theories of scientists concerning nature can be a way to find its cause.

al-Tanbihat: A normal person has limited power for doing things and moving objects. Then a state might occur to the human soul so that his power increases several times to the extent that he becomes distinguished from others. We can observe this state when he is angry, when he seeks superiority, or the like. Therefore, it is not surprising if a gnostic faints at the time of amplification, and this is an obstacle that disturbs his powers. This state is more powerful than the one witnessed at the time of anger or happiness.

2. In the 32nd chapter of Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, attributed to Fārābī, some short statements also refer to the same issue.
Khwājā Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī comments on this point as follows: “Now, we understand the meaning of the words attributed to Imām ‘Alī’s stating, ‘I swear to God that I did not lift the doors of Khaybar with my physical power but by a divine power’.”

In such cryptic words of Ibn Sinā, reference has been made to the principle of the commensurability and similarity of miracles and charismatic acts and the states of the soul; however, its quality has not been stipulated. Nevertheless, by resorting to illuminative philosophy and gnosis, Mullā Sadrā has explicitly revealed the quality and nature of this universal human phenomenon in some parts of his books.

For example, in *al-Shawāhid al-rubābiyyah* (in the 2nd and 3rd *ishrāqs* of the 5th *mashad*), after explaining the three-fold features of prophethood (enjoying holy powers, receiving revelation, and moving matter), he writes about the soul’s feature of affecting matter and its cause as follows:

And the third feature (the soul’s affecting matter) is, therefore, one of the soul’s faculties arising from its practical part and faculty of movement and affecting hyle and the matter of the world by removing one of its forms or adding one to them. It also affects the changes in weather, the formation of clouds in the sky, rainfall, and the occurrence of storms and earthquakes… And his prayers will be heard in the worlds of Dominion and Kingdom. In the light of his superhuman powers, he can heal the sick, satiate the thirsty, and make animals obey him. This is completely possible because it has been proved that objects also obey souls and are affected by them. In fact, the forms of the world that continuously appear on the substance of the elements of the world are affected by spherical souls, and, when the human soul gains power, it
becomes similar to spherical souls (like the similarity between a child and his father) and leaves the same effect on the *hyle* of the elements of the world that they do. However, when it is not powerful, its effect does not go beyond its own body and world. In this case, when it creates an unpleasant form or event in its imagination, the temperament of its body changes, and it shows it, for example, by sweating or trembling. And, when the form of victory and overcoming the enemy occurs to the soul, the body becomes warm (from happiness), and the face becomes red. Indeed, all these events occur merely because of the soul’s imaginations…

Therefore, it is no surprise that some souls enjoy a perfectional faculty that has been affirmed from the above. Such a soul is the same as the soul of the world (which is the administrator of the world) and is qualified to have the same effect that it has on its own body on other things. Thus the *hyle* of the world obeys such a soul in the same way that the body obeys its own soul. This soul affects the *hyle* of the world by correcting it and removing all of its defects and corruptions. And all of this happens just because of the soul’s enthusiasm, interest, and superior and divine motion, which create love in God’s creatures, such as a father’s love for his child.

Moreover, in *al-Wāridāt al-qalbiyyah* treatise (*fayḍ* 38), Mullā Šadrā writes:

There are three reasons for the workings of supernatural acts (miracles) from the Prophets with the permission of God: 1) the purity of the soul, 2) power of thought and idea in speculation,
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and 3) the weakness of the faculty of imagination in dominating the senses.

Concerning the first reason, we should say that the substance of the soul is, indeed, of the type of the world of Dominion, and divine existents naturally affect the world of matter (which has the three-fold directions) and the spheres. This is because substances and natures (inevitably) are captured by, and are obedient to, the world of creation. Therefore, the soul is one of the rays of the fire of heavenly existents and has the same effects that they do. The first effect of the essence of the soul is on the body, the faculties of the soul, and its concomitants in the body… This being the case… the appearance of a great soul which can administer a vaster and bigger realm is possible. This soul’s power of administration and control of bodies can even be spread to the world of generation and corruption… In sum, the soul, which is one of the substances of the world of Dominion and of the type of the world of pure intelligences, will indeed be able to do what the causes and concomitants of its creation do when it becomes similar to them in knowledge and act. This is like what happens to a piece of iron when placed beside fire; the heated, red iron will glow and burn like fire itself because it has assumed the attributes of fire.

In the above sentences, we can find a point that Làhiji has just dealt with briefly. Concerning the quality of the “faculty of movement” in Prophets and the God’s Favorites, he just said, “At this level (and station), the soul sometimes deserves and is qualified to affect the matter of beings and nature as it affects and commands his own body.” However, he has not explained the quality of the unity of these two “relations”. Some of these
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explanations can be found in those of Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s words that we quoted and some of them in those of others as follows:

First aspect: In order to explain the permissibility of affecting the matter of beings in proportion to “affecting the matter of their own body”, Mullâ Ṣadrâ reasons by referring to the commensurability of man (the human soul) with the faculties dominating nature (the administrative or impressed souls in the firmaments).

This is one aspect of the possibility of the emanation of supernatural acts, miracles, and charismatic acts from human beings and consists of the influence of the human soul and its mental conceptions on matter and external bodies or merely on their hyle so that they assume the same “form” that the human soul has, and a phenomenon or event occurs due to man’s will and desire.

According to philosophers, each of celestial spheres has a number of souls by which and by its own movements it affects the matter and hyle of the earthly world, and any form that it wishes appears. In the past, they called such images marriage (nīkāh and zuwāj); therefore, they called the spherical souls, which played the role of the father for nature, the seven-fold fathers. This was because the seed of phenomena and forms was from them. They are also called earthly elements (the four-fold elements) the four-fold mothers because they believed that the innermost nature of the world functioned as a mother’s womb. From the matrimony of spherical souls and earthly elements, a new existent and form was born to the world every moment.

Philosophers believed that if man (who was himself the child of the above mother and father) attained the necessary power and became similar to his ancestors, he would be able to do what the souls of celestial spheres and stars do. That is why Mullâ Ṣadrâ says, “When the human soul becomes powerful, it will indeed be similar to the souls of celestial spheres
and stars, as children look like their fathers.” This statement is justifiable; however, since it has been adopted from Greek Aristotelian philosophy and is based on the pagan mythological culture of Olympian gods, it is not very pleasant.

**Second aspect:** Another aspect proposed for the permissibility of the rational soul’s effect on the *hyle* of the world is what we quoted from Mullā Ṣadrā in his *al-Wāridāt al-qalbiyyah*. He says,

The essence of the soul is of the type of the celestial Kingdom of the “same world of the souls”, and the effect of these celestial essences on the matters of the world is a natural one. This is because the souls are from the world of “creation”, and all matters and natures are obedient to this world. Thus the human soul, which is of the type of the same heavenly souls, is imprisoned in the cage of the body, is involved in administering the affairs of this storm-stricken vessel [and in Mullā Ṣadrā’s words, a flame of its fire], and has the power of innovation or creation and exerting natural effects upon nature.

According to this aspect, the soul naturally enjoys the property of leaving effects in the form of creation (*ibdā‘*), which, in the technical sense of the word, refers to *creato ex nihilo* without seeking help from prior matter. Nevertheless, the souls that are limited by elemental bodies will lack this ability unless they free themselves from the darkness of matter and, in Mullā Ṣadrā’s words, attain “essential purity”.

**Third aspect:** The next aspect is for the human soul to reach the supreme level of knowledge and act (theoretical and practical wisdom) through the purity and perfection of the soul. Moreover, through proximity and assimilation to disengaged souls, it can attain their form and effect, like
what happens to metal when placed in fire. In this case it takes the form of fire, glows, and, like fire, burns anything that can be burned.

The souls of the Prophets and God’s Favorites also reach the supreme level of knowledge, insight, and worldview through the purification of their spirits. Moreover, like supernatural elements and unlike the common conduct of other human beings, they are involved in the creation and formation of the substances of this world.

Following his previous words in the *al-Wāridāt al-qalbiyyah* treatise, Mullā Ṣadrā says:

> In sum, the soul which is one of the substances of the world of Dominion and of the type of the world of pure intelligences, will do what its superior existents and causes and concomitants of its creation do when it becomes similar to them in knowledge and act, like a blazing piece of iron beside fire.

Although he refers to this aspect along with the second aspect, one can make a distinction between them. This is because the second is an essential property, while an effect which is obtained due to similarity or proximity to something else is an accident which is said to disappear quickly or slowly.

**Fourth aspect:** According to this aspect, the Prophets and God’s Favorites are the loci of the manifestations of God and the means through which God reveals His Creation and Supernatural Deeds to people. In *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, Jāmī writes:³

> The Prophets and the God’s Favorites are the loci of the manifestations and tools of the Truth. Therefore, whatever the

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tool does is indeed the act of the Creator, as the pen in the hand of the writer has no free will, and the choice is always made by the writer himself. Thus, when Almighty Truth does miracles and performs charismatic acts through them, how can we say that the Truth is capable of doing certain things and incapable of doing some others? This idea is truly the same as blasphemy.

Fifth aspect: Another aspect of this effect is that, in terms of knowledge and insight, a soul that is mixed with matter, through purification and spiritual freedom from the impurity of matter, goes through the level of “intellectus materialis” and “intellectus inhabit” and, after going through the level of the so-called actual intellect (which means the presence and actuality of all knowledge), reaches the level of “intellectus adeptus”. Then, by connecting with the “Active Intellect” (which is said to have been referred to as Gabriel in the Book and Sunnah), it gains scientific dominance over the world. In the same way, by connecting with the Active Intellect, which is the regulator and the so-called headman of the world, the soul gains practical dominance over the hyle or matter of the world. Therefore, it can make any “form”, event, and effect that it desires appear in the world. The events that are different from what normally occurs are called miracles and charismatic acts.

This aspect can also be seen in Sabziwâri’s Sharḥ-i manẓūmah. He says,

The practical part of the soul, which is called the moving faculty, develops the ability to make the hyle obedient to itself. It can make rain, create storm, and destroy sinful people. The elements of nature obey him exactly in the same way that his organs do…
For the Prophets and God’s Favorites this is a union with the Actual Intellect, which the Peripatetic-Aristotelian philosophy considers the tenth intellect in the hierarchy of intellects. However, the Seal of the Prophets goes beyond this because the Prophet’s soul is in spiritual union with the first intellect, which is the prime mover of the world of creation. We can see this point merely in gnosis, and Ḥākim Sabziwārī has also adopted it from this field.

Sixth aspect: This aspect has been discussed by gnostics and, in a sense, embodies all the previous aspects and their acceptable elements.

From a gnostic point of view, performing charismatic acts and miracles is the natural result of attaining the station of the perfect man. This is a person who has left the stages and levels of spiritual perfection behind and turned into “macrocosm”.

According to gnosis, man, who is himself a part of the great world of creation, is also a symbol of the world, and that is why he is called “microcosm”. He is small in terms of “form”; however, he can reach a “station” that dominates the world. It is at this point that he turns into the “macrocosm” itself. This is because man is God’s successor and enjoys the station of vicegerency. The world is the “succeeding object”, and the successor must have dominance over what succeeds him.

The truth of the perfect man who has united with God is, in fact, like the soul and “life” of the world, and the whole of the great world, which is

4. Sabziwārī, Manẓūmah, pp. 326-328. Sabziwārī writes in his glosses, “The souls of the Prophets and God’s Favorites, are connected to the Active Intellect (which is the tenth in the hierarchy of intellects); however, the soul of the Seal of the Prophets and his heirs connect with the first intellect. This is because the spirituality of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) is the same first intellect, and you can say that it is the same universal intellect. As he himself said, “The first of all God’s creations was my light.”
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also called the “macroanthropos”, is like its form and body. Therefore, as the microanthropos has dominance over his body and its organs, the perfect man has dominance over the entire world, and, by God’s permission and with the help of the divine order and blessed name of “Allah” (which is the mother of all names, its external representative, and the “consistent being”, and comprises all names) tears the roof of heaven and throws any new plan that he wishes.

These various philosophical and gnostic views, each of which having approached the issue from a different angle, can be brought together in an all-inclusive and comprehensive theory. There might also be some other theories that view this phenomenon from a different perspective.

Having been inspired by the Holy Qur’an, we can also add another view to what has already been said and present the related discussion and conclusion after referring to the following premises:

First premise: Miracles and supernatural acts are of the type of “creation”. In its philosophical sense, this word means a kind of making and bringing into being. It has been defined as “creato ex nihilo”.

This word has not been used in this sense in the Qur’an. However, the word “amr” (command) has been employed there in this sense. God’s Command in the Qur’an is synonymous with His “Will” for the existence and realization of each creature and existent. He says, “Indeed, it is God’s Command that whenever He Wills something to come into existence, He Commands it, ‘Become’, and it comes into existence.”

5. For more information, refer to gnostic works, such as the 8th chapter of Qayṣarī’s introduction to Ibn ‘Arabī’s al-Fuṣūṣ and indications of the 5th chapter.
6. Adapted from Hāfīz’s Diwān.
8. Yā-sīn chapter: 82; Maryam chapter: 35; al-Naḥl chapter: 40.
In the above verse, in addition to referring to the word “command” and emphasizing that it accompanies the Divine Will and is at the same level with it, He has referred to it as “Become! Be”. This is what gnostics have called “ontological becoming”. Here, they do not have the surface meaning of the word in mind, rather, they intend the same word of Allah, which means a “generic command”, and its quality is the creation of a phenomenon that was previously non-existent.

**Second premise:** In the Holy Qur’an, “command” and “spirit” are considered to have the same origin and root. According to al-Isrā’ chapter: 85, “… Say: ‘The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord…’”, the exalted spirit, which leads creation, has been introduced the same as “command” or as having risen out of it. Here, the miracles of the Prophets and the Infallible Imāms (‘a) and their charismatic acts have been attributed to this very spirit. Therefore, some have considered it to be Gabriel or the governor of the world.

**Third premise:** Adam or the first man, as the Qur’an explicitly states, comprises the breath of the Divine Spirit and material elements. In other words, there is a part of the divine spirit left in trust with his interior. This reality has been frequently emphasized in Islamic philosophy, gnosis, ethics, literature, and culture.

In all these branches of knowledge, man holds an inferior place where he is either imprisoned like a captive or, like an angel, appointed to govern the material body for some time.

The result and outcome of this “material-spiritual” combination is a reality called the human soul, which inevitably enjoys the characteristics of disengaged spirits or what philosophers have referred to as the intellects and souls. In other words, man has the power of “creation” or “creato ex nihilo”, although this ability might have been blocked by accident (and due to material impediments). Therefore, the reality of man or his soul potentially
enjoys the ability to create and make the phenomena which cannot be made by any other existent other than Almighty God and disengaged heavenly and omnipotent spirits.

**Fourth premise:** As the “Divine Command” is the same as His “Will”, what is known as “human will” and has been discussed in sciences such as philosophy and psychology is the same as “command” and an example of divine command that has been left in trust with humankind through the indwelling of the “divine spirit” in the first man.

A very important point here is that, unlike what is known, this divine power is extremely different from what is known as strict desire or motivation in human beings and is considered to belong to the hierarchy of human (and animal!) voluntary acts. This power does not appear except in cases of fighting, defending, and controlling instinctive faculties and drives in the chain of the causes of bodily motions. (Therefore, we can say that most human activities are rooted in his instincts and are similar to those of animals.)

The existence of this spiritual power in man, in addition to controlling his instincts and instinctive acts, affects his internal elements, as well as those of other individuals and existents in the outside world.

**Fifth premise:** The power of the “will” or “command” in human beings enjoys gradation and has various levels and degrees, which were discussed at the beginning of this paper. The commonest of these levels is that of affecting man’s central nervous system, muscles, and external organs. The effect of the nervous system and muscles is exercised in two ways: the first is through the power of the “will” in its specific sense, as discussed above, and the second is through desire and the instinctive factors that human beings share with animals, which are – usually and wrongly – referred to as will in its general sense.
parasympathic nerves and the internal organs of the body. In this way, the will power can affect the other elements and individuals in supernatural ways. Performing charismatic acts is the highest level of this power. In this case, in addition to resorting to their will power, the Prophets also seek help from specific omnipotent and heavenly external factors.

It must be noted that the mechanism of the growth, reinforcement, and efficiency of this force (will power) is what has been referred to not only in the Qur’an, but also in hadith, ethics, and the literature on spiritual journey, i.e. gaining absolute control over animal instincts.

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) says in this regard, “My internal Satan has chosen Islam through me.”

In other words, there is a reverse relationship between the power of instincts and will power. We can assimilate our instincts to a stream of water or flood and will power to a dam. However, the difference here lies in the fact that the more our will power resists the pressure of our instincts, the more powerful it becomes.

* * *

Given the above premises, which cannot be attained unless in the light of the Qur’an, hadith, and divine knowledge, we can arrive at the following conclusions:

In the light of the “commanding spirit” that is breathed into the human body and the rational soul, which is the offspring of this blessed marriage, and by making the necessary efforts and training of his God-given and essential talents, man is capable of traversing “the stages that lead one from matter to meaning” and attain the highest level of perfection in terms of both insight and behavior or, in a sense, “knowledge and act”.
The perfection of man’s station in this spiritual journey and search has two manifestations and appears in two faculties: the first is the manifestation of the hidden realities of the world in his eyes. This is because the factuality resulting from this search (which has been interpreted in the Qur’an as “the right path” and “If you indeed do your best to reach God, you will certainly meet Him”), by separating him from the darkness of matter and animal instincts, will open the wayfarer’s eyes to the realities of the hidden world and lead him towards a window to the unseen world.

The outcome of this phenomenon is the same power of man’s true, presential, and all-inclusive knowledge, which is one of the effects and conditions of the station of Prophethood in the Prophets, the station of Imamat in the Infallible Imams, and the station of guardianship in the God’s Favorites and the most pious. It has been referred to in philosophy as “the faculty of the all-knowing”.

Gaining practical dominance over the world of matter, which is also necessary for divine vicegerency, is another result of this spiritual journey in addition to this clairvoyance and dominance over the unseen world and its hidden realities. At this level, every guardian and the Prophet can “create” any phenomenon that he wishes with the permission of God (that is, within the framework of this Divine Will and Pre-eternal Power). In this way, the realm of his “command” will be as vast as the whole world and universe. That is why working all kinds of miracles and performing charismatic acts are possible for him (the wayfarer). This is the same faculty that philosophers refer to as the “moving faculty”.

Finally, it is useful to refer to certain points:

**First point:** The existence of this great and glorious faculty in the perfect man never means that he works miracles. This is because a true “guardian” and a true caliph of God will never interfere with the realm of his Lord at this level and will obey the rules of servanthood. All
the miracles of the Prophets and the God’s Favorites appear due to the Divine Command and in order to demonstrate His Power. They are intended to confirm their prophethood or the truth of their words rather than to prove their power.

In his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Ibn ‘Arabi says,

So, if God sent him a revelation to interfere with that affair, he will do that. And, if He forbids him to do so, he will refuse to do it. And, if He gives him the choice to interfere with it or not, he will choose not to interfere unless his knowledge is imperfect.

The wisdom behind performing miracles is for one who reaches the level of having the power to dominate the infinite world to attain perfection of knowledge and the grandeur of a divine station. It is this perfection of knowledge that does not allow the wayfarer to go beyond the limits of courtesy and dominate His kingdom unless in compliance to His Command.

**Second point:** This characteristic – man’s practical and scientific power – is essential to him because his nature originates in the divine spirit. However, because of its being a dependent and shadow-like characteristic, all of his apparently essential features have occurred to him. This is because indigence, need, and non-existence are essential in man’s existence, and the closer man becomes to the perfection of knowledge, the more he learns about his own poverty and indigence, and the more he observes courtesy before the Divine Presence.

Muḥyaddin Ibn ‘Arabi quotes from one of the elites of *Shi‘ites*, “For 15 years Almighty God has granted me the ability to dominate, but it is not because of self-sacrifice that I have not used it.” Then he adds, “We have given up miracles due to knowledge and courtesy rather than self-sacrifice.”
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Third point: Indeed, one of the secrets of the world of knowledge is that reaching not only the summit of this station but also any other one does not depend on the mystic journey but on God’s Will and the selected man’s nature and state of preparation.

However, ascetic practice, mystic journey, invocation of God, and dominating the animal instincts can be very effective in attaining the lower stages of such stations. This is because all these stages are the results of that commanding spirit that is hidden in all human individuals and can be accessed through the purification of the interior and sincerity of heart.

Dear God, let us know the station of your followers and help us join good people and good friends. Praise and worship are truly for God Who is the Creator of the world and everything therein.
Prophethood and Messengership*

It is impossible for us to discover all the various dimensions of the Prophet’s character; however, seeking to discover its grandeur and depth is itself one of the stages of Man’s development. This is because, as Rûmî says, although drinking all the water of this ocean is impossible, “tasting” it will bring about lifetime drunkenness, fervor, and effort.

It is also a huge challenge to portray the ontological dimensions of this great man. Likewise, preparing a list of his perfections and reading and perceiving them require a perfect soul and extensive knowledge. This is because recognizing “perfection” itself is a kind of perfection and demands perfection.

* This paper was presented in the Conference of “Muḥammad (ṣ), the Exemplar of Humanity” in Tehran in 1365 AH (1986).
Guardianship (*wilāyah*) is one of the most important, or perhaps the main substance of the other dimensions of the prophetic character. In fact, the Prophet’s prophethood, messengership, leadership, and authority, as well as his other characteristics, originate in his guardianship. It is because guardianship flows in the warp and woof of the Prophet’s acts and behavior and all of his substantial and actual manifestations that it is studied, analyzed, and discussed in all genetic and legislative fields or, in other words, in the realms of real and mentally-posited sciences (which are sometimes referred to as the natural and human sciences).

Muslim scholars have traditionally divided sciences into real and mentally-posited ones in order to classify their knowledge and analyses of the phenomena of the world of being. This is because all the affairs of the world and related sciences are of two types: they are either intended to learn about the realities and natural phenomena of the world which exist free from the interference of the human mind and laws (such as the sciences related to nature, metaphysics, and the world of being), or they are intended to know the phenomena that have come into existence due to man’s intervention (such as the science of law and the disciplines related to interactions among human beings).

There is a distinct borderline separating these two different fields of knowledge. However, guardianship (and its subsidiary issues) plays a central role within both of them. Moreover, subjects such as guardianship, vicegerency, leadership, messengership, and prophethood hold a very high position in various sciences such as philosophy, gnosis, law, and jurisprudence.

Guardianship or government is one of the major topics in jurisprudence and law and belongs to the realm of mentally-posited sciences. It also bears a firm relationship to caliphate or vicegerency, prophethood, and messengership, which are among the spiritual and real phenomena of
Prophethood and Messengership

This world.¹ The prophet or messenger is an “authority” who, in the
dimension of religion, functions as the remover of unspoken torment, and, in
the genetic dimension, functions as the head of the world of nature and the
guardian of the order and ongoing processes there. For this reason,
guardianship (God’s guardianship, guardianship of the Prophet and the
Imāms, and the guardianship of the jurisconsult) has its roots, on the one
hand, in the law and the mentally-posited and conventional affairs of human
society and, on the other, in the depth of Divine Kingdom. Undoubtedly, no
other issue in the world is as amazing, profound, glorious, and beautiful as
prophethood and messengership.

In order to prove the above claim, it is helpful to explain and
interpret these two luminous words, which have always shone like bright
jewels at the apex of humanity and human civilization and, while
reviewing them analytically, discover the depth of these mentally-posited
and real concepts and learn about their relationship and unity with each
other.

Nubuwah and Risālah

The word nubuwah (prophethood) is derived from the word “nabi”
(prophet), which has been frequently used in the Qur’an. Nabī literally
means the one with news or the “giver of news”. Some say that it is derived
from “nibāwah” in the sense of eminence.² This word has been applied to the

¹. The writer believes that in spite of the mentally-posited and conventional
appearance of prophethood and messengership, both are among the natural and
essential phenomena of the world and their mentally-positedness and madness
are secondary.

². Tusi, Tumhid al-usūl, p. 312.
prophets and those sent from God in the Qur’an and has also been used idiomatically in the rational and transmitted sciences.³

*Risālah* (messengership) is derived from the word *rasūl*, which is itself derived from the infinitive “*irsāl*”. It means a messenger or a person who is sent. Generally speaking, it applies to the bearers of the messages of holders of power. In the Qur’an, it refers to the bearers of divine messages.

Accordingly, *nubuwwah* (prophethood) means giving news and “*risālah*” (messengership) means delivering messages. A prophet unveils the true face of the world, the beauty of the truth, and the truth of beauty; he reveals the face of being from the origin to the Return to people, exactly as it “*iṣ*”. A “messenger”, on the other hand, brings people a great number of divine life-giving and promising messages heralding them to an eternal and happy life.⁴

The “prophet” teaches about the worldview, which is the alphabet of real life, to people, who are the novice students of the school of knowledge. He shows them “what is” and introduces to them the One God and His Glorious Attributes and Supreme Names through the words that have been whispered in his heart’s ear. In this way, he opens a window towards the light of the vast world of truth in the darkness that they are living.

Nevertheless, a “messenger” brings “what ought to be” (including a collection of ideas and injunctions, namely, ideology and law) and reveals to people the divine law, the holy way, the path of God and, in sum, the “religion”, which is the closest path to attaining eternal happiness and

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3. *Rasā’il Qayṣarī*: Technically speaking, prophethood means being chosen to deliver God’s messages to his servants in order to guide them.

4. Ahmad Ibn Zayn al-‘Abidin ‘Alawi ‘Amili (Mīr Dāmād’s student), the writer of the beautiful book of *Laṭā’īf al-qaybiyyah*, interprets *nabī* as a prophet who comes to make God known to people and refers to *rasul* as a prophet who has brought a new divine law.
prosperity. Moreover, he provides them each with short-term and long-term programs for attaining happiness in both the earthly and heavenly abodes.

There is not much difference between the meanings of these two words in principle; however, there are some ideas concerning their different aspects. Some believe that one of them is general and the other particular. That is, every messenger is also a prophet, while a prophet might not be a messenger. Some others maintain that a messenger is one who brings a new religion, whereas a “prophet” has a more general meaning, i.e. it also refers to people that have not brought a new religion and advocate the early prophets.⁵

Some others say that a messenger is one who has a Book, while a prophet does not. There are still others who maintain that a messenger is one who abrogates the religion of his preceding prophets, while a prophet does not do so. There are also some other theories which are almost the same as the above views.⁶ Shaykh Mufid believes that all Shi’ite thinkers are unanimous concerning the differences between them and the existence of an absolute general and particular relationship. He says,

*Imāmiyyah Shi‘i* scholars are unanimous that every messenger is a prophet, but not every prophet is a messenger. And some of God’s prophets are the guardians of the divine laws of other

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⁵ Sometimes messengership has been interpreted as specific prophethood, and prophethood as general prophethood. Qaysari says in his *Rasā’il* (p. 22), “Prophethood is of two types: general and particular. General prophethood is not accompanied with messengership and a new divine law, while particular prophethood is.” Also refer to Mulla Sadra, *Mafāţīḥ al-ghayb*, p. 484.

⁶ “A prophet guards the universal religion that is shared by all divine laws; i.e. decisive, fixed, and unchanging laws, without innovating a new way or divine law. However, in addition to that common and universal religion, the messenger also presents a new divine law and new principles.” *al-Aqīb al-qubīyyah*, p. 188.
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messengers and their successors. A group of “Murji’ah” and all the “people of ḥadīth” share this view; however, Mu’tazilites do not agree with this idea.7

Concerning the difference between these two terms, ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī maintains that the messenger is appointed to publicize the religion, while the prophet does not have this duty. He says:

It is explained in the divine science that there are some fixed intermediaries between our world and Almighty God. Therefore, we can conclude that this duty must necessarily be given to God’s saints, who are the first people of the pen. And he [who is one of God’s saints] is called a prophet if he has a divine law which only he himself follows. However, if his divine law is also followed by other people, he is called a messenger.8

Elsewhere, he concludes that “anyone who has been sent from God” is a prophet, while the word “messenger” has its own verbal meaning (i.e. bringer of messages), which is sometimes accompanied with a final notice. The prophet and the messenger have both been sent by God: one has come to bring news from the unseen and the other to bring messages and fulfill his particular messengership mission. There is no absolute general and particular relationship between them.

In his interpretation of al-Baqqarah chapter: 213,9 ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī writes:

7. Awā’il al-maqālāt, p. 44.
9. “Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace Guided the believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guided whom He will to a path that is straight.”
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The meaning of messenger involves messengership (prophethood), and the meaning of prophet involves giving news. Thus a messenger holds the noble station of being an intermediary between God and His people and the honor of knowing God, and what belongs to Him belongs to the prophet.

It has also been said that the difference between a prophet and a messenger is of the type of absolute general and particular relationship (every messenger is a prophet, while some prophets are messengers and some are not). Therefore, a messenger has been sent by God, bearing messages, and is appointed to publicize them. A prophet has also been sent by God; however, he might not have been appointed to publicize His messages. Nevertheless, God’s words do not confirm this difference. We read in the Qur’an, “Also mention in the Book (the story of) Moses: for he was specially chosen, and he was a messenger (and) a prophet.” This verse is on praising both the messenger and the prophet, and it is not right to begin the gradation from “particular” and then move to “general” (a messenger is particular and a prophet is general).

Following the above points, while quoting and rejecting others’ ideas in this regard, ‘Allāmah says in another place that the holy verse, “Never did We send a messenger or a prophet before thee, but, when he framed a desire, Satan threw some (vanity) into his desire:…,” explicitly talks about the difference between the meanings of the words “prophet” and “messenger” but not in an absolute general and particular sense. Otherwise,

13. al-Ḥajj chapter: 52.
from the phrase “Never did We send a messenger or a prophet”, we must infer that the prophets were not responsible for disseminating propaganda, while we see that the word “arsalnā” has been used at the beginning of the verse, which means the command to publicize something. However, it means that a messenger is one who receives revelation from angels, sees them, and talks to them, whereas a prophet receives revelation in sleep and has no contact or conversation with angels. This is because from the verse, “Say, ‘If there were settled, on earth, angels walking about in peace and quiet, We should certainly have sent them down from the heavens an angel for a messenger’,” it can be inferred that there is a concordance between sending a messenger and sending a religion, and the sending of a religion requires the sending of a person to bring it, whether a prophet or a messenger.

The difference between a prophet and a messenger lies in their methods of receiving revelation and God’s words, which ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī has referred to (and it is surprising that no other interpreter has referred to this point before). This issue has been frequently mentioned in the Shi’i ḥadīths, and the friends and companions of the infallible Imāms have also referred to this difference in their words. For example, Hishām Bin Sālim narrates the following tradition from Imām Ṣādiq (‘a). Here, in addition to the levels of the Prophets, this Infallible Imām (‘a) also talks about this difference:

Abū ‘Abdullāh [Imām Ṣādiq (’a)] said that the prophets and messengers are divided into four groups:

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1. Some prophets only receive inspirations (some news is given to their souls).

2. Some prophets can see things and hear voices during sleep but do not see any angels in wakefulness. They are not sent to anyone, and they themselves have another Imām and leader, such as Ibrāhīm ('a), who was the Imām of Lut.

3. Some prophets see things in their sleep, hear voices, and see angels. They are sent to a group of people, whether small or big. With regard to them, we can refer to the Prophet Jonah ('a), and God has said about him, “We sent him to approximately 100,000 people.” It is said that his people numbered more than 30,000. However, Jonah ('a) himself had an Imām and a leader.

4. Some prophets see things and hear voices in their sleep, and see angels in wakefulness. They are also Imāms, and as such are Arch Prophets. Ibrāhīm ('a) was a prophet but not an Imām until God told him, “I will make thee an Imām to the Nations” He pleaded: “And also (Imāms) from my offspring!” He answered: “But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.”

The points that at first sight catch the eyes are as follows:

- Since the source of division here is the word nabi, it implies that every messenger is a prophet, and the relationship is of the same absolute general and particular type.
- Prophethood is not concomitant with mission and propaganda.
- Messengership is a more complete level of prophethood.
- A prophet is not appointed to conduct propaganda unless he is a messenger (or unless he bears a message).

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Prophethood is of certain degrees and levels even without messengership. This is because some learn about the realities by themselves and through, for example, the divine power. Some others do this with more awareness and explicitness, which is an indication of having received revelation.

Imāmah (leadership) is higher than messengership and is not concomitant with prophethood and messengership.

There is also some hierarchy in prophethood and messengership and at any one time there is only one authority, who is the very Imām (leader), and the prophets and his contemporaries must follow him.

Seeing the angels is the highest level of revelation.

Each Arch Prophet is an Imām.

We believe that it is not difficult to resolve the disagreements and differences among these great people. This is because prophethood is an essential quality rooted in spiritual efforts, purity, thinking, worship, and the so-called spiritual journeys. According to great thinkers, a prophet is one who has made the journey from the Truth to people and descended to the world of bodily natures and the plurality of creation.

With his abundant insight into the universe and the celestial kingdom, the prophet inevitably brings some news from the truth and shares the achievements of his journeys to his friends. Prophethood means governing the secrets of existence, and the prophet is the spirit of the world. According to Fārābī, “In essence, prophethood belongs to a divine power which the essence of the created world obeys, as the essence and instinct of the small created world (i.e. the body) obeys your soul.”

However, messengership is an external and legislative position that can be assigned and is exclusively limited to higher levels of prophethood.

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It suits one who makes the journey from people to people with the Truth. As the master of knowledge said, the messenger is responsible for giving messages. These messages rise like waves from the sea of the prophet’s heart and hit the thirsty coastline of lost people. Prophethood is a fully affirmed matter, while messengership is one level of affirmation. In other words, the fire in the prophet’s heart bursts into flames and offers a torch called messengership to people. Messengership is the extension and perfection of prophethood and the level of its complete divulgence. Each of these words (prophethood and messengership) refers to one aspect of that chosen person which is different from but not in contrast to his other aspects.

It appears from Zayd al-Shuhhām’s tradition that prophethood leads to messengership, and perfect messengership leads to friendship and, in its ultimate perfection, to Imāmah.¹⁸ That is, the universality and inclusiveness of Imāmah is greater than friendship; the inclusiveness of friendship is greater than messengership, and the inclusiveness of messengership is more than prophethood without messengership. However, the attribute of prophethood depends on the prophet’s interior, while that of messengership depends on his exterior. In this way, the problem – in ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī’s words, that gradation from particular to general at the level of glorifying and honoring is in contrast to eloquence – is resolved. This is because the

¹⁸. Ḫūṣūl al-kāfî, vol. 1, p. 247, Muḥammad Khālid narrates from Muḥammad Ibn Sinān, who quotes Zayd al-Shuhhām as follows: “I heard that Abū Abdullāh (Imām Ṣādiq) says, Verily, before God chose Ibrāhīm as His messenger, He made him His servant. And before He appointed him to messengership, He appointed him as His prophet. And before He made him His friend, He gave him messengership. And before He made him the Imām, He made him His friend. When all of the above were done, He said, “I will make thee an Imām to the Nations” He pleaded: “And also (Imāms) from my offspring!” He answered: “But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers”.”
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messenger involves the guidance dimension of the prophet, and the word prophet involves the dimension of unveiling of the realities of the world to him. One reveals his ultimate perfection, which is hidden to Man, and the other his external and visible perfection, which is perceptible to Man. The holy verse 124 in chapter *al-Baqarah* refers to these two perfections separately, which is the same as glorification and eloquence and is not in conflict with them.

**Imāmah**

In Arabic, *Imāmah* means being a leader, a pioneer, or a forerunner, and it has also been used in the holy Qur’an in the same sense. Islamic scholars, too, have used this word in its conventional meaning and, as we can see, early theologians did not define *Imāmah* as a specific term. However, later disagreements concerning the depth of this concept have led different Islamic thinkers to try to formulate a comprehensive definition for it and present it to all. Among them, Màwardí believes that *Imāmah* means “the prophet’s vicegerency in guarding the religion and worldly politics.”

‘Allāmah Hilli in his *Bāb-i hādi ‘ashar* introduces it as “the leadership of all people in religious and worldly affairs as the vicegerent of the prophet.”

The *Sunni* people, although they refer to “guarding religion” in their definition, consider *Imāmah* to be the same as vicegerency. For them, vicegerency is the same as governing regardless of the existing spiritual dimensions in prophethood (which *Shi‘ism* considers necessary for *Imāmah*). Therefore, according to *Sunnites* who, following the *Shi‘ites*, have used the word *Imāmah* instead of vicegerency in their theological and jurisprudential books, *Imāmah* is that same social and administrative dimension of

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prophethood, i.e. the management of society and nothing more. In fact, it is the same thing that existed in the time of the caliphs.

Nevertheless, this word has a vaster meaning for the Shi’ites and embodies many dimensions (which will be mentioned later) that an Imām must possess. Accordingly, we can say that, among Muslims, Imāmah is a common term which involves two very different meanings.20

This very difference of meaning has given another form to the issue of Imāmah and, unlike the Sunnite, who consider it as one of the secondary principles of religion, the Shi’ites consider it as one of the primary principles of religion, a subject area related to prophethood and testament, and the continuity of the prophet’s guardianship. According to Mutahhari, “If Imāmah merely meant the external leadership of Muslims, like other Muslims, we the Shi’ite would also view it as one of the secondary principles of religion.”21

The Shi’ites believe that Imāmah is the continuation of the absolute guardianship of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). The reasons for this idea have been discussed in their proper place. The dimensions of the acts of guardians and Imāms according to Shi’ism are as follows:

1. They must know those of God’s rules that are not easily accessible to all people and are able to teach them to people when necessary.

2. As the Prophet (ṣ) had perceived the Qur’an whole heartedly, they must also understand it fully so that people do not wander aimlessly when trying to perceive it and receive help from them.

20. Bāb-i ḫādīthīyyah, pp. 43-44.
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3. As the Prophet (ṣ) had the God-given right to judge among people, solve their problems, promulgate decrees, and execute the punishments determined by God, so they also have the same duties and must establish justice among people.

4. As the Prophet (ṣ) was pure from satanic whims and temptations, owing to the reasons given in theology, the Imām must also enjoy the same piety so that he does not make any error in leadership and God’s religion; in this way, the security and good of Islamic people are not threatened.

5. As the Prophet (ṣ) was an authority, pole, and possessor of genetic guardianship, the Imām must also have the same features. As we read in the hadith, the Earth is never void of authority.

6. Since, in addition to messengership, the Prophet (ṣ) had the responsibility for the leadership and governing of Muslim’s society and had the power of the so-called legislative guardianship, the Imām is also an heir to the Prophet’s station of Imāmah, leadership, and guardianship (with certain conditions that have been discussed elsewhere in their proper place). Therefore, Imāmah in its particular sense means guardianship (i.e. including all external and spiritual stations) and is the gathering place of genetic and legislative guardianship. Clearly, the proper place for a thorough study of the above realities, which are fundamental and faith-related, is the field of theology and not jurisprudence or law.

However, as mentioned before, non-Shi’ite scholars do not believe in such vast concepts of Imāmah and wilāyah (guardianship) and limit them merely to the meaning of government. They also maintain that their discussion is related to the fields of jurisprudence and law. The first caliph
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said in his first sermon after the death of the Holy Prophet (ṣ.), “Beware people! A leader is necessary to administer the society. Think and look around and present your vote (that is, elect your leader) …” and vicegerency, i.e. the succession of the Prophet (ṣ) in “command” or government came into being at that time. The other characteristics of the Prophet (ṣ), even according to Sunnite scholars, particularly gnostics and their followers, can only be found in the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ‘Ali (‘a), his offspring, and his successors. They believe that none of the distinguished thinkers and scholars of the various branches of Islam – the three-fold caliphs – or any others than the People of the House enjoy such characteristics.

Thus we expect the prominent Sunnite scholars of our time to pay attention to this point (that Imāmah is different from caliphate or vicegerency and limited to the twelve Imāms). They should, once more, discuss the issue of the Imāmah of twelve persons from the aspects that they agree with and provide some new ways for finding unity and closeness among all Muslims.

The dimensions of Imāmah and guardianship which existed in the Holy Prophet (ṣ), the Arch-Prophets and, in Shi’ites’ view, their successors (whom we know as heirs to the Prophets) have also been referred to in books of theology as the attributes of an Imām. They also include the justifications for the necessity of Imāmah. In what follows, we will briefly refer to these attributes and reasons:

1. The Imām must be well-versed in God’s injunctions, including what is lawful and what is forbidden, the abrogating and the abrogated, the ambiguous and the unambiguous, the absolute and the limited, and the apparent and the hidden. He should also be a fixed authority for God’s religious injunctions and the laws necessary for controlling individuals and society. This is because, if rules and regulations lack a fixed centre,
people’s whims and passions and the strength of powerful people can render God’s injunctions into different forms at different times. Moreover, with the interpretation of God’s injunctions according to the interests of malicious people, God’s religion will be transformed into a tool for satisfying the egoistic desires of rulers. As a result, the philosophy of the prophets’ mission and messengership – which is the establishment of God’s rules - will be absurd and in vain. Therefore, it is necessary that someone should exist as an Imām, that is, as the criterion for the correct recognition of religious principles and laws and of good and evil. Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī says:

As we know, there is no decisive proof or consensus among scholars concerning the new principles which need to be known. However, since we are obliged to act according to the divine laws, there must be a way for us to know them and make the best choice in the case of disagreements. This way is none other than resorting to the Infallible Imām’s words, which are free from error and negligence…

The other reason is that, as we know, the Prophet’s Shari‘ah (religious law) is necessary. But what about those people who come later until the Judgment Day? Therefore, there must be an infallible guardian of Shari‘ah to protect it when they intend to quit it… And if we do not assume the existence of an Infallible Imām, then there will be no guarantee that Shari‘ah will be put into effect.22

2. The Imām must be infallible. The condition of infallibility is specifically for Imāmiyyah Shi‘ism, and some non-Shi‘ite theologians believe that piety and abstinence are the conditions for Imāmah. For

example, Bàqilâni says, “Imàmah verily suits someone who has all the conditions … and is pious in his religion.”

Some also believe that justice is necessary for an Imàm, for example, Màwardí says that justice is one of the seven-fold conditions of Imàmah. Some others believe that caliphate is allowed even to someone who is involved in debauchery and injustice! The commentator of al-Maqāṣid says that caliphate and Imàmah can be attained through force and without swearing allegiance, even if the ruler is clearly corrupt. In another place, he says, “It is necessary to obey the Imàm as long as his acts agree with religious laws, whether he is just or tyrannical!”

However, Shi’ites maintain that permanent infallibility is a necessary condition for an Imàm. In Sharh-i tajrîd, ‘Allâmah says, “The Imàm must be infallible (have a divine power that protects him against committing sin).”

According to Khwâjah Naṣîr al-Dîn Ṭûsî,

It is rationally necessary for the Imàm to be infallible, the most meritorious, and the most knowledgeable. Infallibility is necessary because the dominance of animal instincts and desires over individuals in society will most probably lead to chaos and disorder. Therefore, it is necessary for a leader to refrain from surrendering to such human defects so that he becomes the proof for the necessity of an Imàm. Otherwise, infinite regression will arise and another Imàm will be required.

23. al-Anṣāf, p. 69.
27. Ibid.
3. The Imam must be the most meritorious of all people. In other words, he must be the best and the one who encompasses most of the effective aspects of leadership. Just as the Prophet (ṣ) was the most learned of all in the knowledge of the Qur’an and its interpretation and was aware of all the secrets of the world, the Imam and leader of society must be the most learned of all, as well as the most accomplished with regard to his power of administration, bravery, generosity, originality, and other perfectional attributes.

Based on the rational principle of the obscenity of an inferior choice and the preference of one equal over another, Shī‘ite theologians have proved the necessity of the Imam being the most meritorious of all.

‘Allāmah Hillī says:

The Imam must necessarily be superior to other people. Three states are possible here: either he is equal to, inferior to, or superior to them. The third is the most desirable state. The first is impossible because in a state of equality, it is impossible to prefer one to the other. The second is also impossible because giving priority to the inferior over the superior is rationally obscene. As God Almighty says, “Does one who guides others towards God deserve being followed or one who does not guide unless he himself is guided? So, what has happened to you? How do you judge here?” And, this judgment involves the superiority of the Imam in knowledge, religion, wisdom, valor, and all physical and spiritual virtues.\(^\text{28}\)

4. The Imam must enjoy genetic dominance because he is the authority (hujjah) of God. According to the authentic traditions that have been handed down to us, the authority is someone who not only makes religious laws in the light of his vast knowledge (which is enriched through

\(^{28}\)Sharḥ-i tajrīd, 3rd problem, p. 228.
the source of revelation) but also the center and axis of the creation of the world. Moreover, he has an intrinsic ability for domination and performing miracles and supernatural acts, so that his absence will cause the destruction of the natural order of the world. We read in a hadith from Imām Ṣadiq (‘a), “I asked Abī ‘Abdullāh (‘a) if the Earth would continue to exist without the Imām? He replied, if it is left without the existence of the Imām for even one hour, it will collapse.” In another hadith, we read, “If God’s proof (Imām) were not there, the Earth and its people would sink…”

In addition to these conditions and attributes, the Imām is the political and military leader of society. This is the same station that we read in a famous hadith from Imām Reḍā (‘a): “Verily, Imāmah is the station of the Prophets and their legacy for their successors.”

It is surprising that while a number of Muslims view the Holy Prophet’s vicegerency as existing only in the political leadership and government of society and do not consider the existence of other conditions to be necessary, some non-Shi’ite writers introduce the messenger only as the carrier of God’s messages without enjoying the right to rule or having come for governing Muslim’s political society. In this way, his successors are left with no right for the political administration of the country.

However, apart from the theory of this writer (‘Abdulrazzāq), which originates from his ignorance of the Book and the Sunnah, all the people of learning unanimously maintain that following or putting the politics of internationally dominant countries into effect, along with their leadership and rule, is one of the distinctive features of the Prophet (ṣ) and his successors. In addition to the existing proofs that have been transmitted to us, rational argument also demonstrates the concomitance between religious

law and government. This is because presenting a religion (which is a collection of civil, penal, financial, and commercial laws and principles, as well as those related to individual states and the family) without establishing a related executive guarantee is like the existence of a legislative power in society without any executive power. There are two possibilities and assumptions here:

1) We could say that people’s faith and ideas are enough for enforcing the laws. This assumption is obviously wrong because, firstly, the Man and his animal instincts, which tend to secure his personal benefits or hurt others in order to get revenge and are mixed with racial, linguistic, and regional differences, will never act against his natural desires and whims unless he fears the punishment of a superior power. Moreover, it is impossible for him to gain control over his instincts and, without any diversion from or violation of law, follow all principles and laws. On the contrary, if there is no superior power ruling the people in society, there will certainly be chaos and disorder, and the weak members of society will live in loneliness, leading an anti-social life.

Secondly, experience has shown sociologists and historians that, in spite of the existence of governments or local, central, or tribal ruling systems and even the presence of the prophets and religious leaders, there have been many individuals who have broken the rules and violated others’ rights.

2) We can also say that a wise legislator, due to his knowledge of man’s violent and aggressive nature, will believe that the existence of an executive power is not necessary. Here, the wise person has done something unwise and unacceptable and planted a tree without thinking about taking care of it and its future survival. Obviously, in such a society all the principles and rules will be forgotten in the initial steps, which is very far from God’s policy. Therefore, it is impossible that God sends to people
prophets with some rules but does not assign them or other good people to take control of government and require people to observe these laws.

The Holy Qur’an itself is a witness in this regard, and referring to Ibrāhīm, Moses, David, Solomon, and the like as Imāms in the Qur’an, is another proof of this fact. There are various arguments for this claim in the traditions; for example, “If He does not choose for them a successor who guards what the Prophet (ṣ) has brought, as we have also said before, they will be destroyed, and all the religious laws, traditions, principles, and people’s faith will change. This will lead to the destruction of all people.”

There is a lengthy tradition from Imām Reḍā (‘a) in this regard which we will discuss later. In some traditions, we see the sentence “The Imām is responsible for guarding the religion and governing Muslims.” Besides, they have described the Imām as “the guardian and trustee of the people, and one who protects them against corruption and determines and executes the rules and principles in society.” They have also referred to the experiences of other nations, which have never been without a leader and introduced the Imām as one who fights enemies, leads the army in wars, divides the national wealth among people, and puts an end to the cruelty of oppressors. Basically, this description of the Imām as the person in authority, which is frequently found in the Qur’an and ḥadīth, indicates the concordance between Imāmah and government and control over social policies.

At the end of this section, it is instructive to refer to some parts of a few traditions:

1. It is narrated from Imām ‘Ali Ibn Mūsā al-Reḍā (‘a) as follows:

Verily, the Exalted and Almighty God did not take the Prophet’s soul until He had completed his religion and

transmitted the Qur’an, which involves everything. The rules concerning the lawful and the forbidden, the implementation of rules, and anything that people need to know are clearly explained in it. Thus God said, “We have not forgotten anything in the book,” and He sent the following verse on Hajjat al-widā’ at the end of the Prophet’s life: “This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But if any is forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”33 Imāmah commands all aspects of religion. The Prophet (ṣ) introduced ‘Ali (‘a) as the Imām of Muslims and did not quit anything that was required by people unless he had talked about it before.

Verily, the station and place of Imāmah is so high; its aspects are so exalted, and exploring it is so difficult that people cannot perceive it with their wisdom, theories, or ideas or choose an Imām according to their free will.

Verily, the Exalted and Almighty God granted Imāmah to Ibrāhīm Khalil after appointing him as His prophet and friend.

Verily, Imāmah is the station of the prophets and their legacy for their successors. Imāmah is indeed the vicegerency of God and the Prophet (ṣ), the position held by the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), and the legacy of Imām Hassan (‘a) and Imām Husseīn (‘a).

Verily, Imāmah is the leadership of the religion and government of Muslims and the glory of believers. Indeed it represents the dynamism of Islam and is its upward-growing branch. Prayer, alms giving, fasting, ḥajj, jihād (holy struggle),

33. al-Mā‘idah: 3.
receiving the spoils of war, taxation, and charity, carrying out lawful punishments, and safeguarding the borders are only realized and reach their perfection in the light of Imāmah.

The Imām is God’s trustee and proof among people and His successor in His land. He invites people towards God and defends His sacred territory. The Imām is only one in his time, and no one commands a position close to that of his, and no scholar is equal to him. He has no like. All perfections and virtues are exclusively for him without his asking for them or trying to acquire them. Rather, all of them have been granted to him by the Giver and Bountiful God.³⁴

2. Faḍl Ibn Shādhàn’s narration from Imām Reḍā (‘a):

Thus, if it is asked why God has placed a Lord of Command among people and ordered them to obey him, the response is that this is for many reasons. One of them is that when people reach a specific level and are ordered not to go beyond it so as not to be destroyed, they will not do this unless there is a trustee among them who keeps them at the level to which they are allowed to reach and to warn them not to go beyond it so that they do not face danger. There must be a custodian to forbid them to become involved in corruption and destruction and to inform them of all the limitations, punishments, and principles. The other reason is that we cannot find any group or nation which has survived without a leader or guardian. Therefore, it is not permitted in God’s philosophy to leave people to themselves and not to let them know that they must have a leader to survive, to fight their enemies under his leadership, or to divide the spoils of war under his supervision. In this way, he will protect them against the cruelty of oppressors and keep them united.

The other reason is that if God had not chosen an Imām and a trusted guardian for the people, all beliefs would have been obliterated: the religion would have been annihilated: the Sunnah and principles would have been changed: there would have been a lot of innovators presenting new religions, and unbelievers would have damaged the religion and confused Muslims. All the above would have happened simply because people are not perfect; they are full of shortcomings and need others to help them. Moreover, they have some disagreements with others and their wishes and ambitions are different from each other. Therefore, if God had not placed someone among them to guard the Prophet’s Shari‘ah, they would have been corrupted; the religious laws, principles, traditions, and beliefs would have been transformed, and this would have led to their total destruction.³⁵

Vicegerency

Concerning the history of the usage of this word, historians say that when Abû Bakr became the leader of the Islamic government and called himself the Caliph (vicegerent) of the Prophet (ṣ), the other Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman rulers who followed him chose the same title for themselves, and the word vicegerent became common and replaced the term wilāyah (guardianship).

However, exactly in the same way that it did not accept their government,³⁶ Imāmiyyah Shi‘ism did not say a single word about vicegerency in its political and theological discussions and always relied on Imāmah. As we can see, all through the science of theology (whose Imāmah

³⁶. Ahmad Subhi, an Egyptian writer, (Naẓariyyah al-imāmah, p. 24), says, “For Shi‘ites an Imām refers to the ‘holder of legal right’ (De jour) and caliph to the ‘holder of actual dominance’ (De Facto).”
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part was founded by Imāmiyyah, the successor to the Prophet (ṣ) is interpreted in terms of Imāmah. Both the Shi‘ite and the Sunnite resort to Imāmah when demonstrating and refuting various issues, and there is no discussion of vicegerency.

Generally speaking, Shi‘ism believes that the following differences exist between Imāmah and vicegerency: Imāmah means the leadership of society and requires a mutual relationship between the Imām and people, while vicegerency means pure succession and is usually one-sided; i.e. a caliph or vicegerent is normally appointed by a person or a group of advocates.

Imāmah means that the Imām is the people’s trustee; therefore, he is responsible before them and makes a pledge to them. However, vicegerency does not mean being a trustee, and the vicegerent does not make any pledge to the people.

Imāmah is null and void if the Imām’s allegiance to the people is contradicted or cancelled. However, vicegerency does not legally depend on people’s votes or opinions.

Imāmah depends on divine creation and requires holiness and essential readiness, while none of these is a condition for vicegerency.

Imāmah is not granted by the prophet and can be independent of him; however, vicegerency must be granted by the prophet.

Imāmah means the deputyship of the prophet in everything that is attributed to him (except in revelation). However, vicegerency might be limited to the external leadership of society.

Imāmah depends on the heavy and difficult condition of infallibility and knowledge, while vicegerency is not.

Imāmah cannot be withdrawn or revoked, and the prophet does not play any role in creating it; vicegerency, however, can be revoked by the prophet.
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The word vicegerency was commonly considered to apply to government. Long ago, it was the reason for many conflicts in the history of Islam and, as a result, various sects appeared and the unity of Islam was ended by the appearance of different branches. However, it also carried another meaning which was always intended by those people with knowledge of God and the selected ones. It meant the vicegerency that has been referred to in the Qur’an and is a robe of honor that, in the name of God’s vicegerency, has been rightly made only for the body of human beings among all existents.

As mentioned before, there is no trace of the title “the vicegerency of God’s prophet” either in the Shi‘ite primary principles of beliefs or in its secondary principles, jurisprudence, and political law. Nevertheless, a lot of attention has been paid to “the vicegerency of God” in the supreme field of Qur‘anic teachings, and the people of knowledge, particularly Shi‘i scholars, have placed great emphasis on it.

Ibn Sína says:

Anyone with complete access to theoretical wisdom will indeed attain prophetic features and attributes. This station is close to the level of being a God-like human, who must be worshiped after God. He is the king of the earthly world and God’s vicegerent there.37

We read in the marginal notes to the above book:

In sum, a man who is a perfect gnostic has great knowledge and perfect acts, is a holy God-lover, enjoys a divine power through his first primordial nature and material intelligence at the highest level of perfection and purity, and in his actual and

37. Ilahiyyat al-Shifà’, Chapter on Caliph and Imām.
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secondary primordial nature has access to the perfect situation of attaining acquired reason (*intellectus adeptus*). Thus, such a human being becomes a rational world similar to the entire system of being. As a result, he becomes an all-inclusive version of all worlds of being and, at the same time, enjoys prophetic characteristics, messengership, vicegerency, and hereditary rights. Therefore, he will be the absolute sultan of the earthly world and God’s vicegerent in that world. And, as mentioned before, he is about to become a human-like Lord.

Qayṣari also says:

The effects of names and attributes do not appear unless through a locus of manifestation. Thus it is necessary for the locus of the manifestation of Allah’s name, who enjoys all the names and attributes of God, to be a vicegerent close to the world and take everything in the world towards the perfection that it deserves. This vicegerent is nothing but the Muhammedan spirit. That is why Almighty God said, “Lo! Those who swear allegiance unto thee (Muhammed), swear allegiance only unto Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. So whosoever breaketh his oath, breaketh it only to his soul’s hurt; while whosoever keepeth his covenant with Allah, on him will He bestow immense reward.” 38 And the locus of the manifestation of the names of “Allah” is His vicegerent in all the worlds. That is why we read in the Book and in Sunnah, “The locus of the manifestation of Allah’s Name was the prophet, while man was on the Earth”, and God’s vicegerent must have all the attributes of God except “essential necessity” 39

38. *al-Fath*: 10
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In his treatise on vicegerency and guardianship, Imam Khomeini writes:

It is now the time to know about the meaning of the vicegerency of the universal intellect in the world of creation. His vicegerency is verily the same vicegerency in appearance and in the truths of being; his prophethood means revealing the perfections of his Almighty Origin and expressing the names and attributes of God, which are present in His glorious chamber, and his Imámah means perfect dominance over all levels of the Unseen and intuition, such as dominating the human soul in all of his bodily organs. What rightfully confirms our words is a hadîth that Shaykh al-Ṣâdûq has narrated from Imám Reá (‘a) in his book 'Uyûn akhbâr al-Riáh as follows: “The Holy Prophet said, “God has created nothing which is superior to me; if I had not been there, He would not have created Adam, Eve, the Heaven, fire, the sky, and the Earth… So, a call came to me saying: ‘Oh, Muáammed! You are my servant and I am your God, so worship Me and rely on Me; you are verily My light among My servants and My messenger to My people, and you are My proof to My creatures’.”

This expression has been adapted from the Qur’an from a verse stating: “Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth’, ” which refers to the story of the creation of Adam, Eve, and the human generation.

A vicegerent or successor must enjoy the characteristics and attributes required by the position he has been appointed to, and according to the gnostic interpretation given above, each essence has certain attributes,

40. Imam Khomeini, Mišbáh al-hidáyah, p. 163.
41. al-Baqarah: 30.
and each attributes has a manifestation. In this position, vicegerency belongs to an existence that is a complete locus of the manifestation of the divine names and attributes. In several traditions, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the Infallible Imāms have been introduced as God’s vicegerents and the loved inhabitants of His Kingdom. Thus through reading about them we learn the following facts.

First, upon creating the human being, God made the robe of vicegerency for the body of the perfect man. Second, vicegerency makes it necessary for the vicegerent to be the most similar of all existents to God. Third, this position is good for the existence of the Seal of all Prophets (ṣ), who is the most similar to Almighty in terms of his behavior and attributes. In fact, he is called the chamberlain of the royal court of the “Most Hidden”, the secret keeper of the “pure dark mist”, the old man spreading love and making all existents drunk, and the cupbearer of the wine-house of Absolute Beauty. He is the same person who holds the goblet of guardianship (which means the goblet of happiness, love, and friendship) that is being filled from the pre-eternal cask. After him, the heir to absolute guardianship is the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) and then all the glorious Prophets, from Ibrāhīm to the others.

Researchers in the field of gnosis believe that the perfect man is the most supreme locus of the manifestation of beautiful attributes. Man is a prototype similar to God in behavior, qualified for all the good divine names, and the beginning of existence and being or “the first created by God”. In ḥadīth, he has sometimes been referred to as the “intellect” and sometimes been considered qualified for the station of prophethood. Moreover, according to the people of heart, he has been referred to as the vicegerent, “the holy emanation”, “the Muḥammedan truth”, “the absolute guardian” and the similar.
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However, in spite of all these proven facts, considering the interpretive tone of the Holy Qur’an and the harmony of its address to the believers (and in some verses addressing the Israelites who were contemporary with Moses (‘a)), we must view the circle of vicegerency as even vaster than what gnostics say and we have referred to.42

It seems that the vicegerency of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), and the Infallible Imāms is at the highest level of vicegerency; however, others also deserve the position of God’s vicegerency or even something higher than that, which requires research, in proportion to their level of closeness to God and the degree of their manifestation of God’s Names. Each human being is a vicegerent of God “because he has the will power, is stable, and enjoys a specific status and position.” His vicegerency will be demonstrated and revealed in proportion to the strength of his will power and its manifestation, which originates in the “divine command” and the “existential being”. Due to brevity of time and space, we will leave this discussion here and continue it in an independent treatise in the near future.

Sovereignty

Sovereignty means having absolute control over a person or people and object or objects as well as having the right to determine their destiny. In

42. For example, the words of God in al-Ḥadīd: 7: “(Believe in Allah and His messenger, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heirs. For, those of you who believe and spend (in charity), for them is a great Reward)” are addressed to other than prophets who are appointed to have faith in the prophets. They also reveal that the addressees of this verse are all God’s vicegerents and His properties are left in trust with them.
other words, it is something that enables its owner to impose his will and rule on its object, such as people, an individual, thing(s), or society.  

Sovereignty is a legal term and a comparison of its applications with those of guardianship, which is a Qur’anic term, reveals that they are not much different in meaning. Moreover, even if there is a difference, it lies in subtle points hidden in the concept of guardianship and propounds the legal concept of sovereignty in a more comprehensive and delicate manner. As in the Qur’an and Islamic books sovereignty has been interpreted as guardianship, in the science of law, too, the word sovereignty has been used instead of religious guardianship (sovereignty in its genetic sense is not intended here).

Sovereignty, which is also interpreted as reign and dominion, has various applications, whether general or particular:

Ownership is the legal control over objects and its legal effects include control over the owned and having the right to interfere with it. This has been referred to in jurisprudence in sentences such as: “People have the right to control their own property.”

Having a free will and choice is another interpretation of one’s rule over oneself or others. Each individual’s sovereignty over himself is one of the applications of the concept of sovereignty or guardianship, and it means that everyone can physically dominate their own bodies in every way, or

43. Sovereignty can be defined as an abstract and unequal relationship between a person and a person or a thing in which one is the superior and the other is the subordinate. The origin of the abstractness of this relationship might be a real affair; therefore, guardianship is genetic.

44. Contrary to the view of some contemporary researchers, the right to dominate is not among the referents of genetic guardianship; rather, it is a legal sovereignty or religious guardianship and, as we know, Shar’ or the religious law have determined some limitations and boundaries for it. For example, committing suicide and self-inflicted harm are forbidden and sometimes punished.
allow others to do so. In the case of an underage or deranged child, the sovereignty of the father or the grandfather is permitted over him. This is also true about a husband’s matrimonial right,\(^4\) which represents a lower degree of the same authority. However, rule over human societies is known as government.

Based on what was discussed above, it appears that government is ruling or exerting religious guardianship over small or big social groups in the form of controlling the political and social affairs of a society and administering them in their various present forms or in other possible and practical ways.

From a sociological point of view, government is a social phenomenon rooted in human beings’ individual and group behaviors. It is a manifestation of sovereignty, which is its soul, and enjoys legal dimensions. This phenomenon has never been separate from human societies including small and big social communities and for as long as man has existed, whether in familial and tribal forms or in civil and urban social forms, there has been a government alongside him. Recent studies by sociologists and anthropologists have shown that government and human societies are inseparable from each other.

In all small and big human societies, some system in the form of patriarchy, tribalism, emirate, monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, tyranny or

\(^4\) As these cases reveal, the term sovereignty in the law is related to religious guardianship. Western jurists have sometimes discussed “natural law” as an intrinsic issue outside the circle of the law and religious law (which is the field of religious guardianship); however, from the “source” of the divisions of law in the view of Westerners, which is the same “law” or the field of religious principles, it appears that their natural and intrinsic laws are rooted in religious law or Shari‘ah. This is because it lacks the features of sovereignty and genetic guardianship which means the power to innovate and create and to dominate in a supernatural way.
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theocracy and the like has dominated societies and determined their fate. Therefore, guardianship which is a form of sovereignty is not among the innovations of Islam and has a history as long as the history of human existence. We can, rather, say that it is a natural affair ⁴⁶ that is not limited to human beings. Government is necessary since lack of government or anarchy is opposed to wisdom, primordial nature, and the good of society.

The necessity of government and guardianship is the main and rational context for demonstrating the necessity of Imāmah. That is why the Infallible Imāms have reasoned on the basis of this natural, intrinsic, and rational necessity in order to demonstrate the need for the presence of an Imām and his leadership among human societies. For example, they said: “Having a leader, whether kind or cruel, is inevitable for people”; ⁴⁷ “There is no escape from having a government”; ⁴⁸ “A ferocious lion is better than a cruel king, and having a cruel king is better than having permanent unrest and riots”; ⁴⁹ “People cannot be guided to the right path unless by a leader (Imām)”; ⁵⁰ “Leadership turns dispersion into unity;” and “Leadership grants order to people’s affairs”; ⁵¹ “There is no group or nation that has lived and survived in the world without having a leader or guardian to control their necessary religious and worldly affairs.” ⁵²

In practice, too, after the Holy Prophet (s) emigrated from Mecca to Medina and settled down in its suitable atmosphere, and after people brought

⁴⁶. Ibn Khaldûn believes that government among some animals is intrinsic and natural but rooted in wisdom and intellect for human beings (Muqaddimah, p. 43, published by Mashkul).
⁵⁰. Ibid., vol. 23, p. 22.
⁵¹. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 107.
⁵². Ibid., vol. 6, p. 60.
faith in him, he immediately established a government there and became its leader. It was a government in the form of a state government and had all the characteristics of a simple and primitive government such as an army of volunteers, a treasury, some officials, and a judicial system. The headquarters of his government and justice system was Masjid al-Nabi (the Mosque of the Prophet (ṣ)).

In the words of the Holy Qur’an, guardianship means sovereignty and has been used synonymously with leadership or Imāmah in books of ḥadīth. The most obvious manifestation and effect of guardianship is its government over the society of believers. Later the concept of guardianship, particularly in various scientific fields, was analyzed and it was divided into different types, such as genetic and divine legislative, universal and particular, absolute and limited, general and specific, granted and acquired, real and mentally-posed, involuntary and voluntary, Žāhirite (exoteric) and Bāṭinite (esoteric) guardianships.

There are also some disagreements in the literal meaning of guardianship. By reference to some of the various meanings that have been given in dictionaries for this word, including closeness, advocacy, government and leadership, help, love, etc. some have tried to extend the meaning of this guardianship beyond that of leadership and sovereignty or to go beyond their semantic commonality and consider them in univocal terms.

In our view, all of these meanings are, in fact, the applications of this word, and its root means the unity and mutual relationship inspired by love that makes one side the leader and the other the follower. This simple concept involves both love and judgment in its innermost core; it creates both kindness and leadership through friendship. In other words, it is a mixture of love and judgment, not a love without obedience nor a judgment without love: “Say, (O Muhammed, to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me;
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Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

Moreover, in spite of the many types that were put forward for guardianship, its most conspicuous meaning is the same as government, which is inevitably inseparable from sovereignty. In the words of the Infallible Imāms, which are inspired by revelation, guardianship means ruling Muslims and acting as successors to the Holy Prophet’s government. As we mentioned before, the most famous division of the concept of guardianship divides it into genetic and divine legislative types.

Genetic Guardianship

Genetic (Takwīnī) guardianship can also be called disposition, intrinsic or natural guardianship, or the Bāṭini reign. It means a kind of natural dominance over the world and the objects inside it so that their existence and all their states depends on the will of the guardian. This dominance appears and is realized in the form of making, creating, and innovating, or changing and preserving perfection, or making disappear, bringing to death, annihilating, and mutilating; and creating a single order in the world or changing one system to another system. Terms such as cause and effect, necessity and possibility, absolute richness and indigence, manifestation and the manifested, and God and worshiper, all observe and refer to this one-sided and illuminative relationship and flowing emanation existing between the guardian and his followers.

Genetic guardianship is limited to Almighty God and is one of His essential modes and concomitants of “real existence”. This guardianship is

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certainly manifested by no existent other than God. In this real relationship all the various meanings of the word guardianship, such as love, proximity, sultan, and judgment, can be found, and some of the divine names and attributes which are known as “attributes of acts” are the different interpretations of this same word.

The origin of this abounding emanation, as mentioned in the section dealing with vicegerency, has also been accessible to the Holy Prophet ( să ), the Infallible Imāms ( ‘a ), the great Prophets, and God’s friends, and they have all been able to enjoy the taste of guardianship to some extent.

The Holy Prophet ( să ) and, at lower levels some chosen people, have had a great share of this genetic sovereignty and true dominance over the world, called genetic guardianship, with God’s permission. The miracles of the prophets and the supernatural acts of other Favorites of God are indications of this reality.

Legislative Guardianship

Legislative guardianship can be granted and made. This dominance is granted to the guardian according to an agreement or an enforced law. The subjects of this dominance are human individuals and the objects related to them. This is the same thing as is observed in human societies in the form of various governments, legal or illegal, logical or illogical, etc.

This kind of guardianship (unlike the genetic guardianship, which pertains to the relationship between the “guardian” and objects, since they are objects) is established between the “guardian” and “individuals” or human beings (or their affairs); it can be nullified, granted, and changed. In other words, as it is assigned to some people, it can also be taken away from

54. Guardianship belongs to Almighty God, and (according to the Qur’an, with God’s permission) other existents can also enjoy it in some form.
them or changed (unless it is rooted in permanent genetic guardianship and survives in the light of the power it receives from the Everlasting Origin).

Legislative guardianship, which is synonymous with government, can have various dimensions the most important of which are legislation, i.e. determining the future life of people and society. In despotic governments the ruler holds this power, and the ruling person or group impose their desire and will over others (monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, dictatorship).

In people-centered governments this duty is left in trust with a person or people (democracy). In an Islamic system, the believers accept the divine law based on their own free will and obey God’s absolute government. Here, the law belongs to God but it is enforced by someone who possesses purity, knowledge of jurisprudence, the law, administrative power, and social insight.

The other dimension of legislative guardianship is administration (or the administrative power). In other words, it means “Imāmah” or leadership and supervision over the correct enforcement of the law, which is the particular meaning of government. In democratic governments this power is granted by people through Parliaments or President to the “government” and in totalitarian or oppressive governments, it is in the hand of a single ruler.

The other dimensions of this guardianship include making “judgments” and solving problems among the people, establishing justice, determining the punishment for criminals, and making decisions about war and peace, which sometimes change the fate of a society.

The source of this kind of guardianship has been extensively discussed. Some believe that it essentially belongs to people and is their natural right; some maintain that it belongs exclusively to God and He assigns it to specific people; some who believe that it originates in the inevitable development of societies; some argue that it is based on social arrangements, and some say that it is rooted in force and domination.
In the view of Islam, legislative sovereignty is a branch of genetic sovereignty, which belongs to God, and He has entrusted it to people through His Grace and Mercy. Human beings accept the divine legislative guardianship of the All-Knowing God, Who has granted the gift of life to them whole-heartedly before His messengers and Prophets. According to the Qur’an, they bring “faith”, and then the Prophets and their successors inform people of the divine law, hold the seat of leadership and government and, through the execution of the same life-making and blissful laws, guide societies towards development, happiness, and well-being.

An Analysis of the Genetic Relations and Values of these Terms

A comparison of these terms reveals that some of them enjoy hierarchical superiority to others, such as messengership to prophethood, and Imāmah to messengership (as mentioned in an earlier hadith). Some others enjoy natural and causal superiority over others (superiority due to causality); in other words, one is considered to be the cause of the other. For example vicegerency is the cause of guardianship; guardianship is the cause of prophethood and messengership in one branch, and for leadership (Imāmah) and government in the other. However, it is possible that the titles of these two branches converge into a single term regarding a specific

55. Article 56 of the Iranian Constitution: Absolute sovereignty over the world and man belongs to God, and it is He Who has made man the master of his own social destiny. No one can deprive man of this divine right, nor subordinate it to the vested interests of a particular individual or group.
56. Here, the writer does not mean the final or perfect cause because there are some other types of priority such as natural priority, priority in terms of nobility, etc.
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referent; for example, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) or Ibrāhīm (‘a) were both messengers and Imāms.

When analyzing these titles, “vicegerency” can be considered at the top of this descending arc. Therefore, its genetic value is higher than all of them because, according to gnosis, everything in the world originates in the vicegerency of the divine Prophets and, as is commonly said, in the “Muhammedan truth” which is the essence of being; a being which is mixed with love and attraction and is ruled by a government blended with friendship and kindness.

Guardianship is born from this vicegerency; a guardianship which is the origin of all hearts, the gushing spring of love, the existing unity and attraction in all the particles of the world, the hero of nature, and the genetic dominant power (and when it rules human beings endowed with the nature of truth, it also turns into the dominant legislative power).

Accordingly, the true and original divine vicegerency is the first genetic phenomenon of the world and the origin of “guardianship”. On the one hand, it deals with the material world and what is beyond it; every single particle of the world recognizes it and considers it as its master and administrator, and all miracles and supernatural acts originate in this dimension of the nature of the world. On the other hand, through inspirations from the same laws of creation and divine traditions, the vicegerent makes friends with the world of situation, convention, and consideration, which is the specific social environment of human beings, and appears in the form of a prophet, messenger, leader, and ruler (legislator and administrator of law). In this way, the unrivalled ruler of the world and nature and the vicegerent of God becomes the ruler of human society and social human groups, writes letters to some king or emperor, shakes a brotherly and humble hand with a desert-dwelling Arab, says his prayers in a mosque, etc.
The Great Friend of God connects with the kingdom of the world on a spiritual journey through his first dimension and, on returning from this journey, he brings his true insight and knowledge through his second dimension in the form of a world of revelation and a divine worldview as a gift for people. In this way, he learns about the law governing their livelihood as well as the direct path towards resurrection and benevolent ethical principles. As a result, he will be called a prophet and a messenger; he will be assigned to enforce the law and lead the society of the believers. He will also be called the Imām and ruler.
‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī and Majlisi and the Story of the Intellect and Tradition∗

In the history of Islamic and intellectual sciences, the disputes of the people of hadith with philosophers and theologians have a long history and have led to several events and adventures. These disputes took place not only between the Žahrīrites or Ḥashwiyyah and the Mu’tazilites or Mutakallimun, but also among Muḥaddiths, Mutakallimun, and Shi’ī philosophers. One of the oldest of them occurred about 10 centuries ago between Shaykh al-Mufid (333-413 AH) and Ibn Bābirī, known as Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (died 392 AH). The results of this confrontation are recorded in Shaykh al-Mufid’s Taṣḥīḥ al-i’tiqād, which was written to elaborate on and correct Shaykh al-Ṣadūq’s I’tiqād al-imāmiyyah.

∗ This paper was initially written and presented by Professor Seyyed Mohammed Khamenei at the ‘Allāmah Majlisi Congress in Isfahan in December 1999.
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In our time, too, a conflict of ideas can be seen in ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i’s commentary on Majlisi’s *Biḥār al-anwār*, which bears some similarities to Mufid’s commentary on Şadūq’s book. Such oppositions occur in spite of the fact that all these prominent figures served Islam and believed in the *Sunnah* and the *ḥadīths* of the Infallible Imams. All four of them had devoted their lives to spreading Islamic teachings and training distinguished scholars. Moreover, they left behind a great number of scientific works, which are considered invaluable treasures of the legacy of the Shi’ite and Islamic teachings and sciences.

‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i continued his *Ta’liqāt* (Glosses) up to volume 6 at the request of the publisher of the latest edition of *Biḥār al-anwār*, but he discontinued it for some reasons. We can find tens of glosses in these six volumes which, each in a way, refer to the writer’s interpretation of *ḥadīths* and his corrections. Most of these corrections pertain to religious beliefs and are in defense of philosophers; however, sometimes, like his first gloss,1 they are commentaries on a literary point as in the following *ḥadīth*:

“Man’s reality is his innermost; his intellect is his religion; and his *muruwwah* is placed where his soul is placed.”

The late Majlisi defines “*muruwwah*” as “humanity”,2 but the literal reason for this is not clear to us. In this regard, ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i says, “This interpretation is wrong because ‘*muruwwah*’ means chivalry and high-mindedness.”3

Majlisi has also provided a similar interpretation concerning the word “*bughḍ*” in another *ḥadīth* and said, “*bughḍ* means God’s knowledge of the meanness of foolish people.” However, ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i

1. Majlisi, new edition of *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 1, p. 82.
2. He also refers to the same meaning in his commentary on another *ḥadīth* on page 141 of *Biḥār al-anwār*.
3. *Ibid*.
maintains, “The knowledge of the lowness of something is not called bughṣ. In its natural and philosophical sense, this word means depriving a created thing of its natural privileges.”

Some of the glosses also represent the writer’s justifications for and commentaries on traditions and reject or modify their interpretations. Nevertheless, most of the philosophical confrontations of these two Shī‘ī scholars pertain to theological and philosophical issues, such as the issue of bada’ (revocation of a decree), table of effacement and affirmation, Almighty God’s Knowledge, vision of the essence, excess of attributes to essence, and God’s Will. Concerning some of these issues, Majlisī sometimes attributes to philosophers certain ideas and theories which are unfounded and unjustified. For example, he says that there have been certain philosophers among the Jews who maintain that there is a force behind God’s acts and creation!

‘Allāmah’s answer is short and somewhat scathing, “Attributing such words to philosophers is rooted in misunderstanding.” However, their main point of disagreement pertains to the intellect and its common meanings and definitions. Like Shaykh al-Mufid, ‘Allāmah Ţabāṭabā’ī cannot stand mistakes concerning technical terms, on the one hand, and insulting or downgrading philosophers and people of wisdom, on the other. Therefore, he objects to them and tries to answer their questions politely and philosophically.

5. The other aspect is to consider foolishness, not in the sense of a physical and mental defect, but in the sense of voluntary quitting of the farsighted intellect, which protects us against torture in the Hereafter. Here, reference is made to the famous ḥadīth, “The intellect is something by which God is worshipped and Paradise is attained.” Accordingly, foolishness is anything that keeps people far from heaven. In this sense, most people are foolish.

6. These issues have been referred to in Bihār al-anwār, respectively, vol. 4, pp. 129, 131, 72, 38, 62, and 137.
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When commenting on the ḥadīth of al-‘Aql wal-jahl, Majlisi refers to six meanings for “the intellect”. The last of them, which is common among philosophers, indicates that the intellect is an immaterial substance. The writer even maintains that, according to philosophers, it is an eternal entity, without reference to any source in this regard.

The tone of the writer of Biḥār against the people of reasoning is very harsh and biting and beyond dignity. Strangely enough, his father was a philosopher and gnostic but, under the great pressure dominating the atmosphere of the Isfahan and Iran of that period, which was indirectly rooted in the policies of Shah Abbas Safawid and his successors concerning the eradication of Sufis and Qizilbashs in different ways (such as through jurisprudents and muḥaddiths), he stood against philosophy and gnosis and attacked them under various pretexts. The issue of the intellect was also one of the topics that gave rise to many disagreements between Ṭahrīrites (formalists) and people of meaning, and between rationalists and traditionists. Whenever they reached this point, they started attacking each other based on their own perspectives and viewpoints.

At the end of his commentary on the intellect, Majlisi demonstrated that the 14 Infallible Imāms (‘a) possess the same features that philosophers and gnostics attribute to the intellect, which is prior in creation to other creatures. He also believes that such features are the intermediaries through which God sends his effusions and teachings to human beings and angels. He says, “… In sum, it has been demonstrated in a ḥadīth that the Infallible Imāms (‘a) are the intermediaries between God’s effusion and people.”

As for philosophers, Majlisi says that they followed another path, demonstrated a set of intellects, and said some unnecessary things.

7. Refer to Mullā Šadrā’s Life, Character, and School.
Moreover, in another place, he blocks the path of the intellect towards understanding religion.\textsuperscript{9}

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\textquote{Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’i’s criticism of the writer of \textit{Bihār al-anwār} involves the following points: Firstly, his definition of the intellect is wrong and in contrast to the literal meaning of the word. According to Ṭabāṭabā’i, there are two reasons for this mistake: first, the writer is pessimistic about philosophers and sages and is unfair and biased in his judgment of them. Second, his method of perceiving the meanings of \textit{ḥadīths} is not technical and accurate. This is because the text of the traditions of the People of the Prophet’s House (‘a) and the meanings of their \textit{ḥadīths} and words are unclear and have various layers and depths. In fact, they quoted each \textit{ḥadīth} considering the perceptive power of their addressees and level of knowledge. It has been narrated from Imām Ṣādiq (‘a), “Understanding our \textit{ḥadīth} is better than narrating it. Sometimes, our [Infallible Imāms’] words can have as many as seventy meanings which can all be denied.”\textsuperscript{10} It has also been narrated from Imām ‘Alī (‘a), “It is difficult to understand some of the sciences of the People of the Prophet’s House (‘a); therefore, some people deny them.”\textsuperscript{11}

There are also many \textit{ḥadīths} such as, “Our \textit{ḥadīths} are difficult.”\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, we read in a \textit{ḥadīth} from the Prophet (ṣ), “We Prophets speak to people at the level of their understanding.”\textsuperscript{13} However, in \textit{Bihār}, the writer has assumed the same depth and level of meaning for all \textit{ḥadīths}, while in some of their \textit{ḥadīths}, the Infallible Imāms (‘a) have addressed only chosen

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 103-104.
\item \textsuperscript{10} \textit{Nawādir al-akhbār}, p. 50.
\item \textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 54.
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 51, \textit{Bihār al-anwār}.
\item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{Bihār al-anwār}, 1/106.
\end{itemize}
friends, and ordinary people never had and will never have the power to perceive and analyze the surface meaning of such ḥadīths. It is here that mistakes occur in the perception of ḥadīths, and the muḥaddith misunderstands them. As a result, the bases of true Imāmiyyah teachings and beliefs are called into question, and sublime concepts lose their value and become meaningless.

Secondly, ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī objects to Majlīsī’s unjustified attack against philosophy and philosophers. Majlīsī, first, tries to prove that all the ideas of the righteous and the Qur’an- and ḥadīth-believing philosophers, such as Mīr Dāmād, Mullā Ṣadrā, Fayḍ, and even his own father, Mawlā Muḥammed Taqī Majlīsī, who, in addition to their interest in the fields of philosophy and gnosis, were prominent muḥaddiths and among the stars of the history of ḥadīths, were against the holy rules of Sharī‘ah. Second, he tries to reject the issue of the philosophical intellects, which is a philosophical problem and must be refuted by using the language of philosophy, by means of an insulting and emotional language and maintains that it is an unnecessary and unjustified discussion.

In order to defend the status of philosophy and provide a logical response to him, ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī has referred to a series of premises that Majlīsī openly agrees with. The first was made in the form of the following logical syllogism:

1. According to the writer, in religious terminology the intellect is the same as the faculty of perception of good and evil and the knowledge of the “causes of affairs and the essences of causes.”¹⁴

2. The reality of Shar‘i as prophethood, revelation, and the Book is considered to be an authority when the intellect of a responsible person accepts it. In other words, the criterion for the truth and goodness and the “proof” without the religious law and the Prophet’s righteousness is man’s intellect. That is why one who lacks intellect cannot be called a

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responsible person, and where there is no intellect, there will be no religious law.

3. The intellect follows reasoning, and for it a premise is a premise and a conclusion is a conclusion! When the intellect has to affirm and accept the premise, it has to accept the conclusion, and one cannot blame it for this act.

4. Authority of the outward aspect of hadith, which refers to the writer’s words, is not stronger than the essential authority of the intellect and knowledge. This is because the denotations of words are not certain and are, rather, hypothetical, and one cannot challenge the certitude of science and the intellect by means of the outward aspect of hadith (perhaps, that is the reason why the Holy Qur’an and many epistemological hadiths are accompanied with logical reasoning).

The conclusion of the above premises is that after accepting the role of the intellect and using it in order to demonstrate the authority of Shari’ah, revelation, and prophethood, we cannot ignore it in understanding hadiths and deprive it of unveiling the divine teachings hidden in the words of the hadiths. This is like “revocation of the premise” after accepting it and arriving at a conclusion, which is the same as destroying the foundation of a multi-storey building after constructing it. This is because in this case, the whole building and the final outcome (the conclusion) will be ruined.

Moreover, accepting and rejecting a premise in an argument is itself a kind of coincidence of negation and affirmation, which is a logical contradiction the falsity of which is quite obvious. The rejection of the conclusions that the intellect arrives at will finally lead to the denial of Shari’ah.

At the end of his glosses in this regard and after demonstrating the authority of the intellect and the importance of its role in understanding the

15. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 104 (footnote).
divine words and the ḥadîths of the Infallible Imâms (‘a), following his habit of teaching wisdom, like Shaykh al-Mufîd versus Shaykh al-Ṣadûq, he tries to give advice and explain the consequences of any kind of naivety concerning the ideas of the Infallible Imams (‘a) and commenting on their words.

In his book Taṣḥîḥ al-i’tiqâd (also called Sharḥ-i ʿaqîd al-Ṣadûq), Shaykh al-Mufîd asks his master, Shaykh al-Ṣadûq Ibn Bûbwayyah, the master of all the Muḥaddiths of his time, not to attribute any weak or false idea which pleases him to Shi’ah and to walk more slowly and wisely on top of these precipices and slippery heights in order to protect the good of Islam and the authority of Shi’ism among other schools of thought.

After quoting the words of Ṣadûq in his Taṣḥîḥ al-i’tiqâd, Shaykh al-Mufîd says, “When defining the spirit, Shaykh al-Ṣadûq, unknowingly, ascribes the idea of believers in transmigration to himself. This is the same as defaming Shi’ism.”

Then he refers to the ideas of the followers of transmigration and says:

The ideas of those who believe in transmigration are among the worst philosophical theories. The enemies of Shi’ism try to charge it with disbelief by such slanders. Some Shi’i Muḥaddiths, who have no bad intention, transmit any ḥadîth that they hear without paying attention to its authenticity and narrator. They are not aware that they are attributing some lies that the spirit of Shi’ism detests and despises to it and are, in fact, helping the enemy.16

The above words do not belong to someone who denies ḥadîth or is an opponent or rival of Shaykh al-Ṣadûq. Rather, they belong to a jurisprudent, Muḥaddith, and theologist who considers himself Ṣadûq’s

‘Allāmah Ṭabātabā‘ī and Majlisi and the …

student and views him as a faithful and honest muḥaddith who works for the good of religion. However, truth deserves to be followed.

The essence of Shaykh al-Mufīd’s words is that knowing a ḥadīth and believing in its authenticity is not concomitant with perceiving the profound meanings of its teachings. It is possible for a muḥaddith not to attain its depths and fail to understand the meaning intended by the Imām. Transmitting ḥadīth is other than understanding it. One might not sometimes be able to do both at the same time.† Indeed, according to the Commander of the Faithful (‘a): the words of the Infallible Imāms, like the divine words, enjoy certain depths, and, as they themselves have said, not everyone understands them in the same way. In fact, each person can take as much from that infinite ocean as the capacity of his receptacle allows him.

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‘Allāmah Ṭabātabā‘ī has great respect for the master of the muḥaddithin of his time, i.e. Majlisi, and considers himself indebted to that prominent muḥaddith and the guardian of the invaluable legacy of the People of the Prophet’s House (‘a). However, out of good will and in order to provide good guidance to future generations and young muḥaddithin, as well as to protect the validity of Shi‘ī rationalism, which was the method of the People of the Prophet’s House (‘a), against the attacks of the Salafīyyah, Ṭahīrites, Ḥashwiyyah, and Ḥaqqīyyīn (traditionists) surrounding them, ‘Allāmah says, “The safest way for those who lack expertise in rational issues is to content themselves with the exoteric meanings of the Qur’an and ḥadīth and not to enter the domain of rational problems and discussions.”‡

† ‘Biḥār al-anwār, 2/148.
‡ Ibid., pp. 55-51.
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‘Allāmah Ṭabātabā’ī’s commentary and glosses on Biḥār al-anwār was a scientific necessity and to the good of the supreme Imāmiyyah teachings. This is because the Shi‘i ḥadīth, along with its glory and magnificence must be interpreted in a way that it is not abused by enemies or turned into a means of propaganda or mockery in their hands. Criticizing weak interpretations on the part of the guardians of Shi‘i teachings, such as Shaykh al-Mufid and ‘Allāmah Ṭabātabā’ī, is a great service to the supreme Islamic culture and the teachings of Imāmiyyah school of thought.
Theology in Mullā Ṣadrā and its Present Status

It was a long period of time during which the place of sciences and the status of philosophy were not discussed, and their evaluation had been left to public taste. Ordinary people sometimes preferred medicine, sometimes engineering, and sometimes other sciences, and a huge number of university students were attracted to them. However, the discussion of the place and status of the sciences, not only from a philosophical and academic point of view, as was done in the past, but also from an “applied” and “policy-making” perspective, seems to be a new and interesting departure. We can even say that it is extremely necessary for our society.

The present writer intends to explore this issue mainly from the perspective of philosophy itself and leave the related hot political and social discussions to younger researchers. So, we will begin our discussion with the

* This paper was presented by Professor Seyyed Mohammed Khamenei at a Congress in Theology College of Tehran University.
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nature, definition, and use of philosophy and theology and their relationship to other sciences, a subject previously dealt with as one of the eight principles before beginning the study of philosophy.

It was said in the past that philosophy (and theology) was the “mother” of all sciences because it is through philosophy that the subject of each science is determined and clarified. Therefore, this field enjoys a position of excellence and other sciences are its offspring. Another reason for the superiority of philosophy was the nobility of its subject. It was claimed that it discusses the absolute existent (undetermined) which, finally and in reality, leads to existence and absolute existence. It was also said that there is no place for questioning the nobility of existence in philosophy.

Mullâ Ṣadrâ demonstrates the superiority of philosophy over other sciences by stating that the subject of this field is absolute and not limited by any didactic or natural bounds. He also adds that philosophy does not need the other sciences, while all of them rely on it and are its slaves. Western thinkers later turned this pyramid upside down and said that philosophy is the handmaid of the other sciences. Unfortunately, both the West and the East are still suffering from the consequences of this mistaken view.

Mullâ Ṣadrâ is not even content with this and introduces “knowledge” as the goal of human existence and philosophy as the “cause” of other sciences. At the same time, he believes that philosophy is the end of the other sciences, and this is why he calls divine philosophy the master knowledge.¹

Accordingly, in his view, a divine philosopher is the master of his time. As we know, the rule of philosophers and the elite (in its Islamic terms, the guardianship of the jurisconsult) had reached Mullâ Ṣadrâ through Illuminationist philosophy. In relation to this he says:

And a wise gnostic is one who knows the divine realities in the form of certain arguments… Thus leadership belongs to this wise gnostic, whether people benefit from his knowledge or not.

Therefore, others’ not benefiting from his knowledge is not his fault; rather, it is because of their own negligence. Can you not see that a physician is called so because of his medical skills whether people approve of him or not? His status as a physician will never be threatened by lack of patients.

… The same holds true about an Imām’s (leader’s) imāmat (leadership), a philosopher’s philosophy, and a manager’s management (in other words, even if no one benefits from them, their status and position will not be tarnished).

At this point, we will return to our initial starting point stating that, in order to demonstrate the status of philosophy, it is sufficient to pay attention to its various definitions. It can be defined in terms of “the perfection of the soul in order to become God-like” or “man’s becoming a rational knower and an equal to the macroanthropos.” Some other definitions are also to be found in philosophy books.

Another proof mentioned for the nafs al-amrī (fact itself) virtue of divine philosophy is the following quotation from Mullā Sadrā: he expressed these words after referring to all the problems that Ibn Sinā, in spite of all his glory, had failed to resolve:

This negligence of Ibn Sinā was due to the fact that he paid a lot of attention to literature, mathematics, music, medicine, pharmacology, and other particular sciences. When asked why he did not pay attention to mathematics, Socrates said, “Because I am busy with the master of all sciences; i.e. the divine knowledge”.

Socrates himself believed that the worst of all miseries of mankind is running away from intellecction and philosophical thought.

Given the statements of philosophers about the excellence of philosophy, we might ask them why they have viewed philosophy and divine wisdom from the viewpoint of theoretical wisdom when discussing their

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3. Plato, Phaedon.

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status and superiority. Moreover, we might ask why they have merely dealt with their definitions and subject matter and not paid attention to the important role of practical wisdom or, in a sense, applied philosophy. In fact, they have ignored the philosophy of philosophy.

As we know, in ancient times wisdom was divided into theoretical and practical kinds. Practical wisdom itself was also divided into three parts: ethics, house administration, and city administration or politics and, in fact, statesmanship.

In spite of having other sciences such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and literature, ancient philosophers were not proud of these; rather, they were mainly involved in practical wisdom. Many Muslim and pre-Islamic philosophers spent their lives offering counsel to kings so that the people’s welfare and prosperity would be provided for through appropriate and wise policies. This was a sound, wise, and logical choice because the essence, origin, and context of human life depend mainly on practical wisdom rather than on the other sciences.

The context of a man’s life consists of his family, society, and character. One might never become sick in life or have a sick person to take care of. Likewise, one might never feel a need for astronomy and mathematics; however, he can never feel a lack of need for “himself”, “his family”, and “society”, which constitute the subject of practical wisdom.

Therefore, the main point and context for a philosopher to learn and pay attention to is his individual and social life, and all other sciences are subsidiary. This can be an argument or a philosophy for the significance and superiority of philosophy over other fields of knowledge. The philosophy of philosophy begins at this point, and “Whosoever has been given wisdom has been granted multiple virtues.”

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4. The Qur’an, chapter 2: 269.
Theology in Mullā Sadrā and its Present Status

Early philosophers maintained that the advantage of practical wisdom lies in providing the knowledge of “good and evil”. Since a man’s actions are under his own control, practical wisdom can lead a philosopher towards good and keep him away from evil.

Empirical sciences are related to laws beyond human power and lie in the particular domain of divine power. Man can only discover the laws of these sciences, including physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology, medicine, etc.

Hence, a science whose subject pertains to man’s domain of power is preferred over one which is not. Attaining happiness, which is man’s most important goal, is within his power and depends on his choice. No other science can provide mankind with welfare and comfort, and none of the tools and instruments that have been made through the knowledge of other sciences for people’s welfare can guarantee his comfort without being rooted in practical wisdom (e.g., one’s psychological background, family, and social status). Today, we might even be able to claim that the above sciences have had more disadvantages than advantages for humanity and nature. In this regard we can refer to toxic substances dumped in the natural environment, fatal and destructive tools and implements of war, carcinogenic household gadgets, etc.

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At this point, we will take a deeper look at philosophy, practical wisdom, and their merits: the most practical and life determining issue in a person’s life has always been the government, its policies, and the ruler’s behavior, cruelty, etc.

Topics such as freedom, equality, and sovereignty, which have an extensive historical background and are spoken of by any physician, engineer, lawyer, clerk, and workman today, are among the issues related to practical wisdom and civil politics, which are discussed in political philosophy.
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Among the other subcategories of practical wisdom, we can refer to human rights, civil rights, the science of law (including constitutional law, penal law, international law, administrative law, civil law, and family law) or sciences such as economics, education, military defense, and the like. The other social organizations and institutions that are discussed in sociology are among the branches of the science of civil politics or, in fact, wisdom.

The question of government and guardianship (imāmat or leadership, as used in Islamic texts) of people is the continuity of the notion of “prophethood” and is the main element of religions, including Islam.

Up to this point, we have considered material life to be the domain of practical wisdom and have thus explored it. However, divine philosophers and gnostics, such as Mullā Ṣadrā, extend the realm of practical wisdom beyond the borders of the material world as far as the infinite world of the Hereafter. According to this philosopher, ethics, the administration of a family and society, and the establishment of a philosophical and perfect government are not intended simply so that, like animals, we have enough food, sleep, and enjoy comfort. Rather, they are intended to help us attain spiritual perfection and mental growth. As a result, we will be able to exit the domain of animality and step into the circle of humanity.

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Now, let’s take a look around us and compare the previous theoretical questions with the realities surrounding us. Fortunately, our government is based on wisdom and philosophy, and its founder was a philosopher. Finally, philosophers have managed to attain their true right and seized the reins of government.

Under our Constitution, the rules and regulations of government are based on practical and theoretical wisdom. Principle 2 sets out our
theoretical and ideological principles, which are also religious principles, including Divine Unity \((tawhîd)\), revelation and prophethood, resurrection, justice, and \(Imâm\).

Principle 3 is concerned with practical wisdom and refers to moral virtues, the training and development of individuals, family, the nature and form of a just and wise government, and the general policies of the country.

Since wisdom, knowledge, and, particularly, practical wisdom are the main axes in the Constitution and the foundation of the Islamic system and its government, the country’s statesmen and policy makers must also view philosophy, which is the basis of practical wisdom, as the most central of all disciplines. They should also attach more importance to this important field of knowledge, which is the mother of all sciences, techniques, politics, and government, in the areas of programming, budgeting, official organization of affairs, implementation of plans, and management.

For example, in educational programming the status of philosophy as a specialized subject must be transformed into a general one (such as Islamic studies or literature). This is because a philosophical grounding and background is more necessary for any student and scholar to have than any other type of sciences. If one wishes to attain expertise in any field, his soul and mind must be primarily trained in logic and philosophy.

There are three main problems in policy-making for the field of theology which must be taken into consideration:

1. The first is the scarcity of faculties of theology in comparison to other subject areas. Furthermore, the quality of education provided in these is also unsatisfactory. A comparison between the number of centers and departments of philosophy throughout the world, particularly in the West and the Indian subcontinent, with that in Iran leads to nothing but shame for us.

2. The next problem concerns the number of students studying theology, which is much fewer than what is truly necessary. In fact, quantity here is as important as quality because philosophy graduates are responsible
for publicizing wisdom and philosophy and disseminating culture and rationality throughout society. Therefore, the greater the number of philosophy students, the more the atmosphere of society will become infused with philosophy. Moreover, some of these students can later become competent professors.

3. The third problem concerns philosophy lecturers and is, in fact, rooted in the previous two problems. As we know, the significance of the role of a lecturer depends on his knowledge and academic and practical accomplishments. An academic’s knowledge is not limited to what he has learnt during his years of education; rather, he must attain it through continuous study, research, discussion, and enquiry. A typical teacher of philosophy must have written philosophy books and be familiar with some foreign languages such as Arabic, English, French, etc. Moreover, he must be aware of the latest ideas and theories of the authorities in the field of philosophy, both inside and outside the country as far as possible.

However, this ideal situation requires certain prerequisites many of which are beyond teachers’ reach in terms of power and choice. For example, in order to accomplish the above tasks, they need a good budget and an appropriate place, a rich data bank, and the tools to inform others of their achievements. Obviously, the government and related organizations must provide such facilities and pave the way for teachers and researchers to conduct their studies. From among the most basic requirements of teachers, we can refer to books and other research tools, sufficient time and space, welfare, appropriate training and education, as well as encouragement and persuasion.

Books represent one of the most important tools of research for university teachers in our country and one of the best means of expanding their knowledge. This is because the use of computers and the Internet has not yet become widespread among our philosophers. In my opinion, as the early philosophers stated, “One who lacks sense perception verily lacks knowledge.” We should also say, “One who lacks books verily lacks
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knowledge,” because each book leaves a significant effect at its own level on an individual.

However, having access to the required books is by itself a great and sometimes insurmountable problem for lecturers. This is because these books, particularly foreign books, are very expensive, and researchers sometimes have to pay a lot of money to buy them for their research projects. Besides, the price of a book series that consists of several volumes is so high that it is often impossible for teachers to purchase them. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, some university teachers are not very familiar with the Internet and the worldwide web and, therefore, easily lose access to a vast ocean of information. What is worse, our universities do not encourage them or do not provide the facilities for them to receive the necessary training in this regard.

Another important issue here is time. Most university teachers do not have enough time for research. One of the factors that leads to this calamity for science and knowledge is university teachers’ having to teach many classes due to a shortage of expert and competent teachers and the extreme need of universities and academic and cultural institutes of them. However, it is sometimes financial need that forces them to teach several classes a week.

Having too little leisure time and forgetting the self is a plague for the people of learning and science. This will gradually lead them to emptiness and shortage of academic knowledge, and sometimes to their metamorphosis into automata. Thus, the problem of providing for the family’s housing and welfare is also very important in teachers’ progress in their field.

One of the other factors leading to better quality teaching is continuous supervision of teachers’ training, spiritual growth, and guidance based on rational and logical policies rather than “official” and superficial ones. This question demands independent programming and can be accomplished through forming appropriate trade unions and clubs, internal
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journals, and correct management.

Here, it is now the right place to turn to one of the saddest parts of this discussion which entails a comparison of the status of philosophy and the other rational sciences in Iran with that in other countries.

According to the latest statistics available to the author, there are 12,302 philosophers and philosophy professors at university level and 1,855 philosophy departments in North America. If we take the population of Iran into consideration, we should have approximately 3,300 teachers, professors, and PhD philosophy experts for 60 million Iranian people. Moreover, if we also take into consideration the history of philosophy in Iran, as the pioneer of this field and other sciences over the centuries and the cradle of philosophy, there should be many more philosophers and philosophy professors and authorities. Likewise, there ought to be about 470 philosophy departments in this country.

Interestingly enough, there are at least 124 philosophy departments in India, 108 in the UK (which has the same population size as Iran) 28 in the Philippines, 44 in South Africa, and 32 in Spain. However, the real numbers are even higher than the ones given above.

In view of the discussion in the introduction about the important role of philosophy in society and its superiority over other sciences, the problems mentioned above should not exist in a country whose Constitution has been drafted on the basis of wisdom and philosophical and religious principles. Rather, theology must be viewed there as a basis for culture, civilization, and even growth and development. This point should also be observed in policy-making and programming.
Chapter Four:

Psychology and Anthropology
According to the history of philosophy, until four centuries ago, there were only two well-known theories concerning the soul. Plato and many other ancient philosophers considered it to be a reality independent of and separate from the body. They maintained that it pre-existed the body and then joined it when it was susceptible to receive the soul. They further added that the soul accompanies the body as long as it possesses the necessary power and capabilities, and when it weakens and dies, the soul enters another abode. In this theory, the soul functions as the captain of a ship.

Aristotle and his followers viewed the soul as a matter-like substance and the “form” and “first entelechy” of the body, for which the body was a natural tool and object to actualize its faculties.1

* This paper was presented at the World Congress on Phenomenology in Italy (Rome, June 2001).
By assimilating the “body” to wax and the soul to the “image” on the wax, Aristotle explicitly emphasized their unity but separation in substance. In his definition, the soul can only be known through the functions and acts of the body. This is because, due to its predisposition for accepting the soul, the body receives its essence, existential constitution, and, in other words, first perfection or entelecheia from the soul and turns into a tool for the acts performed by the soul. That is, the soul grants life, actuality, and form to the body and is practically connected to and in union with the body. All actions performed by the body are in fact attributed to the soul, and, without the soul, the body is lifeless and is not a human body. This theory was later completed and brought to culmination by Ibn Sīnā and other Iranian philosophers.

Mullā Sadrā, however, presented a third theory. He believed that, in contrast to the ideas of Plato and the Illuminationists (Ishrāqīs), the soul is corporeal and material when it is created, oozes from the matter of the body, and then makes a “form” for itself. Also, contrary to what Peripatetic philosophers believed in, the soul is not a passive and motionless substance; rather, it is a substance which, like time, enjoys motion in its essence. In fact, time is basically the outcome of the soul’s motion.

At the same time, Mullā Sadrā agreed with the Peripatetics’ definition of the soul. However, he criticized them on the grounds that for them the soul, although an immaterial substance, could unite with the body without being commensurate with it. He found it a contradiction because two things one of which totally material and one totally immaterial can never be united. Moreover, according to the Peripatetics, the soul is simple, whereas anything that is not a composite cannot be created because

createdness is due to being potential, while being simple means being actual and lacking potency.

Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory of the soul can be regarded as a synthesis of the two famous historical theories mentioned above. In fact, he tried to reconcile them with each other, and this was something that Fārābī failed to accomplish. In his *al-Jamʿ bayn al-raʾyayn*, Fārābī tried hard to reconcile the ideas of Plato and Aristotle and to bridge the wide gap between them, but he did not gain any success in this regard. However, Mullā Ṣadrā stipulates in his *al-Asfār* that, by his theory, he managed to bring together the ideas of Plato and the Peripatetics concerning the issue of the createdness and pre-eternity of the soul.\(^4\)

Here, we will present a summary of Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory in five parts. However, a complete explanation of this theory, which he himself has discussed in more than 1000 pages, demands more time and space. These five parts consist of the following:

1. What is the soul (the nature of the soul)?
2. How does the soul come into existence?
3. What is the quality of the body-soul relation?
4. What are the faculties and affections of the soul?
5. What is the final destiny of the soul?

Part One: What Is the Soul?

Mullā Ṣadrā accepted Aristotle’s definition of the soul, which is as follows: the soul is the first “entelechy” of the body in order to enable it to actualize its potentials.\(^5\) For him, the soul is an immaterial, essentially

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5. *Entelechie* in Greek and *Perfectihobia* in Latin.
unfolded, and indestructible substance which is not of the type of matter and material things. It gives life to the body in order to use it as a tool to perform its acts (which are either of the type of perceptions or physical and muscular activities).

The immaterial soul is not contained in the matter of the body, and the body is not its receptacle; however, it accompanies the body and is tied to and captured by it. Therefore, Mullā Sadrā believes that the soul enjoys two aspects: it is immaterial and of the type of separate substances in essence, and corporeal and in unity with the body in terms of act and conduct. According to him, it is not a problem if one thing enjoys two opposite aspects; that is, to be immaterial and a separate substance, on the one hand, and to accompany matter, on the other. Unlike other heavenly souls, the human soul is worldly in origin, needs matter, and depends on it.

Unlike other philosophers, Mullā Sadrā does not regard man’s soul as being fixed, motionless, and unchanging and having only one degree of existence. Rather, he maintains that it enjoys growth and motion in substance and essence and continually moves towards perfection.\(^6\) Generally speaking, we can refer to three general stages for the soul in Mullā Sadrā’s theory:

1. the soul before nature
2. the soul with matter and nature
3. the soul after departing matter and nature

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\(^6\) Ibid., p. 346.
Part Two: How Does the Soul Come into Being?

The importance and novelty of Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory lies in the solution it provides to this problem, which is the main focus of this paper. He argues,

Since the human soul needs matter to originate and come into being, it uses the hidden potential and predisposition in the body that is able to develop the soul in itself (which can be likened to a fire hidden within a stone), and like, one of the body organs, originates along with the body.

In other words, the human body, because of its nature, needs a supreme soul other than the vegetative and animal souls, so that it may develop its specific capacities and make them flourish.\(^7\)

That is why the predisposition for possessing the soul has been left in the body. The soul must come into the realm of being in a way and reside in its natural abode.

At this point and in an ontological argument, Mullā Ṣadrā demonstrates that it is not necessary to prove that the soul has an existence separate from the body, for both of them exist through the same existence. Since the existence of the body is evident, the existence of the soul is also demonstrated. This is because the soul is one of the potentials of the body. Therefore, at the beginning of the appearance of the soul and body, the existence of the soul is not separate from the body in the same way that the existence of an accident is the same as the substance in which it is realized. However, the difference is that once the substance perishes, the accident is inevitably destroyed, but the soul does not perish with the annihilation of the body. This is because the way in which the

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\(^7\) al-Asfār, vol. 8, p. 402.
soul grows and develops itself is other than that of the body. In fact, although they are united in origination in terms of subsistence, they change through two parallel existences.

At the beginning of life, the soul is only a potential or “faculty” for the body which is actualized and attains external existence through the trans-substantial motion of matter. However, once it comes into being, it separates itself from the body and follows its own specific path of growth and development (which is different from that of bodily growth) in order to attain its ultimate and “transcendent” perfection.

From another point of view, the human body can experience two types of development in the course of and by means of its trans-substantial motion: first, the material and corporeal development of the body which helps its growth and perfection and finally ends with old age and death, second, the immaterial development which takes place inside and along with the body and creates the soul or the human self.

In Mullâ Sadra’s view, after its origination and appearance, the soul becomes the owner of the body as “I” or the “human self” and makes the body continue its life along with itself. He has an interesting idea in this regard and says, “The body is not the carrier of the soul; rather, it is the soul that carries the body and takes it with itself on the road of life, as the wind moves the ship not vice versa.”

The question here is that if the soul and the body are two separate things, then their unity will be wrong, and if they are one and united, the soul cannot be considered independent of the body and, particularly, its opposite

8. Accordingly, he believes that the human acts which are jointly performed by the body and soul are proof of their unity. If, as held by Descartes, they are two different substances, one can never attribute the same act to two independent agents.

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in separation from matter. Now, how is it possible for something to be both immaterial and material and not to lead to contradiction!

The Peripatetics believed that, like any other *hyle* and form, the body and the soul are two substances which, although different, are in need of each other. However, there was still the problem that there must be a kind of commensurability between the *hyle* and form in their being material or immaterial. The Peripatetics’ theory could not solve this problem because although they believed that both the *hyle* and form enjoy a material aspect and are not separate, they maintained that the soul is a synthesis of those two material substances.

Khwâjah Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī, another prominent Iranian philosopher, asked one of his contemporary philosophers (Khusrawshâhī, as discussed in detail in Mullà Şadrâ’s books), if the soul has been created from matter, which, as we know, is mortal, why do they consider the soul immaterial and immortal? Moreover, how do they consider a material body the “container of possibility” and the existence of an immaterial substance opposite to the body?

Nevertheless, Mullà Şadrâ solved this problem. The importance of Mullà Şadrâ’s theory lies in the solution it provides for this problem. Based on the principle of the trans-substantial motion, he demonstrated that, even for a material phenomenon (i.e. the body) that is susceptible to becoming immaterial, it is possible to gradually develop an immaterial form through the trans-substantial motion.

Before demonstrating this issue based on his own method, Mullà Sadrâ first proved the weakness of the arguments of the Peripatetics (as well as Illuminationists). He saw no contradiction between the soul’s corporeality and its potential for becoming spiritual (through attaining rational grades). We might not call it the soul even when it is corporeal, however, we cannot
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deny that the human “self” and its intellectual growth are separate from bodily growth.¹⁰

In Persian gnostic literature, the human soul’s leaving the material level towards the vegetative level, and leaving the vegetative embryonic level towards the animal level and coming to possess motion have been likened to death. This is also the case with crossing the boundary of animality and entering the domain of humanity. At each level between vegetation and animal as well as that between an animal and human, man crosses a boundary which is considered death comparing to the previous level and birth comparing to the next one. Rûmi, the great Iranian gnostic and poet, says:

I died as inanimate matter and arose a plant,
I died as a plant and rose again an animal.
I died as an animal and arose a man,
Why then should I fear to become less by dying?

According to Mullâ Šadrâ, the transformation of the soul and its development from corporeality towards becoming a plant, an animal, and a human being are similar to the changes in coal and iron due to heat. Heating them is similar to the origination of vegetative acts; their becoming red hot is similar to the origination of animal acts; their catching fire is like the origination of the rational faculty. All these phenomena are in fact the different forms of the same evolutionary process of objects.¹¹

He calls these transformations the “grades of the soul”¹² and divides them into two groups: apriori and aposteriori transformations and grades. He calls corporeality, vegetativeness, and animality “apriori” grades and the

¹⁰. Therefore, not all the people who have bodily growth attain spiritual perfection of the soul and remain at the boundary between an animal and a human being.
¹¹. al-Asfär, vol. 8, p. 35.
¹². Ibid., p. 378.
change of the soul into passive, actual, and active intellects the “aposteriori”
evolutions and grades of objects.

In Mullā Ṣadrā’s view, all the apriori and aposteriori grades of
the soul are the inseparable parts of the human soul. However, the
difference is that his previous grades prepare the ground for the soul to
go through its later rational and immaterial evolutions in order to attain
perfection.

These two groups of grades are opposite to each other, and the
strength of one is tantamount to the weakness of the other. When the
vegetative and animal faculties are weakened, the soul gains power, and that
is why the soul separates from the body and does not die when it dies.
Rather, by turning its back to the body and animal and vegetative faculties,
which we interpret as “death”, the soul becomes free like a bird freed from
the cage.13

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Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory is based on a series of premises through the
trans-substantial motion. Therefore, in order to explain it more thoroughly,
we will cast a look at these premises.

Premise 1: Matter is in no way static but enjoys perpetual
dynamism and motion in its substance and accidents. Motion is inherent in
matter and exists all over the material world.

Premise 2: There is a potential and susceptibility hidden in every
material existent which is the ultimate aim of its creation. In the matter of
human body the potential for the origination of the “immaterial soul” is
hidden, and this potential needs the trans-substantial motion of matter in
order to surface and show itself.

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Premise 3: The community of two or more things in the same matter does not denote the community of their natural and ultimate ends. That is why both a plant and animal come into being from matter, breathe, feed, and reproduce but one becomes an animal and attains an animal soul, which can move and go from one place to another, while vegetation is not so.

Likewise, animals and human beings, although both are capable of motion and sharing all vegetative faculties, follow two different and natural ends. This is because man is susceptible to becoming a human and can attain this perfection through the trans-substantial motion.

Based on these premises, Mullā Ṣadrā concluded the following:

1. The matter or the *hyle* of the soul is the same as that of the body (unlike the idea of the Peripatetics who considered *hyle* specifically for the body and assumed that the soul was only form). From the same matter two existents come into being parallel to each other but following two different ways and two different ontological ends. The context for the development of both existents – the body and soul – is the trans-substantial motion of matter. However, the soul receives its food and growth from the five-fold senses and corporeal feelings, while the body owes its survival to the soul’s survival. Unlike the Illuminationists’ theory stating that the soul is a heavenly and divine truth coming towards matter, Mullā Ṣadrā says that, at the beginning, the soul is a material truth moving towards divinity (spirituality).  

2. Although at the beginning of creation the soul is born in matter and has a material form, it is not purely material. Rather, it is on the borderline between material and immaterial things. In Mullā Ṣadrā’s

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15. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 13; *al-Shawāhid al-rubēbiyyah*, p. 213; *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, p. 536. Mullā Ṣadrā has a general principle for this borderline and says, “All the different types of inanimate things, vegetations and animals are connected to each other in a chain, and the end of each of these species is the horizon of other species.” *al-Asfār*, vol. 9, p. 102.
own words, “At the time of origination, the soul is in the last form of material things and the first form of perceptions.” In other words, its existence is in the last corporeal layers and the first spiritual and mental layers.\textsuperscript{16}

3. The body and soul have combined with each other in a way and made up human beings. However, this combination is other than the combination of quiddity and existence, or matter and form, or even substance and accident. However, one must pay attention to the fact that their combination is of the kind of “annexation” and not due to the combination of two substances or a substance and an accident. Rather their combination is a real one called “union combination”.\textsuperscript{17} This kind of combination existed neither in Illuminationist philosophy, nor even in the Peripatetic philosophy.\textsuperscript{18}

The empirical evidence for this unity or union is the same bilateral relation between the body and soul. This is because experience tells us that the human soul perceives bodily pain and injury, and the body shows the signs of mental problems or sorrow in itself in psycho-physiological diseases.\textsuperscript{19}

4. The quality of the body-soul combination is such that it leads to a union between them. In other words, the “I” of the body is the same “I” of the

\textsuperscript{16} al-\textit{Asfär}, vol. 8, p. 330; vol. 3, p. 330.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, vol. 5, pp. 190, 286, 289.
\textsuperscript{18} From a logical point of view, man is a rational animal because his genus is being corporeal, and his differentia is being spiritual and rational. The Peripatetic philosophy calls this the combination of matter and form. Unlike the Peripatetics, Mullâ Šadrâ does not agree that their substances are separate from each other at the beginning of creation. Rather, he argues that the rational faculty is exactly the same animal faculty that has been developed. \textit{al-Asfär}, vol. 8, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, vol. 8, p. 134.
soul, and this “I” cannot be analyzed or divided. Human being is, rather, a single unit, and this unity remains unchanged all through his life. Neither the material changes and growth of the body nor the growth and changes in the ascending degrees of the soul can disrupt its individuality and unity, exactly in the same way that the changes in a tree do not alter its reality.

Part Three: What Is the Nature of the Body-Soul Relation?

After coming into being and attaining relative independence, the soul, on account of its primary union with the body, controls it, cooperates with it, and interferes with its activities. This is because both the body and soul have certain faculties of their own and need the faculties of the other. In fact, they use each other’s faculties in order to survive. It must also be added that the changes the soul brings about in the body and its interference in bodily acts are essential and stem from the quality of the existence of the soul and even the body. These changes are in no way similar to the changes created by factors external to the body. This is a subtle point, which is a little difficult to understand.

The interference of the soul in the body is in the form of controlling it, changing it, and perfecting its nature. It is also in the form of prompting man’s voluntary acts and motions by moving the muscles of the body. However, the soul has also certain affections,
benefits from bodily faculties and utilizes the product of human senses in the workshop of its mind.  

This mutual dependence of the body and soul on each other makes the five-fold senses, which are corporal and parts of the body, start working as means of providing the universal rational and imaginal perceptions of the soul. Otherwise, it would not be able to reveal its potentials and attain knowledge, and, in Peripatetic terms, move from the level of material intellect (intellectus materialis) to the levels of intellectus in habitu, actual intellect, and intellectus adeptus. At this last stage, the human soul is connected with the Active Intellect. In fact, the body plays the role of a launch platform for the growth and perfection of the intellect.

Both the body and soul have certain affections which reflect a kind of interaction between the body and soul. For example, soulish joy and sorrow affect the body, and physical diseases and injuries affect the soul. This bilateral relation is a sign of the mutual dependence of the body and soul on each other and their unity.

Human being’s voluntary motions are originally the acts of the soul; however, they can be attributed to both the soul and the body. Of course, the movements of the body in relation to the soul are voluntary and, like God’s Acts, belong to the category of “emanation” and “production”, but the same movements are deterministic phenomena in relation to body. This is because the body plays the role of a tool and means for the soul. Therefore, the soul is, from one point of view, both “corporeally created” and corporeally

23. Mullâ Sadrâ believes that the body has two referents. One is an external and mortal body and the other is hidden in it. The latter is the real bearer of the former’s life and is directly related to the soul. al-Asfär, vol. 9, p. 98.
25. Ibid., vol. 8, p. 328.
26. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 109; vol. 7, pp. 67, 118.
27. Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 107-108.
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dominated, and, from another point of view both spiritually subsistent and spiritually rational.\textsuperscript{28}

Mullā Šadrā believes that even “perception”, which most philosophers consider to be a kind of affection of the soul, is one of the acts of the soul and affections of the body and brain (refer to the article Sense Perception by the writer).

In spite of the mutual dependence of the material body and immaterial soul on each other, Mullā Šadrā sometimes calls this relation as coexistence, accompaniment, or “togetherness”.\textsuperscript{29} He says we should never consider the soul as the contained and the body as the container. It is only the soul’s need to the body that keeps it there; however, this continues until it goes through its period of development and waiting for perfection. It is this very “waiting” or, in Mullā Šadrā’s philosophical term, “State of possibility” of the soul that, as long as it has not become purely “immaterial”, utilizes the body (during this period of its life, it is like a satellite that has not been placed in its own circuit and requires a carrier and its powers).

In Mullā Šadrā’s view, after its completion, the soul can see the realities of the external world even without depending on the eyes of the body and can have access to sensibles and intelligibles without relying on other senses. He believes that one of the great mistakes of philosophers is their belief in the sameness and static nature of the soul’s states (from the beginning to the end of its life). Mullā Šadrā’s approach is naturally rooted in his theory of the trans-substantial motion. The other philosophers who did not believe in this theory could not naturally share it and had to accept that the soul, unlike the body, which grows and develops gradually, has an unchanging and even stable state.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., vol. 8, p. 347.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., vol. 3, p. 55.
Mullā ʿAdrā calls the stage at which man is born and gradually attains bodily perfection and his soul has not reached perfection yet the stage of the “first man” and the “natural man”. He also calls the second one at which the soul grows with the help of the body, reaches perfection, and depends less on bodily senses and tools the stage of the “second man” and the “soulish man”. At this stage, a “sixth sense” comes into being in his innermost and soul that performs the tasks of all other senses.

In his view, only a few human beings can go beyond this stage and become a “rational person”. This is the same “third man”. Mullā ʿAdrā has adopted this classification from Plotinus, who divided human beings into the natural man, the soulish man, and the rational man.\(^{30}\) By man, he means the same combination of the soul and body, which, as we said before, exist through the same existence and have the same ipseity from birth until death.\(^{31}\)

**Part Four: What Are the Faculties of the Soul?**

Ibn Sīnā and the philosophers succeeding him divided the soul into vegetative, animal, and human types depending on its levels. They also said that each soul possessed certain faculties each having different types. The vegetative soul had three faculties: nourishment, growth, and reproduction.

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31. Because of its essence, the soul is unfolded and has an ipseity; however, due to its relation with the body, which is material, it is divided into various faculties. (It includes all the sensual and wrathful senses and faculties which, in terms of their belonging to the body have a specific place. Nevertheless, in terms of their belonging to the soul, they have no specific place and are absolute.) This analysis stands in no accidental contradiction to essential unity and simplicity. That is why it is said that the soul, while enjoying unfoldedness and unity, includes all faculties (refer to *al-Asfār*, vol. 9, p. 105).
The human soul has two main faculties: the locomotive faculty (which is responsible for the animal’s movements) and the perceptive faculty (which is related to its senses).\textsuperscript{32}

However, the human soul, in addition to possessing all the faculties of the vegetative and animal souls, has two other main faculties: the practical faculty and the theoretical faculty.\textsuperscript{33}

Four stages have been named for the theoretical faculty: material intellect, \textit{intellectus in habitu}, actual intellect, and \textit{intellectus adeptus}, which is the determining factor in the development of the soul and reaching the level of connection with immaterial phenomena (or separate entities).

As the vegetative faculties in human beings lead them from childhood to growth and maturity, they lead the soul from its crude and primitive (material) level to maturity, i.e. perfect man, and make it deserve the connection with the immaterial world and the supra-imaginal world, i.e. the actual intellect and the world of intellects.\textsuperscript{34}

However, the practical faculty is responsible to administer the body, protect it, and maintain its order, so that it can continue its life and generation and take the soul to its natural goal.\textsuperscript{35} Mullā Șadrā sometimes called the practical faculty the Active Intellect, and the perceptive faculty the passive faculty.\textsuperscript{36}

The above-mentioned faculties – in terms of their temporal priority and importance for human beings – are like a chain that starts from the vegetative faculty and ends in theoretical faculty (and the acquired intellect). The important point here is that each of these faculties at any grade and at the level of practice is separable from others. However, before the soul, each

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}, vol. 8, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 8.
\end{flushleft}
is simply considered a faculty, and the soul, because of its essential simplicity, includes all of them.\footnote{Ibid., p. 129.} In fact, while maintaining the unity of its ipseity, the soul is the totality of all those faculties.

Moreover, although each of the five-fold senses or the other vegetative and animal faculties performs its own duty and specific role, all of them are the acts of the soul, not collectively, but through the true activity of the soul and in the form of its being their true agent.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 6, p. 375.}

Mullā Ṣadrā solves the problem of philosophical determinism and free will through this very ontological method. This is because, although man is the true and free doer of all of his acts, attributing them to God is also true because both of them enjoy the same ontological origin.

In the chain of the faculties of the soul and between its higher and lower grades, which, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, amount to 19,\footnote{Ibid., vol. 9, p. 373. Mullā Ṣadrā believes that, based on chapter \textit{al-Muddaththir}: 30, their number is 19 and man’s going to Heaven or Hell depends on them.} there is a kind of organized dominance. For example, the animal soul dominates the vegetative soul, and the human soul dominates both of them and the faculties subcategorized under them. The more recent the time of its realization and coming into being, the higher its level and the greater its strength will be.\footnote{\textit{al-Asfūr}, vol. 8, pp. 51, 225, 255.}

Another point which might be pointed out concerning the faculties of the body and soul is the category of the passions of the soul. Here, we are referring to passions as opposed to act not in a sense comprising both (as intended by Descartes in his book).\footnote{\textit{(Traite) des Passions des l’ame}.}
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As mentioned previously, Mullā Sadrā believes that, in addition to the specific passions of the soul, all the passions of the body are also among those of the soul because he believes in the unity of the two. That is why the human spirit, although not as much as the body, is influenced by physical diseases, injuries, and damages.

Part Five: What Are the Final States of the Soul?

One of the philosophical problems that has remained unresolved in some or even in most schools of philosophy is the human soul and its fate. In Mullā Sadrā’s school, because of his belief in the principle of the trans-substantial motion, it is a scientific necessity to pay attention to the final states of the human soul. It is also necessary from a theological point of view to solve the problem of the posthumous states of the soul and to demonstrate the existence of another world.

In his view, the motion of the soul and its process of development is not separate from the world of creation and other physical phenomena. Rather, it is in harmony with and accompanies the general process of the global motion of the substance of matter; a motion that begins with matter but leads to other-than-matter and something beyond it. Therefore, he believes in resurrection, the Hereafter, and embodiment (a kind of return to matter) not only for the human soul, which is of the lineage of matter, but also for animals, vegetation, and inanimate beings.

Another strange point in the phenomenology of the human soul is that posthumous states and certain realities such as Heaven, Hell, joy, and torture are all created directly by the human soul itself, are rooted in the creativity of the soul, and, according to the religious law, are the consequences of human being’s “worldly acts”. Here, man is exactly

42. al-Asfār, vol. 4, p. 157; vol. 7, p. 66.
43. Ibid., vol. 7, p. 67.
like a farmer who plants the seeds in winter and harvests the crops in summer.

In some of his books, Mullâ Šadrâ explains this phenomenon as discussed above and from the viewpoints of Illuminationist philosophy of Socrates’ school of thought. However, he has also discussed it from the viewpoint of the Peripatetic philosophy through the motions of the soul and intellect.

The issue of the final state of the soul in the Peripatetic philosophy can be posed in the form of a question about the quality of the human soul’s transition from the animal stage, i.e. leaving man’s shared features with animals (nāsūt state) behind, to a higher stage. This stage must be specifically for human and can be interpreted as sacredness or holiness, and, even in this spiritual process of the development of the soul, we should be able to follow its extension far into Dominion (malakūt) which is close to the stage of divinity.

Islamic philosophers explained the soul’s process of development traditionally (as extracted from Aristotelian philosophy) based on the soul’s epistemological and “intentional” process at the four levels of the material intellect, intellects in habitu, actual intellect, and intellectus adeptus. These four stages were sometimes stated in other forms; for example, Fārābī believes that the material intellect was almost the same as intellectus in habitu, or Alexander of Aphrodisias called the third intellect the Active Intellect.

Before Mullâ Šadrâ, philosophers considered an immaterial spirit and independent intellect as the mover of the development of the soul which governs the world of matter and called it the Active Intellect. Like a powerful force of gravity, it pulled the soul towards itself, actualized its potentials, was its source of inspiration, and taught it knowledge and

44. Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 413, 419.
wisdom. Philosophers assimilated it to light because if light does not shine at colorful objects, they will actually have no color. The shinning of the light of the actual intellect at human being also actualizes the hidden potentials of his soul. In this way, it causes their spiritual development and frees them from the material stage (or the level of pure potency) to actuality. It will finally leave them after death and, if successful in escaping the darkness of animality and not falling in Hell or Socrates’ “Tartarus”, the soul will turn the Active Intellect into a heavenly existent. Early philosophers sometimes referred to the Active Intellect as “father”.

Although Mullâ Šadrâ agrees with the interference of the Active Intellect in the spiritual development of the soul and the human intellect, he believes that the natural and material mover of this motion of the soul, as mentioned before, is the same hidden and trans-substantial motion of matter and resides in matter itself. However, he has sometimes referred to this essential motion of matter, following the method of gnostics, as the soul’s love of light, goodness, and pure beauty and sometimes as the hyle’s love and desire for form, which can be interpreted as the soul’s “creative motion”.

According to Mullâ Šadrâ’s justification, the trans-substantial motion of the soul from the material intellect does not end with reaching the intellectus adeptus because, as the fourth level of the soul’s spiritual life, it is the level of the connection and union with the Active Intellect or the same “Holy Spirit” which philosophers of ancient Iran called the “Soul-giver”, gnostics call the unfolded existence, and the divine

45. Mullâ Šadrâ has assimilated it to the sun, eye, and eyesight. al-Asfâr, vol. 3, p. 462.
46. Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 413, 462; vol. 9, p. 143.
47. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 176.
48. Ibid., p. 233.
49. al-Asfâr, p. 176; vol. 7, p. 24; vol. 8, p. 398; vol. 9, p. 142.
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religions call Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, and the divine relation. The human soul and spirit, in unity with the Active Intellect and benefiting from its light and knowledge, turn into the Holy Spirit and, according to Henry Corbin, *intelligible sacculum* or *aion*.

In Mullâ Sadrâ’s words, if the *intellectus adeptus* is different from the Active Intellect, it is only because the soul in the form of the former is captivated by and limited to matter. However, the Active Intellect is a form without matter and, while being independent, it can unite with each and every developed soul and grant them a heavenly form by virtue of its unfolded and all-inclusive existence.

In order to complete this discussion, we must resort to Islamic gnosis to which Mullâ Sadrâ paid great attention. In the discussions related to the love of existents, he usually turned to absolute beauty and perfection. One of the famous speakers of Islamic gnosis, Jalâl al-Din Rûmi, referred to these stages as birth and death in his famous *Mathnawi*, as previously mentioned.

In the view of Muslim gnostics, the developmental motion and journey of the soul does not come to an end by reaching the Holy Spirit, and its mover, i.e. its love of absolute beauty, which originally belongs to Almighty God, does not ever rest in peace. Therefore, after connecting to and uniting with the Active Intellect or the “Soul-giver”, the soul is not satisfied and, in order to reach the threshold of divinity, which is called “attainment” and “annihilation” in the Persian gnostic literature, lovingly continues its journey and process of perfection. According to Rûmi, it becomes “what can never be imagined”.

50. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 127.
51. Ibid., p. 461.
52. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 140.
This point has also been stated in a poetic form in the hadiths and texts quoted from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and his successor, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) as follows:

God has a wine that He serves to his friends. When they drink it, they become drunk and joyful, and this drunkenness purifies them like a piece of gold in fire. This purity makes them turn to their Beloved God, and they connect with Him in a way that there remains no difference between the lover and the beloved.53

The wine and drunkenness here mean the same attraction of man’s spiritual process of development, and man’s purity means the dominance of the immaterial soul over the body’s corporeality. Moreover, connection means the harmony with the Active Intellect and, even higher than that, with a divine order which is referred to as the “world of Divine Names and Attributes”.

Mullā Ṣadrā interpreted this relationship as four spiritual journeys in a philosophical-gnostic framework and called his greatest work al-Ḥikmāt al-mutaʿāliyah fiʾl-asfār al-arba’ah (The Four Journeys in the Transcendent Philosophy). He himself was drunk with this very wine and the pre-eternal beauty all through his life, which he spent going through the same four spiritual journeys. At the end, it must be pointed out that, since the Divine Beauty is absolute and endless, the attraction of its love and the journey of the soul does not stop even after attaining the holy and divine spirit, which has been referred to as “observing the Divine Beauty”. In fact, there is no end to this divine and glorious love relationship.

53. Fayḍ, Kalamāt maknūnah, p. 75.
“Man’s Creativity and Vicegerency”

in Islamic Philosophy and Gnosis*

In a general classification, creativity can be divided into two types: firstly, what is mainly dealt with in psychology and means “innovation” and novelty of thought; secondly, one which is more philosophical and is always used in Islamic philosophy as creation from non-existence (which is probably synonymous with creatio ex nihilo). In the present paper, when we speak of creativity, we mean the second.

In Islamic philosophy, creation from non-existence and creation from matter are clearly distinguished from each other. Creation from non-existence is called ibdā’, and creation from matter is called khalq.1 It seems that creativity is more consistent with making or creation from non-existence.

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Before becoming familiar with Alexandrian and Greek philosophy, Muslims became familiar with the term *ibdā*’ for the first time in the Holy Qur’an, where God refers to two kinds of creation for Himself. The first is *khalq*, which means the creation of material things from other material things, which is naturally done by other than Him. The second, which is much more important than the first, is *ibdā*’ or the creation of something from no-thing, which is subtly distinguished from *khalq* in philosophy, in general, and in Islamic gnosis, in particular.

The Holy Qur’an refers to creation through *ibdā*’ by the term command (*amr*) and sometimes by the term “*kun*” (be!), which is technically called “existential *kun*”. The result of the command “*kun*” is the external existence and objective realization of what God’s will wants. Gnostics and Mullā Şadrā call this term “*wujūdi kun*” (existential be).

Something similar to this “existential *kun*” can be found in ancient Iranian philosophy or the same Illuminationist philosophy, which is almost the same as what we know nowadays as *logos*. *Logos* has a verbal aspect and an imperative state. It is also the secret behind the creation of things from non-existence. At the same time, it is the “intellect”, the law, and the spirit. In Christianity, it incarnates in Christ’s body as its external referent.

Following the Holy Qur’an, Islamic gnosis and Mullā Şadrā’s school of thought consider God to have two aspects: creation (*khalq*) and command (*amr*), for creation, whether from pure non-existence or from

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2. The Holy Qur’an, at the end of Ṭā-ṣīn chapter.  
3. Durant, W., *History of Civilization*, Persian translation, vol. 1, p. 425, “Logos is the same pure nature referred to by Ibn Sinā, which was later called ‘Amshaspandan’.” Also, refer to the word “Bahman” in ancient Persian.  
4. This term was most probably introduced to Christianity by Origen, Plotinus’s friend.  
5. It is said that Heraclitus was the first to have used this word. He believed that all the objects of the world have been created from *logos*.  

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matter, is performed by God. Creation and command can be called production and creativity, respectively.

In order to explore the philosophical roots of creativity in human beings, two major points should be taken into consideration: first, the same Divine attribute, i.e. creation from pure non-existence, which is called amr (command), second, the principle of man’s vicegerency in the sense that from among all existents of the world God has chosen man as His sole vicegerent. The relation between these two points and the manifestation of creativity in man as an exclusive characteristic is the theme of the present paper.

In the Holy Qur’an, the issue of God’s vicegerency is narrated in the midst of the story of the creation of Adam. In al-Baqarah chapter: 30, we read “Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth’,” and in the same chapter, verse 34, we read that He ordered all the angels and heavenly beings to prostrate themselves before Adam, “And behold, We said to the angels: ‘Bow down to Adam:’ and they bowed down: Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty,” as if in this way they officially recognized man's vicegerency.6

In Islamic tradition and other Abrahamic religions,7 it is said, “God created man in his own image.” This means that man, who is God’s vicegerent and created in His image, is “God-like” and must naturally bear some similarities to Him.8

After perceiving this similarity, the smallest sign of the existence of divine vicegerency and man’s being God-like is that, like God, he should also be able to create, but not in the sense of making and producing objects

7. The Torah.
8. Ibn ‘Arabi, Risālah al-tanbihāt, p. 52: “And know that every man has a share of God’s vicegerency…”
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because even animals have this ability as well. An example in this regard is their nest-making behavior. Therefore, constructing buildings or any other kind of making cannot be regarded a species-specific characteristic of human beings. Thus the creation reserved for man should be considered a kind of ibdā’ or creation from pure non-existence, which is the real meaning of creativity.

In other words, given the two aspects of khalq and amr, which exist in God’s acts, and since khalq or making from matter and shaping it is an ability witnessed even in existents lower than man, the aspect that is reserved for God’s acts and those of His vicegerent is amr or creation from non-existence.

This point is confirmed by the prophetic ādīth in which God addressing His human vicegerent says, “Whatever We want to create, we say “Be!” and it will be, and We make thee so that you say, “Be!” and it will be.”

Mullah Šadrā introduces the aspect of ibdā’ in the discussions related to the Divine word and says,

The first word in the world was the very term “kun” (that is, the Divine command), from which the world came into being, and beings wore the garment of existence. Hence, the world is the same “Divine word”, although of various levels and degrees.

This Divine word and command cannot be violated.

God has another kind of “word” and “command”, and that is the religion and Book that He sent in order to guide human beings, who are not

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obliged to follow them by nature. Rather, they are intended to test people and benefit them.

Due to his vicegerency, man also enjoys these two aspects of will and command. The former is genetic and natural and can become a source of creation, which we call creation. The commands issued by man to his muscles and organs in his voluntary acts are an example of this. Creation appears in man’s commands to others, as well as in his prohibiting them from doing something. However, these commands might not be followed by the addressees. In this regard, Mullà Sadrà says, “If man concentrates on his powers, his will and wish will be influential, and what he wills will come into being.”

Accordingly, creativity, in its philosophical sense, is the common point between God and man, and the mystery behind it is the vicegerency of God, which can be found in no existent other than man. Logically speaking, God’s vicegerent must have this characteristic and ability in order to perform his duties regarding vicegerency. Man’s “vicegerency” is the key to the secret of “creativity” in man and its allocation to him from among all existents. If the issue of Divine vicegerency were not at stake here, the existence of creativity in man could not have a philosophical justification.

In a deeper inquiry, gnostics regard man’s position in the world as even higher and more important than this, for in Islamic gnosis, the manifestation of Divine vicegerency is fully related to the issue of the perfect man. He is the only existent who, next to God, enjoys superiority and can rule this world; he holds all the strings of existence in his hand, and he has all the attributes and features of other existents. That is why he is called the “all-embracing being” and the “intermediate world”, that is, the intermediary between God and His Divine Effusion to the world.

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This primary reality can probably be regarded the same as the Greek *logos*, which has its roots in ancient Iranian *Ishrāqi* (Illuminationist) philosophy, where it was considered as both the spirit of world and a spirit in man.

The other aspect of the perfect man’s being is the manifestation of love in the world, since, based on Islamic gnosis, love and beauty, and beauty and perfection are concomitant with each other. Since God is Absolute Perfection and Beauty, and since beauty originates in perfection, He is both the Absolute Beauty and the Creator of Love. Therefore, man’s nature or the same “all-embracing being and intermediate world” is intertwined with absolute love, one end of which is connected to Absolute Perfection and Beauty and the other to the creatures of the world. Thus that Absolute Beauty and Perfection becomes the origin of being and love, that is, the cause of all beings’ movement towards perfection and beauty. That is why in Persian gnostic literature love is regarded an essential attribute for man.11

Since we do not intend to enter this field of gnostic issues, we will return to ordinary man who, as mentioned before, due to his divine vicegerency and bearing the responsibility for Divine Trust, has the ability to create. The faculty of imagination, which plays a significant role in his art, science, and ordinary life is one of the ordinary examples of man’s creativity. All human beings have the faculty of imagination, and all of them are, to a greater or lesser extent, capable of creating various concepts, images, phenomena, and mental existents in their minds in the light of their faculty of imagination.

11. The radiance of your goodness manifested in eternity/ Love appeared and set fire to the mountain, earth and sea/ Your face radiated and still saw angels were loveless setting this fire on man/ was then your zealous decree(see the last part of the present paper), http://www.hafizonlove.com/divan/04/152.htm.
One of the important achievements of Mullà Şadrâ’ philosophy is the demonstration of “mental existence”, which means the creative ability of the soul (and the mind) to create mental beings and phenomena, whether they exist in the external world or they are merely created by man’s mind and soul. For example, man is able to visualize impossible or nonexistent concepts and judgments and even “non-existence” itself in his mind and make affirmative or negative judgments about them. These forms depend on man and are “emanative” rather than “immanent” (which might have entered man’s mind). This is the very creativity which is similar to that of God.

The great Muslim gnostic, Ibn ‘Arabi, said that imagination is man’s realm of his absolute and never-ending creativity. As a matter of fact, if the objective and external world is the realm of God’s power and creativity, the mental world and imagination is the never-ending realm of man’s creativity.

Imagination is the origin of all artistic creation, such as poetry and literature. It is this very feature that grants sincerity and freshness to man’s life, makes cultures, literature, history, and civilizations. Even philosophy is indebted to this human faculty.

Man makes innovations in the world of imagination and continually creates some phenomena from non-existence. Poets, architects, designers, writers and all those who are involved in innovation, seek help from their faculty of imagination, which has led human civilization to bloom.

Mullâ Şadrâ says, “God has created man’s soul in a way that it is capable of making forms and objects without relying on his external senses and have them realized.” As we read in the interpretation of Yâ-sîn chapter

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13. His preceding philosophers regarded perception as the indwelling of the image of an object in the mind, as well as reflection and affection.
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in the Qur’an,14 “Man has a world in the realm of his absolute sovereignty where, like in the objective world, there is substance, accident, matter, and element, and the creation of all of them depends on man’s power and will.”

The issue of man’s imagination and the fact that it has been exclusively granted to him are not limited to the ability of ibdā’ and making in his own world; rather, there is a power in man by which he is even able to grant objectivity to the mental beings in his imagination in the outside world and give them external existence.

This idea is accepted in Islamic gnosis and all the Abrahamic religions. Moreover, the historical experience of almost all Eastern religions and philosophies confirm it and consider it an undeniable fact. Even some Western schools of philosophy accepted it.15 Accordingly, the Prophets’ miracles are instances of the manifestation of this divine power in man which God has allowed him to use.

In addition to the Prophets, even true saints were always able to carry out ibdā’ and make extraordinary creations. This is a perfect loci of the manifestation of creativity and is called taṣarruf (domination) or karāmat (miracle) in Islamic terminology. Persian gnostic literature is full of such extraordinary acts which have been performed by them even after their death in order to comply with the demands of those who visit their tombs to seek help from them.16

14. Commentary on Yā-sīn chapter, verses, 43-44
16. Mullā Sadrā, Maftūḥ al-ghayb, p. 474, trans., Muhammad Khwajawi: “Man’s soul is of the kind of the heavenly realm and the substance of the divine nature. If the soul adorns itself with Allah’s morals and gains similarity to the intellects and souls, it will be able to do what they do, in the same way that melted iron does what fire does and has the same qualities.” Mullā Sadrā, al-Asfār, vol. 9, p. 82: “Those who are qualified with Allah’s morals, their ears, eyes, hands and feet will be the manifestation of the Truth.”
Since this ability depends on piety, chastity, and faith, not everyone can be expected to possess it because those who are captives of a completely animal life are no different from animals except for food, clothing, housing, and reproduction. Not only can they show such creativities, but also some of them cannot even understand them.

The imagination’s capacity for innovation and creativity is not only a gnostic issue but also a philosophical and metaphysical one. It also holds an important place in Islamic philosophy, specifically, in Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s Transcendent Philosophy, and in order to perceive its ontological dimensions, one should first pay attention to the division of the world of existence in Islamic philosophy and gnosis and the philosophies preceding them, as well as to its relationship with man.

Ontologically, the world of existence has various levels. Its lowest and weakest level is the world of matter and the realm of the five senses, and sense perception is the weakest of all human perceptions. However, this idea is against positivism.

The next level belongs to the world of imagination or Ideas, which is in some respects similar to the world of the sense and matter; however, it is free from matter and time. There are certain phenomena which are not related to the human senses but have been frequently experienced. They are said to be perceived through what is sometimes called the sixth sense and might be related to this world.

This level of existence and this part of the spiritual world, due to its subtlety and accuracy, cannot be perceived through the five senses and material experience. Nevertheless, it exists in this very world and dominates it. In more accurate terms, the world of matter is drowned it.

A higher and more subtle level than the imaginal world, which is another part of the immaterial world, is called the world of the intellect. In this world, there is no trace of not only matter but also other quantities,
dimensions, and qualities. It dominates the other two worlds.

The hierarchy of these three levels and grades of existence is established both in the dimension of the creation of the world (which is called the arc of descent) and in the dimension of the return and perfection of creatures (which is called the arc of ascent). The world of matter is called the world of “appearance” and “presence”, and the other two immaterial worlds are called the inward or “hidden” worlds, for they are hidden from man’s senses.

Contrary to the order mentioned above, in the true order of these three worlds, the first created world is the world of the intellect, which was called Bahman in ancient Iranian philosophy and was later translated as logos in Greek. In the Holy Qur’an, it is called the “Spirit” or the “Holy Spirit” and the “Word”.

The imaginal world or the world of the soul is the second world and creature, which is called the Trustful Spirit in the Holy Qur’an. In this hierarchy, the material world or the world of the senses is at the lowest level.

Man’s perception and soul can be in relation to all these worlds and unite with them. Therefore, his soul sometimes has sense perception and establishes a relation with external existents, sometimes has imaginal perception and relates to the world of imagination, and sometimes has intellectual perception and relates to the world of the intellect. Unlike other existents, man enjoys certain faculties by which he is capable of going beyond the world of matter and sense and, without abandoning his material body, step into supra-material worlds, such as the imaginal world and the

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world of the intellect.20 This is because he is God’s vicegerent and should have sovereignty over all worlds and be connected with them.

Imagination in man is the same as imaginal perception and entering the world of Ideas.21 Considering the hierarchy of existence, it exists at the level of the world of Ideas and is immaterial (that is why the faculty of imagination is called conjunctive imagination and the world of Ideas disjunctive imagination). In other words, an imaginal existent created by man’s mind is a being between the material existent and the intellectual one. Hence, if man concentrates his will power on something and enjoys spiritual strength, he can change the imaginal existent into a material and sensible one and grant it external existence. The examples in this regard include the extraordinary acts performed by the Prophets and saints.

The system of this creativity and objective and external making of things and phenomena is based on the correspondence between man’s spiritual degrees and the ontological levels in the world. In other words, the secret behind man’s creativity is the relationship between the “conjunctive imagination” or the human world of Ideas and the “disjunctive imagination” or the world of Ideas, celestial kingdom, and the world of souls. The correspondence between the conjunctive and disjunctive imaginations is the means relating the mind to the outside, subjectivity to objectivity, and noumenon to phenomenon.

As we saw in the division of the levels of existence and the three worlds, each material phenomenon also exists in the other two worlds but with an existence befitting them. In order for each material phenomenon to come into existence, it must have had a rational existence in the world of the intellect and then assumed an Idea existence in the world of Ideas. In this

20. Ibid.
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way, it can appear in the world of matter and sense. In other words, the “noumenon” of each phenomenon exists there.

An imaginal existent may change into a sensible and external one through an intermediary, such as man’s direct and concentrated will, exactly in the same way that it is realized through the direct Divine Will. However, man’s making and creativity has two levels: the first level takes place in man’s soul and mind, which is the same as man’s personal imagination and is called disjunctive imagination. In other words, man creates what he wishes to create first in his imagination.\(^{22}\)

Then, with the help of concentrated will (or \textit{ardor} in gnostic terminology) – which is acquired through ascetic practice and worship – he gives it an imaginal form, i.e. takes it to the disjunctive imagination or the world of Ideas. Once the form created by man’s imagination acquires its natural and cosmological substance and noumenon, with the help of the same will, man brings it from the world of disjunctive imagination to the world of matter and gives it the form of a phenomenon or an event so that others can also see it.

Since creativity in man takes place through imagination, and since it is the harmony between man’s existence and the levels of existence or the nature of the world and their mutual relationship that inspires man’s imagination, it is necessary to refer to the two terms “macroanthropos”, and “microanthropos” in order to show the continuous relationship between man and the world (whether the material world or one more inclusive than that).

In Islamic philosophy and gnosis, “macroanthropos” has been frequently referred to. Macroanthropos is the collection of the world as a

\(^{22}\) Suhrwardi considers the two steps as one and the two types of imagination the same, i.e. the disjunctive imagination. Mullà Ṣadrā, \textit{al-Asfār}, vol. 1, p. 302; \textit{al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah}, p. 197.
single and living existent. We might view it as an equivalent for the word “cosmos” or something different from it. Against the macroanthropos is the microanthropos. Microanthropos is this very corporeal and material man who is a member of one of the human societies and lives on the Earth.

In gnostic literature, man is regarded as a symbol of the major world or “macroanthropos” and whatever exists in it can also be found in man. In a poem by Imām ‘Alī (the first leader of the Shi‘ah and the successor of the Holy Prophet (s)), who is regarded the first founder of Islamic philosophy and gnosis, we read:

Thy remedy is in thee, while thou art not aware;
And thy pain is from thee, and thou seest not;
Thinkst thou that thou art a minor world?
Whereas a major world is hidden in thee.

These two major and minor worlds enjoy several similarities. There is also a kind of harmony between man and the big world (or macroanthropos) so that one can even hear the echo of the major world in man and the hidden harmony between the two anthropoi. This can even be likened to resonance in physics.  

A. Aesthetics and Artistic Creativity

The sense of beauty and its perception are natural to man. In most of the things which we regard as beautiful, in spite of their differences,

23. Muslim gnostics believed that mountains, rivers, and other material and sense phenomena of the world also existed in man’s body.
24. “The people of intuition have said that man’s soul represents the breath of the Merciful i.e. the first created (logos) and its echo.” Mullá Sadrā, Commentary on Yā-sīn chapter, p. 464; al-Asfār, vol. 7, p. 4; Mafātīḥ al-ghayb, p. 18.
there is a common aspect that makes us call all of them beautiful and react to them with pleasure and even love. Here it becomes clear that, in general, beauty is not something conventional or related to habit or errors committed by the senses; rather, it is something real. Its instances, however, sometimes differ from each other due to people’s tastes and their beauty becomes relative.

Does the perception of beauty require acquired knowledge, pure intelligence, or knowledge by presence? What effect does beauty have that other things do not? What is it that makes beauty, beauty and art, art? Finally, what is the difference between aesthetics and natural sciences?

We must say in response that this sense of aesthetics is, in fact, the same as perceiving the natural order and perfection of the universe (or cosmos). Since perfection’s other name is beauty, influenced by the harmony between the nature of the world and macroanthropos, man enjoys all that perfection and beauty and their various manifestations in objects, living things, mankind, and art (the works that man creates under the influence of that harmony) and is attracted to them (thus the criterion for recognizing beauty and art is taste and is located in people’s hearts).

Beauty and Perfection are two of God’s Attributes. They are manifest both in man and in the universe. We read in a prophetic hadith, “God is Beautiful and likes beauty.” Since man is the vicegerent of God and has latent divine attributes, he likes beauty, and since both macroanthropos and microanthropos are the manifestations of Divine Beauty, man’s love for beauty can, in fact, be traced back to his love for God.

In other words, beauty is a Divine attribute, and since the world is the mirror of Divine Beauty, a uniquely coherent, perfect, and beautiful

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25. The term “aesthetics” (derived from aesthete) meant perception and was later used to refer to aesthetics or, in fact, the perception of beauty. Apparently, it was first used by Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762).
order governs it. While being a part of the macroanthropos, man is also its manifestation (for both man and the world are the manifestations of Divine Attributes) and is in harmony with it. Man is, indeed, the reflection of the Divine Command and Speech and should reflect the inner essence of the world in himself. Therefore, he sees the beauty of the world in the mirror of his existence or finds it as an inspiration in himself. And since he is able to “speak”, he reveals what he has seen or received as inspiration through words or acts and reflects all those beauties in them.

Like God, man can grant a form to matter and create something new, which we call artistic creativity. Art, which is the manifestation of one of the different types of man’s creativity, is a gift revealing the hidden aspects and beauties of the world that man’s conscience presents to others.

Man and the world are the Divine arts manifesting the hidden beauties of the Absolute Being, and man’s art is, in fact, a copy of that Divine art. Through his art, man shows his spirit, in the same way that God has revealed His Beauty through creating the world.

Unfortunately, the near-sightedness of some materialist, pseudo-materialist and positivist philosophers has prevented them from seeing these facts or made them deny the realities. That is why these schools have not been able to learn about philosophical, intellectual, and aesthetic principles and, as a result, even failed to introduce a scientific justification for many phenomena such as telepathy and magnetism, which are out of the domain of normal, and sense experiences.

B. Ethics

Ethics is another puzzle that can only be solved through accepting the harmony between the macroanthropos and the microanthropos and the
Man on the Path of Being correspondence between the ontological levels of man and the world. Ethical principles are not a collection of social conventions, habits, and customs; rather, they refer to the rules dominating man’s primordial nature (fitrah). Therefore, they are completely objective, real, absolute, and fixed, and relativity has no way in them.

Ethical rules are *a priori* facts and hidden in man’s nature (fitrah) as a reflection of the truth and reality. If they grow naturally, they will provide the context for human ethics.

Ethics and beauty share the same origin; however, beauty pertains to objects and phenomena, while ethics pertains to human acts and events. Beauty is static, while morality is dynamic, and, logically speaking, aesthetics is of the type of concept, while ethics is of the type of judgment.

For example, philosophers regard justice as essential beauty, and injustice and oppression as ugliness. They also maintain that “good”, which is the same as “perfection” is the end of each ethical act. This reveals the relationship between ethics and beauty, as well as their relationship with the realities existing in the macroanthropos. Some philosophers believe that taste is the criterion for beauty and the intellect (*nous*) as the criterion for ethics; however, based on what was said above, both of them should be known by the same criterion.

When reading Socrates and Plato, we come across the relationship between moral acts and beauty: human beings instinctively seek “good” in the same way that they love beauty and are fascinated by it. All people like justice, freedom, goodness, and righteousness and are unanimous concerning their beneficence. However, the question is, what is the reason behind this unanimity?

This secret cannot be discovered without understanding the real and close relationship between man and the world. Likewise, the absoluteness of ethics cannot be demonstrated without first discovering the natural fact that the goodness and badness of acts are essential and based on intellectual and innate principles. Since they have neglected this relationship between man and the world (or man and macroanthropos), the principles of which conform to their primordial nature, some philosophers have denied the absoluteness of ethics.

The Greek term “cosmos”, in its real sense, means the beauty of “nature” or, according to the terminology of Islamic philosophy, “the best order”, and contains beauty, order, harmony, and personal unity. Ethics means following this beautiful order while observing the moral values of Sharī'ah and the divine primordial nature. This fact can be clearly seen in the philosophy of ancient Iran, in the teachings of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, in the Stoic Philosophy, in Marcus Aurelius’ writings, and in the Neoplatonic School.

In Islamic texts, too, justice has been defined as putting everything in its proper place, which is precisely manifested in the divine order of the world and God’s granting every creature its true rights, which is the same as his bounty and mercy. We also read in hadith, “It is because of justice that the heavens and earth are erected (and do not collapse).” On the contrary, injustice means violating others’ rights and disturbing the divine and religious order of the world. Even the Holy Qur’an basically defines

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27. See Tawḥīd-i Maḥdī, Imám Sādiq’s saying about the term “qusmus”.
28. Also concerning social order and rights.
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religion based on creation and God’s fiñana. Man’s fiñana is also similar to God’s.

In this paper, two important points have been mentioned. First, the world or cosmos and their rules are created with balance, equilibrium, and beauty. Second, in order to have a better life, man, who is the microanthropos, should observe the principles indicated in “religion and ethics”.

C. Love

“Love” is another issue whose metaphysical origin can only be perceived through understanding the correspondence between man and the world or macroanthropos. Apart from the imperfect psychological, literal and poetic definitions provided for it, love is a divine phenomenon while being a philosophical one at the same time, which has to be examined in the workshop of metaphysics or Islamic gnosis.

In order to interpret love philosophically and ontologically, one must take the external reality of existence, its principality, and gradation perfectly into account. Love is a movement towards beauty, and since beauty stems from order and perfection; since perfection necessitates the meaning of existence qua existence; and since the most beautiful existent in the world is the Absolute Being or God, real love is the inherent movement of man, who is a limited and dependent existent, towards the Absolute Being and Absolute Beauty so that he can escape from his own imperfection, which is a kind of non-existence, and attain perfection. That is why gnostics say that not only man but also all creatures of the world are

29. al-Rûm chapter: 30: “So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish) Allah’s handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah.”
in love with the Absolute Being, and all the world is going towards God with a rhythmical movement. In gnostic literature, love is introduced as a means of knowing and finding God and is called the “astrolabe of God’s mysteries”. 30

Love not only leads creatures towards perfection but also perpetuates them. 31 Beauty creates love among people and attracts the opposite sexes to each other. Gnostics call this love “virtual love” because sexual desire usually affects it, and this exalted and spiritual human phenomenon turns into an animal act. At the same time, virtual love is regarded a good means for making superficial people acquainted with real and divine love and is called the “bridge of truth”.

Love is also related to creativity. Gnostics have said that the principle of “existential kun” (that is, the Divine command or the holy gnosis of existence) is the same love and kindness. Since man is God’s vicegerent and the holder of Divine beauty, consciously or unconsciously, he loves himself, all beauties, the macroanthropos, and, in fact, the Absolute Being. This is because all of them are the manifestations of that Being, and there is no existence other than Him in the world of existence.

Upon the perception of beauty, man finds love in himself and goes after the beloved with love; in other words, he activates his will (which is the manifestation of his creativity), and demand leads to motion. 32 The relationship between man’s soul and the beauties of the macroanthropos and listening to the cosmos, which is called Divine utterance, inspires him and makes him create artistic masterpieces and express beauties.

30. The lover’s ailment is different from all ailments; Love is the astrolabe of God’s mysteries. The Spiritual Couplets of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥḥamed Rūmī, abridged and translated by E.H. Whinfield [1898].
According to Islamic gnosis, God’s primary love for Himself is the cause of the creation of the world and man. It is also written in hadith that God started to make known the act of creation, that is, to show His Beautiful Face to His creatures so that they love Him and turn to the source of His beauty. However, no existent other than man, who carried the secret of vicegerency, fell in love with Him, or it is better to say, no existent was more in love with Him than man. According to the Iranian Gnostic poet, Hāfīz,

The radiance of His goodness manifested in eternity,  
Love appeared and set fire to the mountain, earth and sea,  
His face radiated, and still saw angels were loveless,  
Setting this fire on man, was then your zealous decree.

In the light of this love, his creativity, and inspiration from the best order of the world or the macroanthropos, man can carry out his terrestrial mission, which is to make the world habitable, create, explain the hidden truths of creation, and set himself free from the voidance of animal life. However, this latent capacity is unfortunately undeveloped in most people and thus they have not tasted the joy of real love. In fact, man has done nothing in the history of humankind but destruction and murder. Nevertheless, his heart is captivated by love within the limits of his nature. The story of true love is endless and so sweet that we can never narrate it in a single paper. Rather, as the Iranian Gnostic poet, Rūmi, says,

However much we describe and explain love,  
When we come to love, we are ashamed before it.33

33. Rūmi, Ibid., with slight changes.
The Platonic Spirit in Mullā Ṣadrā’s Philosophy*

The corporeality of the origination of the human soul and its becoming spiritual (immaterial) in the course of time is one of Mullā Ṣadrā’s well-known principles. This principle is known as “The soul is created with the body but becomes immortal through the spirit” (jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth wa ruḥāniyyat al-baqā’).

Earlier Illuminationist philosophers believed that the human soul is immaterial, pre-exists in the Kingdom of Heaven before uniting with the body, enters the body of the baby after its formation, and begins its life with the body. In contrast, Mullā Ṣadrā maintains that the soul itself is material in the initial stages of its creation and originates in matter; however, it gradually follows a different path and, in the process of separating from matter, reaches the culmination of its disengagement (from

* This paper was presented in the First World Congress on Mullā Ṣadrā in Tehran in 1999 under the title “A Dialog between Islamic Philosophy and Western Philosophy”.

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matter). Like all other Muslim philosophers, Mullâ Ṣadrâ calls this existent “nafs” (the soul) in all of his works. Nevertheless, since in philosophical and religious sources the word “rūḥ” (spirit) has also been used in the same sense or in a sense very close to it, they have sometimes been used interchangeably. Therefore, one might ask whether the spirit is the same as the soul or has a different meaning. Still, a related question is, if spirit refers to a different immaterial concept, “What is it, and how is it related to the soul?”

* * *

In Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s works and books, in addition to the word “soul”, “spirit” is also used in different senses which can be limited to the following four meanings:

1. The first meaning refers to what is known as “Vaporous Spirit” among Peripatetic philosophers and physicians. In most of his books, Mullâ Ṣadrâ describes it as a delicate mass and, perhaps, immaterial entity at a level between the body and the soul. He maintains that it is the mediating link between them. In one of his books, after referring to the different types of human mental and perceptive faculties, he says, “For each of these faculties and tools there is a specific spirit which is a warm and delicate mass and the product of the four-fold humors.” In another place, he says, “What is called the animal spirit is not the divine spirit. Rather, it is related to this world, is fast destroyed, and never reaches the Hereafter.”

1. In Arabic, nafs means “self”.
2. In European languages, the words “soul” and “spirit” are also used in different senses.
4. Ibid., p. 392.
2. The second meaning refers to the great and powerful angel who connects the Divine Will to existents and creatures. It is also called “The Holy Spirit”. It has also been referred to and used in the Qur’an and ḥadīth in the same sense. Mullā Šadrā sometimes considers it as a collection of “the intellects” or angels and says, “The intellects, due to their perfection and actuality, are like a single thing, and this single thing, which, in fact, refers to numerous intellects, is sometimes called the ‘spirit’.”

3. In the third meaning, “spirit” is used in the same sense as the soul. Mullā Šadrā, too, has used “spirit” and the “soul” in the same meaning (e.g. in al-Shawāhid al-rubābiyyah, p. 293). He has sometimes considered the spirit as the continuation of the soul and one of the stages of its perfection and complete disengagement (from matter) (Ibid., p. 198).

4. According to the fourth meaning, the “spirit” is separate from the soul and, in contrast to it, is an actualized immaterial truth which descends from its heavenly level to the world of matter and dwells in man’s body. After death, when the spirit departs with the body, if it has maintained its status, it will be sent back to its own place; otherwise, in the case of its being unworthy or sinful, it will be sent to another place. This is the same spirit meant by Illuminationist philosophers, and particularly, by Socrates and Plato. Our discussion here pertains to Mullā Šadrā’s view in this regard.

From a philosophical point of view, believing in this heavenly spirit is apparently in contrast to Mullā Šadrā’s famous theory of the soul’s “corporeality of origination” (jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth). If the soul is the same as the spirit, and if we consider the spirit as a disengaged existent which, despite its perfection, has descended from Heaven to the Earth and entered the body, there is no sense in arguing that it originates in the body, comes into being through matter’s trans-substantial motion, reaches its

5. Ibid., p. 186.
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culmination of disengagement through the same continuous essential motion, and leaves the body upon death. Considering the differences between the definitions of the spirit and the soul, believing in both of them leads to contradiction and coincidence of opposites or even the coincidence of two contradictories. Accordingly, where Mullā Şadrā, in parallel to believing in the corporeality of the origination of the human soul, believes in its priority over the body great ambiguity arises, and we must try to seek possible responses.

* * *

Mullā Şadrā himself has paid attention to this inconsistency and, by adhering to the principle of the “corporeal origination” (jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth) of the soul, has in a way tried to justify the spirit in its sense of pre-existing the body. However, as we will see later, he finally agrees with this idea.

Here, another question might arise: basically, given his firm belief in the material origination of the soul, why has Mullā Şadrā paid attention to the theory of the pre-existence of the immaterial spirit and not completely rejected it?

The reason for his attention to something as “spirit” (rather than the soul) is his strong belief in religious texts, i.e. the Qur’an and ḥadīth. For example, we can refer to the following ḥadīths: “Allah created spirits before the bodies”; “I was already the Prophet when Adam was still in water and clay”; “The relation between the believer’s spirit and God is stronger than the relation between the beams of light and the sun”; “No one will ascend to Heaven, unless he has descended from it.”

Since Mullā Şadrā attaches a greater value to revelation and valid religious texts than rational reasoning, he accepts the spirit as a postulate.
(but one that can be justified) and, in some cases, tries to reconcile it with his own philosophical theory.

In his Ta’liqāt (glosses on the commentary on Suhrawardi’s Ḥikmat al-ishrāq), in order to interpret and justify the spirit that is independent from man’s rational soul, Mullā Sadrā says that by “the human spirit” and its priority over his soul and body he means the very cause of his existence, which is prior to it. His words are as follows:

Concerning the soul, those who believe in the agreement between demonstration and intuition conceive of the soul as follows. In spite of being simple in its essence and entity, the soul enjoys various stations and degrees. They also believe that, because it is a perfect cause, the soul pre-exists the body and is, in fact, of a specific character, according to which its command over the body depends on a specific predisposition and certain other conditions. Moreover, it is certain that the soul is created and, at the same time, will continue to exist eternally after the death of the body. This is the case only because its cause is eternal. Therefore, if you have certain knowledge of the fact that the soul’s cause pre-exists the body, and if you know the meaning of the cause-effect relation, you will also know that the soul pre-exists the body. Of course, the existence of the cause of the soul is obvious to the people of demonstration. Nevertheless, they are not certain about the perfection of causedness and suspect its truth.

The things that depend on the body, and the readiness of the body is a prerequisite for their existence, in fact consist of some of the natural characteristics of the soul. This is because if the body and its accidents were the conditions for the appearance of the truth and the entity of the soul, the latter would necessarily be destroyed with the destruction of the body.

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Therefore, the truth is that, like other bodily natures, the soul is corporeal in its creation but, like other immaterial intellects, spiritual in subsistence. That is why it has been said that spirits existed 2000 years before their bodies. In another tradition, we still read that they existed 4000 years before their bodies. However, only the light of prophethood can determine with certainty the exact time of precedence.

The above justification is, in fact, a kind of denial of the priority of spirit over the body. This is because some thinkers, such as Plato, who consider the spirit to be prior to the body and even to be pre-eternal, by priority mean the very priority of the soul itself rather than its cause. This is an objective and true precedence and not one that relies on other things, such as its cause or ontological prerequisites.

In some of his other books, Mullā Sadrā reconciles the originated soul with the pre-eternal spirit through benefiting from Plotinus’s school and book as follows: taking his stages of evolution into consideration, human beings, in fact, consist of three types: “the sensual man”, who is the same ordinary corporeal man; “the soulish man”, who is abstract or immaterial and possesses all the organs of the sensual man but is invisible; and “the intellectual man”, who enjoys a more complete, disengaged, and subtle form of the sensual and soulish men. It is this very rational man who connects with the active intellect and becomes the same as it (al-Ḥashr treatise).

After this introduction, Mullā Sadrā tries to introduce the spirit as something other than the soul and the same as the intellectual man, who provides the link between the natural man and the active intellect, as well as with other intellects. He maintains that the spirit referred to in al-Ḥijr chapter: verse 29 (“So, when I have made him and have breathed into him of

7. al-Ḥashr, Asrār al-āyāt, and al-ʿArshiyyah treatises.
My Spirit, do ye fall down, prostrating yourselves unto him”) is the same as the intellectual man.

Plotinus believed that man is essentially the same soulish and intellectual man, and the corporeal man is only a symbol of both of them and always accompanies them.8

In his other works, Mullā Ṣadrā seems to tend more to separate the soul and spirit from each other. In his al-ʿArshiyyah (which is apparently one of his latest works),9 he has followed the same theory; however, in the development of his thought, he gradually gave up denial or justification and expressed his belief in the existence of an independent soul-like truth pre-existing the body. He argues that the prior existence of the “spirit” to the body, which has been referred to in Islamic texts, conforms to intellectual and logical reasoning and principles. He says, “According to what is said and after intuition and rational reasoning, it became clear that the origination of spirits is prior to that of the world of bodies.”10

If we follow the process of the development of Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophy concerning the spirit (which is other than the soul) in the works that he wrote towards the end of his life, we can see clearly his flexibility concerning the belief in the precedence of spirit to the body. For example, in his Asrār al-āyāt he writes:11

Beware that philosophers’ knowledge of the reality of the spirit and the nature of the soul is very little and even negligible. Most of the philosophers do not agree with the precedence of the soul over the body, and those who agree with it have not adduced any arguments in order to demonstrate it. Since they have not been

9. Ibid., 2nd mashriq, 1st ishrāq, 7th principle.
10. However, it can sometimes be inferred from his words that by “spirit” he means the same great angel who has the mission of creation.
able to answer the related objections, they have failed to choose one of these choices with certainty.

He does not limit himself to the above point either, and when defending the precedence of spirit over the soul, he even attacks Ibn Sinā and other Peripatetics, who turned their backs on Plato in this regard, and reproaches them. He wonders why, in spite of their believing in the subsistence of the “soul” after the body’s death, they do not accept its preceding the body!

In his *al-‘Arshiyyah*, in reference to the Qur’anic verses in relation to human spirit, Mullā Ṣadrā writes, “It is surprising that most of the philosophers and followers of Aristotle, such as Ibn Sinā and his students, believed in the immortality of the soul but not in the pre-existence of the soul to the creation of the body.”

Then he adds:

Oh, my dear! Beware that we have come to this world from the Paradise of God, and from there we have stepped into the Paradise of the body. From there we have come to this earthly world which is a place for rewardless labor, and from here we will go to the other world, which is a place for gaining reward in return for no labor…

The terms “God’s Paradise” or “the Dominion of Holiness”, as used by Mullā Ṣadrā, refer to a specific heavenly place similar to “the house of the living”, “the paradise of bodies”, and “the house of labor”, more than referring to the causes and concomitants of man’s creation. In other words, he considers the spirit as a creature preceding the creation of man’s soul and body, as well as the product of a world other than the world of matter. He maintains that it existed before the creation of man’s body and soul because

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it will continue to exist after the death of the body. Moreover, in another place in al-‘Arshiyyah,¹³ he writes:

The fact that man’s soul existed before his body does not lead to its trans-migration or pre-eternity – which Plato believed in – nor does it pose the problem of a single species consisting of various individuals without any potential or material distinction, nor does it require a single soul to be divided into several souls, nor does it persuade one to say that, before the creation of the body, the spirit had nothing to do.

According to the above quotation, Mullā Ṣadrā not only believes in the pre-existence of the spirit to the body but also refers to it as the “soul”. Of course, this can be viewed as a kind of negligence in interpretation. This is because there is no problem with our accepting either of the two words “the soul” and “spirit” as being equivocal and having two meanings and using them interchangeably.

Regarding “transmigration” or other objections discussed above, Mullā Ṣadrā stipulates that when he talks about the precedence of the soul or spirit over the body, he is not referring to his previous justification in Ta’liqāt sharḥ ḥikmat al-ishrāq. Rather, for him the spirit is a disengaged existent which is spatial and personal and enjoys specific ontological features similar to those of the soul that is united with the body and exists in it.

Mullā Ṣadrā delicately and indirectly refers to this reality in Asrār al-‘ayāt as follows:¹⁴

The world consists of two things: command and creation, with the latter depending on the former. The world or the macroanthropos comes into being through the combination of command and

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creation, as the microanthropos (man) comes into life through the unity of the body and spirit.

In this way, based on a comparison of man (microanthropos) with the world and universe (macroanthropos), which is one of the famous headings of Illuminationist philosophy, we can conclude that the spirit pre-exists the body. In other words, as in the cosmos, the divine “command” and will precedes the “creation” of the world and material things, and “creation” originates in “command” rather than vice versa. Like the soul, the spirit does not originate in man’s material body and, rather, precedes it and is the cause of it.

Here, we see that he does not refer to the “cause” as “spirit”; rather, he refers to “spirit” as the “cause”. Therefore, we can infer from his justification in Ta’liqat sharh ḥikmat al-ishrāq (in which he has interpreted the precedence of spirits to bodies as the “perfection of causedness”) that he is not referring to the supreme vertical concomitants and the chain of primary causes. Rather, he means the same spirit which, in parallel with the immaterial causes and concomitants of man’s body, existed prior to its creation, unites with it after creation, and then administers it. In Mullā Sadrā’s words, a taʿānuq (unity) is finally created between the body and spirit. In his al-Maẓāhir al-ilāhiyyah, he also refers to this issue and says:

Through His Perfect Power, the Glorified God created the Throne along with the intellect and the soul and made it the abode of hearts and spirits. Moreover, through his perfect wisdom, he brought earth into existence and chose it as the house of natures and bodies. Then, through His Pre-eternal decree and Israfili trumpet, He Commanded these spirits and hearts of the Throne to unite with earthly bodies. Then, based on His Supreme Power, He Commanded these bodies and their potential to accept these spirits and hearts for some time in the way that He Desires. Finally,
when death inevitably comes and it is time to unite with the other life, these spirits will return to the Lord of spirits.¹⁵

Now, we will return to the question posed at the beginning of this paper. Given his belief in the precedence of the disengaged or immaterial spirit over the body, did Mullà Şadrâ give up his famous theory of the corporeal origination or createdness of the soul? Or, although in some cases he considers the soul the same as spirit and uses these two words to refer to the same thing, did he distinguish them from each other and view them as two separate things with one pre-existing the body in separation from matter and the other created by the body? Or, despite his explicit remarks concerning the objectivity of spirit, which pre-exists the body, did he consider it as a rational existence or something like nûrî (luminous) Ideas (Platonic Ideas)?

The solution of the problem will be easy only when, in line with some shar’î texts and Islamic ḥadîths, we believe that there are two realities in separation from matter and call one the soul and the other spirit. As we read in a ḥadîth from the fifth Imâm (*a), “In addition to their vegetative, animal, and human souls, human beings also have a heavenly soul.”¹⁶

Perhaps, Mullà Şadrâ also held the same opinion and that is the reason why he considered the human soul to be corporeally originated and believed that man has a heavenly spirit which is originated spiritually. In other words, although Mullà Şadrâ has sometimes used “spirit” in other ways, he ultimately believes that it is a reality preceding the body and other than the soul but accompanying it. We might even conclude that the creation of the soul from the body (the corporeal origination of the soul) – which is

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an exceptional phenomenon outside the framework of the other substances of this world – originates in the presence of this heavenly spirit. Moreover, the soul exists alongside the existence of spirit, comes after it, and is its effect.

In one of the chapters of *Sih ašl* treatise, Mullà Šadrâ writes about the combination and plurality of human souls and substances as follows:

And most scholars and all philosophers believe that the human substance is the same in all individuals. However, this idea is not shared by the people of insight. There are some people who live through the animal soul and have not yet attained the station of heart, much less the station of spirit and something higher than it … and it is an extremely great achievement to know the soul and describe its stations. In fact, no one can attain this knowledge except for perfect people.17

17. Mullà Šadrâ, *Sih ašl* treatise, p. 27.
Healthy Man in Practical Wisdom*

One of the most important teachings of the divine religions, particularly Islam, is the provision of a definition for man and his spiritual aspects and direct emphasis on an insensible and immaterial dimension, i.e. the soul. One might even claim that, if revelation and heavenly religions did not emphasize the existence of something called the soul or spirit and its importance in the development of human conduct and character, the imperfect human experience, even in the most developed civilizations, would not be able to perceive such a profound and effective dimension of human beings called the soul or spirit.

In Islam (and other heavenly religions and schools), the human soul has been introduced along with a definition for health and the teaching of the methods of constructing healthy human beings. We can even infer from the Prophet’s words, “I was appointed to messengership in order to complete the

* This paper was written for the “Anthropology Conference” in Qum.
teachings of ethics,” that the main purpose of Islam is reconstructing humanity and creating people with healthy souls and powerful spirits. This is because, according to Islam, man’s spiritual health guarantees his worldly and otherworldly happiness and victory. It also maintains that a healthy character is the key to his transcendence to human perfections, attaining supreme spiritual levels, and nearness to, or even union, with Almighty Truth.

The importance of man’s psychological health and the diagnosis and treatment of related diseases in Islam and other religions conform to their importance in psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis. A comparative study of the theories in these fields with divine teachings can, as always, enrich human experience. However, although man’s knowledge and experience are too limited to allow him to grasp a complete perception of the soul and psyche, he has managed to become familiar with psychological diseases, which are revealed through his behavior and are believed to lead to behavioral disorders and confusions, and try to treat them to some extent.

Man’s psychological health has been explored in Islam from one angle and in medicine from another. In fact, the science of psychology is merely concerned with this issue in terms of personality disorders and serious mental diseases, while religious studies of it are more comprehensive and take all states of the human soul into consideration.

In this paper, we will examine the Islamic view of this issue based on Islamic traditions and, particularly, the hadiths of the People of the Prophet’s House. At the same time, we will glance at the common borderlines between hadith,¹ psychology, and psychiatry.

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¹ In this paper, we have not dealt with the Qur’anic view of mental health, since it is an independent issue and must be discussed separately.
In psychology, the health or the normal state of the human soul and character is called norm and its disruption is called abnormality. This is one of the most general divisions of the human personality, and, according to Mann, it is very difficult to draw a borderline between them.  

Psychological diseases or abnormalities can also be divided into two main groups: psychosis and neurosis.

Psychosis refers to those disorders and mental diseases that seriously affect man’s psyche and personality so that the patient completely loses his character. Typically, he is not aware of his disease and cannot distinguish reality from delusions. He cannot stop his abnormal behavior or help with his treatment. Psychosis has many different forms and sometimes appears in the form of mania or even foolishness. The treatment of such diseases is very difficult and requires the patient to be confined to bed and take medicine.

Neurosis refers to weaker levels of psychological diseases in which the patient does not lose track of his personality and is aware of his mental illness and problems. He can sometimes help with his treatment through using his will power or suggestion. He is well aware of reality and the causes and effects of his behavior and reactions. Neurosis is in fact a kind of temporary disruption of mental balance.

In the hadiths attributed to the Prophet (s) and the People of his House reference has been made to the disorders and abnormalities of human personality. In some of these hadiths, mental disorders have been interpreted as “ignorance” and mental diseases as the “army of ignorance”. In contrast, they call mental health and normal behavior wisdom. By employing

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symbolic language, they introduce wisdom and ignorance as the commanders of two armies. The Iranian psychologist, Dr. Mirsepasi, explained this point in his book and, in this way, opened its way from the *ḥadīths* of the People of the House into modern psychology.³

Considering the *ḥadīth* that Suma’at Ibn Mihrān, the famous traditionist and companion of the Prophet (ṣ), narrates from ʿImām Sādiq (ʿa),⁴ Mirsepasi refers to such mental diseases as mutism, melancholy, schizophrenia, or hebephrenia. He also refers to some members of the “army of ignorance” as mentioned in the above *ḥadīth* which are among the effects or symptoms of these diseases and concludes that the army of wisdom is the sign of mental health (or being wise), and the army of ignorance is the sign of mania, dementia, or mental diversions and disorders.

The following has been narrated from the sixth Imām, Imām Jaʿfar Sādiq (ʿa):

> God first created the intellect. It carried all of His Orders. Then He created the symbol of ignorance but it disobeyed God’s order, and He cursed it. He created 75 armies for the intellect, which are the same good attributes of human beings. Ignorance demanded the Divine Justice to give it an army, so God gave it one the soldiers of which were the same moral and psychological disorders and diseases.⁵

Good and bad attributes exist in everyone except for the men of God. Those who help the army of the intellect and push the army of ignorance out of their interior will live a happy life and will have a good destiny.

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3. Dr. Mirsepsi, *Psychology*, p. 156.
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In this ḥadīth, attributes such as justice, satisfaction, gratitude, hope, trust, affection, humility, patience, contentment, loyalty, generosity, honesty, trustworthiness, and even understanding, memory, presence of mind, joy, and happiness are symbolically considered as the members of the army of the intellect, i.e. the criteria for mental balance and spiritual health. On the other hand, it introduces diversion and distance from them as the references for ignorance, i.e. spiritual and mental imbalance and a kind of disease and abnormality.

There is another ḥadīth with a similar content as the above from the seventh Imām, Imām Kāzim ('a).⁶ There are also some other ḥadiths in this regard which divide ignorance into 3 general types, such as “ignorance lies in pride, pretence, and not knowing God,”⁷ and “socializing with a morally ignorant (sick) person will cause you a lot of problems; if you leave him, he will slander you; if he gives you something, he will twit you for the favor; and if you give him something, he will be ungrateful.”⁸

In another ḥadīth, the army of ignorance has been considered as a chain and hierarchy of levels that are connected to each other.⁹ A number of ḥadiths are also about the disease of obsession, such as “Eating earth and biting one’s nails and hair of the head and face are symptomatic of psychological diseases.”¹⁰ This ḥadīth and similar ones talk about neurotic behaviors and psychological problems associated with mental disorders or diseases such as nervous ticks.

An accurate psychological and psychiatric analysis of these ḥadiths requires more time. However, what we learn from them in general

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⁶. Tuḥaf al-'uqūl, p. 300; Bihār al-anwār, vol. 1, p. 158.
⁸. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 119, and Bihār al-anwār, ḥadīth 12, p. 129.
⁹. Ibid., p. 117.
consists of the criteria for mental health and man’s normality, on the one hand, and recognition of psychological diseases and personality disorders, on the other.

Since the viewpoint of Islam and these ḥadîths, unlike that of psychiatry, is not limited to some critical and extreme mental diseases such as mania, hysteria, hebephrenia, mania in old age, hallucination, etc., it can include all types of diversion from mental health, even cases such as perception disorders, mental disorders, or weaker forms of neurosis, and include both psychiatric and psychological perspectives. It can even go beyond this and found a vast and comprehensive view of mental abnormalities.

Another advantage here is that in psychiatry and even in psychology, the healthy or normal state of one’s personality is never clearly described, while all of the effects, attributes, and criteria of health, along with the factors that threaten them and related diseases, are explained in these ḥadîths.

Of course, in psychology mental health is considered the same psychologically normal state without any emotions, instincts, senses, reactions and mental power. Naturally, it is believed that any disorder in any of them is a disease, whether it is an active or reactive disorder. Therefore, they consider fear, envy, jealousy, and similar unpleasant characteristics to be diseases. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, in the Islamic view of psychological diseases, diseases are diagnosed based on absence of health rather than health from absence of disease. This approach is more efficient and useful for a more accurate recognition of the nature and character of a healthy person.

For example, in Imām Kāzim’s ḥadîth, the first sign of the health of the human spirit is his “belief”, and its disease is “disbelief”, which has not
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been referred to in any of the lists and tables of the common mental disorders in psychology. However, in Islam, a healthy person must have belief and be far from disbelief.

Clearly, belief here does not mean believing in a specific religion and prophet. Rather, it refers to a religious sense and theological primordial nature (fitrat). As we read in hadith, “Each child is born with a pure nature; it is parents who change him.” In other words, every infant is born with a spiritual and religious sense. Therefore, if an individual lacks a religious sense and naturally (and not out of obstinacy) denies it or does not perceive it, he has lost his mental health and gone far away from his primordial nature.

One of the other elements of human health in this hadith is affirmation or believing (or perhaps, as the Holy Qur’an says, credulousness). By contrast, extreme and permanent cases of disbelief and suspicion concerning others’ honesty are diagnosed as disease. From among the other elements, we can refer to sincerity (against “hypocrisy”), which signifies the purity of the soul against “insincerity or double-facedness”, hope and the sense of being hopeful against hopelessness (which is one of the effects of depression), “justice” against cruelty or oppression (which is one of the manifestations of sadism and tyranny), and “boredom” and “sadness” against “joy and happiness” (the former can be considered as symptoms of depression).

Moreover, in this hadith, “denial, lack of talent, and foolishness” are considered as three diseases endangering the health of “knowledge, understanding, and ingenuity”. This is similar to the psychological theory stating, “A neurotic can be called an inefficient person because he cannot
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perceive the real world as accurately and correctly as a healthy person.”

In this hadith, “knowledge” belongs to the army of the “intellect”. We can perhaps say that there are two types of “ignorance”; one is general and stands against the intellect, which is the divided, and the other is particular and one of the divisions of the intellect and stands against knowledge.

The hadith’s emphasis upon the two opposite elements does not contradict its vast latitude. In other words, each characteristic stands on the same axis along with its opposite but in different directions. One is above zero and the other below it. In the mathematical sense of the word, one of them is on the positive and the other on the negative axis.

Each of these two axes can have various points and degrees. The more the negative characteristic – or as the hadith says, “the soldiers of the army of ignorance” – moves farther from zero to the negative direction, the more serious are the diseases, and the more they move toward zero, the closer the person comes to the border of health.

The serious cases of lack of health can be seen in paranoia, hebephrenia (schizophrenia), deep depression (melancholia), mutism, and acts of suicide. Likewise, the abnormalities referred to in the hadith can be divided into mental and perceptive abnormalities and diseases or behavioral or emotional dispersions and sometimes into various immoral and unethical characteristics.

In this hadith, “foul-mouthedness” is considered a psychological disease and the source of unchastity, “courage” the sign of intrepid, social incompatibility, and violating the law, “cruelty and oppression” the signs of sadism and inhumanity, “anger” the sign of absolute dissatisfaction, and

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“disgrace” the sign of sickly frenzy, half-madness, and joviality. However, other types of behavioral, action-related, and even temperamental, incidental, physical, psychological, and environmental abnormalities can also be found beyond the other characteristics mentioned in the above hadith.

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However, considering what was discussed above, we can conclude that unlike psychology, which merely aims to treat serious mental diseases without searching for the criteria for health, and unlike psychotherapy, which does not present any accurate criteria in this regard, Islamic psychology, in the hadiths of the People of the Prophet’s House and in the light of revelation and its divine dimension, introduces all the criteria and signs of man’s mental health and refers to and explains all of its blights and diseases.

The above characteristics in the army of the intellect are the elements that we see in a natural or standard human being. Since in the course of time people, except for a few, deviate from the criteria for health because of natural, genetic, voluntary, and training-related factors, they lose their mental health to some extent. Perfect mental health can only be seen in chosen people such as the Prophets, the Imāms, their successors, or those who have been trained in their school, as mentioned in the hadith of the intellect and ignorance.

Man’s psyche is extremely sensitive and fragile, and physical or spiritual factors such as physical deformities or deficiencies, diseases, physical and mental pressures and tortures, poverty, cruelty, and the like can damage man’s psychological health. These damages sometimes turn good characteristics into their opposites and leave some effects that are called complexes in psychoanalysis. It is also possible that they sometimes lead to
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hysteria, psychosis, and mania. These states might sometimes be temporary and appear in the form of weak depression. In these cases, since the human psyche is extremely adjustable, it can take the path of health and perfection through training and ascetism.

In the ethical and educational instructions of Islam, in addition to encouraging people to try to safeguard against the involuntary plights of the soul, great attention has been paid to individuals’ voluntary care for themselves. Islamic ethics itself is a kind of psychological “self-treatment”, and as we understand from the above hadith, believers can purify their souls from the features of the army of ignorance in the light of their strong will, belief, and endeavor and join the army of the intellect and come closer to their perfect psychological health.

At the end of this part, it is worth paying attention to certain points:

First: When comparing the place of the “perfect man” in gnosis with the place of “healthy man” in psychology, we can be almost certain that man’s health depends on his primary perfections, without which there will be no borderline between human beings and animals, and, in spite of man’s physical distinction from animals, he will turn into a human-like animal.

Nevertheless, in the gnostic sense of the word, the “perfection” of the “perfect man” can depend on his secondary perfections, which are not various, and, unlike health, which is related to horizontal difference and variety, express man’s vertical and ascending degrees. Obviously, unlike health, which is commonly shared by the body and the mind (or the body and the soul) – the perfection of the perfect man is limited exclusively to the soul’s practical conduct and its training or man’s human nature.

Second: In the Islamic and philosophical view of the armies of the intellect and ignorance, as referred to in the hadith, we see that the intellect
is one of the *malikät* in philosophy, and “*malikah*”, although a mental quality, refers to the same human habit and can perhaps be considered the same secondary primordial nature mentioned in *Ishrāqī* philosophy and the Transcendent Philosophy. (In other words, the definition of the intellect in philosophy is different from the one provided in this *ḥadīth*. In philosophy the intellect can be taught and trained and is considered as one of the states of the human soul, while this is not the case in *ḥadīth*.)

However, the term “making” as used in the *ḥadīth*, “God created an army for the intellect . . .,” indicates that good or bad human characteristics are intrinsic and natural issues. In other words, they comprise man’s “primary and primordial nature”, which, unlike passions, is not prone to natural changes and can only be overcome by force and through will power and not naturally.

Third: Apparently, in philosophy there is no limit to the number of good and bad characteristics; however, *ḥadīth* limits it to 75 pairs, i.e. 150 characteristics.

Fourth: Following Aristotle, some philosophers insist that a healthy character is something between two extremes. This is what Aristotle called “virtue”. Nevertheless, we can infer from the *ḥadīths* that this is a purely hypothetical and theoretical classification, and this middle limit is not acceptable in regard to many human characteristics, attributes, and behaviors, such as faith against disbelief, happiness, certitude, patience, cleanliness, etc. Even Mullā Sadrā himself, who advocated this

12. Mullā Sadrā believes that behavior is something between man’s nature, will, and conduct (*al-Asfār*, vol. 4, p. 115).
classification, did not accept drawing such borderlines concerning wisdom and says in this regard, “The more the better.”  

Fifth: The army of the intellect in the hadīth refers to the same moral virtues and human values; therefore, ethics must be considered the same pathology of the human soul and character and “self-treatment” because it is voluntarily acquired. Thus ethics and psychology reach a common point and share a common purpose concerning different types of neurosis (however, the difference is that in the field of medicine it is the physician who is normally responsible for the treatment of patients by benefiting from external factors). Accordingly, ethics becomes the same as mental hygiene.

Sixth: Mullā Ṣadrā and some other philosophers make a distinction between practical wisdom, which is the divider of theoretical wisdom, and wisdom in the sense of human conduct and character, which is the source of virtue and stands against vice, and consider them as equivocal terms. This is because, in one place, wisdom is character itself and, in another place, (and in opposition to theoretical wisdom) the knowledge of character. Therefore, wisdom can also be a kind of psychology or spiritual self-treatment. Some gnostics have also referred to it as “spiritual medicine” and to the wayfaring master as the “spiritual physician”.

For example, in Asrār al-sharī‘ah, Seyyed Haydar Āmulī says, “Spiritual medicine is the science of moral perfections and their blights and diseases. Its purpose is to protect mental health and balance. The (real) spiritual physician is the same spiritual guide and wayfarer.”

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15. al-Asfār, vol. 4, p. 115.
Here, we can find a relation between “healthy man” and “perfect man”. In other words, man’s mental health and psychological balance provide the context for his spiritual perfection and attaining the station of the perfect man and will finally become the same thing.\footnote{Mullā Sadrā, commentary on the ḥadīth of the intellect and ignorance in \textit{Uṣūl al-kāfī}, p. 423.}

Seventh: In wisdom and gnosis health has been referred to as “equilibrium”, whether it pertains to the body or the mind. In his commentary on the 14th ḥadīth of \textit{Uṣūl al-kāfī}, Mullā Ṣadrā explains, “Mental equilibrium is similar to physical equilibrium; it is obtained when all diseases are cured. Absolute mental health or equilibrium is the same as having a good character, i.e. not suffering from any moral diseases.”

As we can see, equilibrium in ethics does not mean the middle point; rather, it means perfection and multilateral beauty, and, thus, the intellect is synonymous with beauty, perfection, equilibrium, and justice, and ignorance is opposite to all of them.

Eighth: An individual’s personality, intellect, and characteristics influence his perceptions and even memories, accidents, divine contingencies, and intuitions. Concerning the intuitions of men of God, Qaṣṣārī says, “Internal intuition is received when man’s soul is in a state of health and equilibrium (and has concentration)…”\footnote{Qaṣṣārī, \textit{Muqaddamih Qaṣṣārī bar Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam}, p. 31, published in India.}

Ninth: From the statement, “These good attributes only exist in the prophets and believers…,” in the ḥadīth, we understand that the Prophets and Favorites of God, considering their stations, are examples of healthy people, and others, considering their weaknesses and health, are deprived of some members of the army of the intellect or perfect health.
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Tenth: from the hadith of Hishâm and the statement, “Oh Hishâm, one who lacks virtue has no religion, and virtue accompanies the intellect,” we understand that there is a firm relation between mental health and having faith in Islam. “Virtue” or fortitude means enjoying human perfection and the natural characteristics of a healthy human being.

Eleventh: Although the army of the intellect is the background, primordial nature, and primary temperament of each human being, certain external causes and obstacles might disrupt it. This state is interpreted as ignorance and the presence of the army of ignorance. However, since the human will is capable of treating the disruption and compensating for the defects, he has to start self-treatment, reconstruct the defective psyche, and change evil characteristics into good ones in order to attain his natural end. This reconstruction is sometimes called the secondary and tertiary primordial nature and sometimes second birth.

The phenomenon of death is a subject that can be studied and discussed from different points of view. According to biological and medical sciences, death means the permanent cessation of all vital bodily functions.

The above definition deals with the body merely in terms of its corporeal structure. In other words, it is based on a material approach and views death only in terms of the five-fold senses. Here, the symptoms of death consist of the cessation of the activities of the brain, heart, and body organs and the loss of body temperature. This definition does not usually refer to the exit of something called the spirit or soul from the body.

However, from a philosophical point of view, death means the permanent separation of the spirit or soul from the body which is inevitably

* This paper was presented in the “Human Rights” Conference in Tehran in 21st Farwardin, 1385 AS.
due to a disorder or confusion in its natural system. Philosophers assimilate death and the departure of the soul from the body to a situation in which one’s house has been destroyed, and one has to leave it and find refuge in another place.

However, in addition to this type of death – which is called natural death – there is another kind that occurs because of certain events or human being’s voluntary or involuntary acts rather than the annihilation of the natural order of the body. Philosophers call it unnatural death (Ikhtirāmi death), whereby the soul is separated from its home, i.e. the body, due to an accident.

The well-known Iranian philosopher, Mullā Şadrā (979-1045 AH), provides a new definition for death. After rejecting the idea of biologists and physicians, who believe that death is the result of the annihilation of the body, he refers to the two natural and unnatural types of death and maintains that death is the freedom of spirit from the prison of the body because of its perfection and being needless of the body. In order to provide a philosophical explanation for this issue, he says the human soul has initially risen from matter, i.e. the body; nevertheless, relying on the process of the body’s material growth and development, it later follows a separate route for its own perfection. This is a perfection that does not stop with age and the negative growth of the body and continues its developmental growth. In other words, unlike the body, it is not prone to aging and atrophy and can never be destroyed.

This kind of perfection is based on another philosophical law called the “trans-substantial motion”\(^1\) of objects, which is one of Mullā Şadrā’s innovative principles. It demonstrates that none of the objects of the sensible and material world is ever at rest, and all of them are involved in a uni-

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directional and progressive step-by-step movement at all times. In fact, all the objects move from defect towards natural perfection. Unlike the static Aristotelian world, Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s is a dynamic and energetic world in which all the objects are in motion and follow the path of development. The human soul is no exception to this rule.

Based on the universal principle of “motion in existence and substance” of objects, the human soul traverses the road towards perfection along with the body and, finally, after completing this process and reaching perfection, when the count for its freedom from the body starts, it leaves the body like a satellite that is separated from its rocket. Then it enters a non-material space that belongs to it and begins the non-material life for which it has been made. Gnostics call this phenomenon death.

In Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s view, although upon death man’s soul or spirit separates from the body and leaves it behind like an old and empty piece of clothing, it has another body in the other world. This body is not made of matter, but is like his worldly body and has the same form and features so that all people will recognize each other in the other world and carry all the contents and characteristics of their mind and imagination to that place.

At the beginning of its life, the soul relies on the support and guidance of the body; however, immediately after it attains an immaterial (disengaged) form, the relation between the body and the soul is reversed. At this point, the soul becomes the support, guide, and, as Mullâ Ṣadrâ says, the “carrier” of the body. Thus the idea that the soul needs the body during all its life is not correct.

Although the soul comes into being with the generation of the body and is, as is commonly said, corporeally originated, it becomes responsible for the protection, growth, and development of the body immediately after being settled. In Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s view, unlike what some
believe, the body depends on the soul and not otherwise. However, the soul has to accompany the body until reaching its own perfection. The growth of the body stops at some time in future, but the growth and perfection of the soul continues. More importantly, the more the soul is perfected, the older, the weaker, and the more defective the body becomes, until the soul flees out of the prison of the body, becomes free, and leaves it behind as a lifeless corpse.²

The philosophers preceding Mullā Šadrā assimilated the body to a ship and considered the soul as a captain who boards it immediately after it is made and leads it. Nevertheless, Mullā Šadrā assimilates the body to a sailing boat and the soul to the wind and says:

Obviously, it is the wind that moves that boat ahead and not vice versa. Likewise, the human soul is the administrator of the body; when there is no wind, the boat will stop moving, and when the soul reaches perfection and becomes needless of the body, it lets go of it and leaves it behind in a lifeless and motionless state. Hence, the body’s life depends on the soul rather than the opposite.³

However, in Islamic gnosis death is much more beautiful and glorious. This is because, unlike what materialists and empiricists believe, it does not mean destruction and annihilation. Rather, it is a step forwards towards a more complete life and the beginning of a new life. In other words, death means man’s “second birth”, exactly in the same way that a

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² This weakness and aging of the body, in Mullā Šadrā’s view, means the soul’s turning its back to the body and becoming needless of it. In fact, the natural cause of death is the soul’s departing with it and not the destruction of the body (al-Asfār, vol. 9, p. 65).
³ al-Asfār, vol. 8, p. 69.
child leaves the fetal state upon birth and enters a new and independent human state. From this point of view, for human beings the material world is like a mother’s womb for a child.

The prominent Iranian gnostic, Rumi, introduces in his poems the change of the embryo from lifeless matter into a vegetative being as “death” in the material state and “birth” in the vegetative state. He also calls its leaving the vegetative state “death” and its entering the animal state and coming into motion “animal life”. Likewise, he refers to its completing its animal life, leaving it, and beginning a human life as death.

He believes that, after all these stages, man’s death means the death of his being a human and the beginning of his angelic life. Finally, he concludes that man never loses anything through these successive deaths and, rather, attains more perfection and reaches a higher level each time that he dies.  

Accordingly, opposite to what superficial people believe, man’s “life” is not limited to living in the body and in this world. Rather, like a chain, it has certain levels and stages, and leaving each means “death” at that level, and entering the next stage means “life” and a new birth. In fact, man is like a child who, not knowing the meaning of high school, views leaving primary school as death. However, when he enters high school, his view changes. When he leaves it, he dies to that world, but going to university is the beginning of a new life and a rebirth for him. According to gnostics, if this man has the capacity, and if he tries enough, these deaths and births will be repeated so frequently that man reaches God in his process of development and sees “the nine Heavens” under his feet.

In the Holy Qur’an, the many verses that are on life and death introduce death as a new level of the cycle of life. This gnostic and philosophical point has been mentioned in some verses. For example, we read in al-Baqarah chapter: 28, “How disbelieve ye in Allah when ye were dead and He gave life to you! Then He will give you death, then life again, and then unto Him ye will return.”

The word death at the beginning of the verse refers to the inanimate and vegetative stages, the womb, and the fetal state. The first life is man’s normal life in this world, and his second death is his normal death in this world. The two other stages of life are related to afterlife and the continuity of the developmental chain in this and the other worlds.

The same point has been referred to in other verses; for example, He says in Ghāfir chapter: 11, “They say: Our Lord! Twice hast Thou made us die, and twice hast Thou made us live. Now we confess our sins. Is there any way to go out?”

The philosophical analysis of the reality of death and life in the Qur’an must first begin with the meaning of “life” and the perception of its depth in this Holy Book so that the concept of death is better understood.

One of the attributes of God is “The Alive”. The philosophical meaning of life and “the alive” is being in existence along with knowledge and intelligence. In Islamic philosophy and gnosis, it is certain that God’s existence is pure, boundless, and immeasurable; hence, He is a unique being and enjoys pure perfection. Therefore, we can conclude that all existents – or, in other words, all lives and beings with or even without knowledge and intelligence – are merely rays of that world-illuminating sun, i.e. God’s Eternal Life and Being.

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5. al-Asfār, vol. 6, pp. 431, 437.
One of man’s characteristics is that, in addition to material existence and a second degree life, which all existents have, he enjoys a specific hidden life which has been referred to as “God’s spirit” in the Qur’an. For example, in al-Ḥijr chapter: 26-29, after referring to the first matter of the creation of man (which includes soil, mud, and the main chemical elements), He adds, “When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.”

One must be very careful when dealing with the vast and somehow vague meaning of the word “spirit”. However, based on the teachings of Islamic gnosis, the first created and the source of all existents of the world and the spread of the gift of existence is the “breath of the Merciful”. In Qur’anic proofs, the first thing that God created was “God’s spirit”, which is called the exalted spirit. Therefore, from a philosophical and gnostic point of view, we can interpret the blast of the divine spirit and its indwelling in man as the emanation of “the first granted existence” or true life.

Given the above analysis, man is the keeper of a divine trust and bounty who, based on the text of the Holy Qur’an, reached the station of divine vicegerency. That is why all angels were assigned to prostrate before the first man (who was the symbol of human beings) at the beginning of his creation. Muslims believe that the source of man’s essential grace is this very station of divine vicegerency. Secular jurists and leaders of other religions that do not view man as God’s vicegerent cannot refer to any real and logical source for man’s essential grace or define his primary and essential rights. This is because if the station of divine vicegerency did not exist, there would be no difference between man and other animals.
Therefore, based on the above interpretation, we can arrive at the following conclusions:

First, when man attains life and existence, it would be illogical to lose it and become non-existent. The reason is that, from a philosophical point of view, existence is always opposite to non-existence, and an object never gives birth to its own opposite. Thus what man considers “death” is, in fact, a change in the form of his life, his abode, and his living place. Death does not have a negative meaning and is, rather, an ontological existence. As we read in the Qur’an, God is the Creator of death and life. We know that “non-existence” cannot be created, and when creation starts, non-existence is gone and replaced by existence.

Second, man’s existence and life do not belong to him; they are left in trust with him as divine gifts. Man has no right to interfere with the natural process of creation – which, like a train, takes him from one station to another. That is why committing suicide or murdering others (unless with God’s permission and based on His laws) are not allowed and are considered to be cardinal sins.

Issues such as euthanasia and killing others out of mercy (which is forbidden in Islam) are related to the domains of philosophy and law rather than ethics. As we know, the willful interruption of one’s own life or that of others, although for benevolent purposes, is forbidden in Islamic law (based on the belonging of the essence of the life and existence of things to God and accepting His ownership of people’s souls and property). Man has the right to live, but is, at the same time, obliged to protect and guard life. This is because he has not created his own life or existence so that he becomes its true owner. Rather, he has received it as a trust and cannot interfere with it or, against the course of nature, throw himself from one stage of being to another one.
According to Islam and based on the belief in the continuity of life after death, suicide or premeditated murder is punished severely in the other world. However, if man were the owner of his own existence, he could and would have the right to commit suicide without deserving punishment.

From a philosophical point of view, denying existence to the self or others means disrupting the natural order of the world and ignoring the divine destinies and fates. Man’s suffering in certain stages and periods of his life is a part of the laws of this world, following which he will be rewarded by some positive consequences either in this world or in the Hereafter. This is like a difficult test that a student takes in order to receive a specific degree, or a sportsman who trains hard in order to become stronger. Interfering with the lives of these people, although out of mercy, against the practical order and program that have been pre-determined for them, is wrong and deserves punishment.

It should also be added that God’s true ownership is not limited to man’s life; rather, He is the Sole Owner of the life of all animate beings, including plants and animals, and the whole realm of man’s life on the Earth. Hence, according to Islam, killing living beings (animals or plants) except in order to protect the human life or defend people against danger is forbidden.

It has been demonstrated in the field of law that man’s limited ownership of his material achievements and natural riches is a second degree and metaphorical ownership. In fact, like his life, his property and wealth are also left in trust with him. Based on the explicit text of the Qur’an, everything, i.e. the world and everything therein is the absolute kingdom of God, and man is God’s vicegerent on Earth and His trust-keeper. He must harvest the land and does not have the right to destroy the fields and the
surrounding areas under the pretext of technological or bio-technological advancements.

In the view of the Qur’an, all activities that have damaged nature or are still damaging it (and are the result of man’s inventions or the use of some machines, different kinds of fuel, or harmful chemical substances) are disallowed. This is because they work against man’s duty and assignment as to construct and guard the world. The Qur’an has forbidden such activities so that man can live in the best and most comfortable way, goes through the stages of development and perfection, and becomes ready in order to reach the highest level, which is awaiting him with pride and honor.
The knowledge of man has always been an important or even the most important issue in all periods, human societies, religions, and various schools of philosophy. This issue has been studied extensively at the highest levels in the gnostic school of Muḥyaddin Ibn ‘Arabī relying upon inspirations from the Qur’ān and ḥadīth. This school has raised man’s status to that of a God-like existent and a comprehensive locus of the manifestation of beings and their Creator. It has granted a position to man which no other school has thus far.

After Ibn ‘Arabī, the Iranian philosopher, Mullā Şadrā (11th century AH and a contemporary of Descartes), founded an independent school of philosophy which was also inspired by the Qur’ān and ḥadīth. Like Ibn

* This paper was presented at a Congress on Ibn ‘Arabī in U.M. University in Malaysia in 2009.
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ʻArabi, he also provided a definition of man, and their definitions did not differ greatly from each other.

At the peak of their knowledge, Western thinkers could only learn about man on the corporeal level, and the highest peak of their knowledge was limited to calling him an “unknown existent”; in other words, they expressed their inability to define man. Western humanists introduce man merely as a human-like existent that not only bears no relation to God or heaven but is also an isolated stranger in the world.

In contrast, Islamic gnosis, on the one hand, and Mullā Șadrā’s Transcendent Philosophy, on the other, not only provided an accurate definition for man but also defined him in terms of his exact ontological limits and boundaries. In fact, their definition was more comprehensive and even vaster than the Greek and Peripatetic definition of man as a “rational animal”.

The gnostic definition of man in Ibn ʻArabi’s school is one of extreme beauty and subtlety and bears a direct relationship with the definitions of creation and of God Himself. God, man, and the world have a close relationship to each other in this approach, and knowledge of one is no different from knowledge of the others.

Knowledge of man in Islamic gnosis is associated with knowledge of the Almighty Truth, on the one hand, and knowledge of the world of being on the other. No knowledge of any of the three sides of “God-world-man” triangle is possible without knowledge of the others. In particular, without knowledge of the Almighty Truth and the world, our knowledge of man will be unfounded, just as the West during the modern era has failed to envisage a correct picture of man after turning its back on both Islamic philosophy and the Church.

1. Alexis Karel
The study of the ideas of these two gnostic traditions consists of three parts:

- Creation of the world of being or the macroanthropos
- The appearance of man and his relationship with the world
- Man’s duty and role.

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1. Creation of the World

In Ibn ‘Arabi’s school, knowledge of man begins with knowledge of the divine names and attributes and their role in extending objective existence and the creation of the realms of being. This view is rooted in the following Qur’anic verse: “And there are good names for God.” Although, according to Islamic gnosis, God’s Essence cannot be known, the infinite dimensions of His existence are each considered as one of His attributes. Each one has a name, which is the origin of the acts and creations of Almighty God and, unlike names given to other existents, they have their own effects.²

In Ibn ‘Arabi’s school of philosophy, ontology begins with inspiration from the Holy Qur’an and the principle that, at the beginning, Almighty God desired to see the things that existed, that is, the external manifestation of His names and attributes. This is because, before that and without reflecting all those beautiful attributes and names, Almighty God had remained hidden behind a curtain of ambiguity like a hidden treasure. Accordingly, emanation, which is the overflow of beauty and perfection,

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2. A name in gnostic dictionaries basically refers to a truth and level lower than the named (i.e. the original truth).
revealed itself beyond time and place in the form of the world of being and, speaking poetically, that charming beauty unveiled itself.

Referring to the following holy hadith, “I was a hidden treasure, but then I wished to be known, so I created the creatures;” Ibn ‘Arabi says that, based on the interpretation of the manifestation of God’s beautiful names, each name creates a specific form in the world of being and is manifested in a specific way.⁴ In this school, terms such as “manifestation” and “epiphany” refer to the idea that there is no pure non-existence beyond existents, and all things, even before their external existence, existed in the realm of “immutable essence” or “divine knowledge” hidden behind a veil. The divine attributes have been included in the beautiful names of Almighty God.

In this school, the world is portrayed as a human being as great as all the hidden and visible worlds in existence known as the macroanthropos. Each existent is like one of the organs of that macroanthropos and the locus of the manifestation of one of God’s names.⁴ Accordingly, the world of being, in spite of its internal multiplicity, enjoys a single identity and unity.

Mullâ Sadrâ also believes in the true unity of the world, and says:

The whole world has been constructed with a superior and more complete order in a single form (in terms of species, individuality, quiddity, and reality). The world of being is integrated and similar to a single human individual in whom the unity and coherence of their components are established on the basis of essential interest, the hierarchy of cause and effect, and the degrees of superiority of the highest to the lowest. The unity of the world is different from

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3. For example, His immense blessing is represented by the names “the Compassionate” and “the Merciful”.
that among the components of a building or the members of an army, which is not real.

He further states, “The individual unity of the world has been demonstrated and the questions of the “whatness” and “whyness” of things are in unity with each other within it. In other words, knowledge of it is the same as perceiving the purpose of its creation. Gnostics have called this first created in the realm of being the ‘macroanthropos’.”

In another place, he argues:

The world is a single entity enjoying natural unity. Some of its components are superior to its other components. It is a living and rational being which is called the “macroanthropos”. The world of matter functions as its appearance and its body, and the world of souls and spirits serves as its soul and interior. The gathering of these together comprises an integrated whole.

Mullâ Sadrâ believes that this macroanthropos, like an ordinary human being, is not only alive but also experiences youth and old age in its body, i.e. in its material and corporeal part. He argues, based on the principle of the trans-substantial motion, that the macroanthropos enjoys internal motion and follows a developmental process and, finally, it dies like a human being. He introduces its death as the same “Greater Rising”.

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7. Ibid., chapter: Fi mawt al-insân al-kabîr.
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2. Man’s Appearance and his Relationship with the World

In order to know about and introduce man and his natural relationship with Almighty God, these two Muslim gnostics from Andalusia and from Iran first proceeded to deal with ontology and the creation of the world to explain and portray man’s true place in the world in the best possible way.

Knowledge of man is also related to knowledge of Almighty God and the ontology of the macroanthropos (or the very world of being). Since a profound and precise knowledge of man depends on knowledge of the world, Ibn ‘Arabí begins his introduction of man from an ontological discussion of the manifestations of the divine names (beautiful names). He maintains that being is like a tree grown from a seed of the divine “holy emanation” and must inevitably bear a fruit, which is man’s existence. In other words, the macroanthropos is a mother from whose womb the microanthropos enters the realm of being.

In gnostic terminology, man is called the “microanthropos” or “microcosm”, and there is a close relative relationship and connection between the macroanthropos and the microanthropos. This relationship has been ignored not only in Western philosophies but even in Peripatetic philosophy.

At the beginning of his book (Fuṣūṣ al-ḫikam), Ibn ‘Arabí states:

Almighty God created and perfected the world. However, it was like a soulless mirror; that is, it could not be a complete reflection of God, the divine names, and His eternal and pre-eternal beauty. Hence, through His will and command and in order to polish this

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Man in Ibn ‘Arabi’s Gnosis and Mullâ Şadrâ’s …

mirror, Almighty God created man from the interior of that world and called this creature man or Adam. Accordingly, He gave him the title khalifat Allah (God’s vicegerent).

It was with the creation of man that God’s names and attributes became manifested in their complete form. This is because each of the other components of the world or the macroanthropos, the same existents and multiple things, is the locus of the manifestation of only one of His names rather than all of them. Moreover, each name functions as a pre-eternal law for being. Therefore, it lacks the necessary potential and ability for a complete reflection of the divine beauty. However, man, whom God has chosen as the locus of the manifestation of all of His names rather than a single one or a few names, is the mother of all laws embodying all pre-eternal ordinances and could be the all-revealing mirror of all the divine attributes.

Among the list of Almighty God’s names and attributes, the only name that includes all the divine names and attributes is “Allah”, and God chose man (the microanthropos) as the locus of the manifestation of the name of “Allah” so that it would be the all-revealing of all divine names and deserves the divine vicegerency. The name “Allah”, of which man is the locus of manifestation, is like a “mother law”, foundation, and origin that embodies all the principles and laws governing the world of being. Moreover, “divinity” means the creation and management of all existents.

According to Ibn ‘Arabi, the divine wisdom required that the name “Allah”, which includes all of God’s names and attributes, have a locus of manifestation in order to show the divine face and beauty completely.
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Hence, He created man to compensate for the defect that existed in the world of being (or the same macroanthropos).  

The possessor of the duty of symbolizing the all-encompassing name “Allah” deserved to hold the divine vicegerency. Therefore, God granted him grace and chose him as His vicegerent. Accordingly, the creation of man was intended to remove the defect of creation and introduce a vicegerent for God. Besides, man is not only a locus of the manifestation of all the names of God and His all-encompassing name (Allah) and a rival for the macroanthropos, but also enjoys some superiority to it, and the “all-encompassing” nature of the microanthropos and his great potential for attaining glory promotes him to the level of the true ruler of the world.

It is vital to emphasize that this man of gnosis is not the same human being as that who lives like an animal and has nothing to do but eat, sleep, get angry, or become lustful. Rather, he is a typical human being who is called the “perfect man”; Ibn ‘Arabi is the pioneer of this denomination.

The “perfect man” is the chosen one among all existents, and the last among all the existents of this world. Therefore, Ibn ‘Arabi refers to man as “insān al-‘ayn”, which means the eyeball, a window in man’s eye connecting him to the outside world. Man sees the world with his eyeballs, and all existents are reflected on this point in a man’s eye and are present there. According to poets, the dearest of man’s bodily organs is his eyeball, which adds to his beauty.

9. That is why we read in a ḥadīth, “God created man in His own image”, or “God created man as an example of Himself.”
10. The Qur’an, al-Isrā’ chapter: 70.
11. al-Baqarah chapter: 30.
In Ibn ‘Arabi’s view, man’s position in the whole of the objective and external world is tantamount to the self-same position of “‘insān al-‘ayn” (or eyeball) in relation to the whole body. Knowledge and perception of the whole world of being must begin with knowledge of the self and of the attributes of Almighty God in the light of the divine presence of the perfect man; hence, man is the locus of the manifestation of the names the “all-knowing” and the “aware”. It is man alone who can become aware of the core of realities. By accepting the concept of the macroanthropos and microanthropos, Mullā Ṣadrā also equates the perfect man with the macrocosm (or the same macroanthropos).

In Mullā Ṣadrā’s school, man is a compact version of the world (or that same macroanthropos), and both the macro- and microanthropos are the same as each other from all aspects. In other words, as the microanthropos is in the interior of the macroanthropos (or the world), so the macroanthropos is in the interior of the perfect man. This is because, as we said, man is the locus of the manifestation of the all-encompassing name “Allah”. In fact, all the other names and attributes of God are hidden in the interior of this word. As a result, since man is a mirror-like existent manifesting all the divine names, he includes the whole macrocosm. This is because the macrocosm is nothing but a collection that manifests every single name of Allah. Accordingly, Islamic gnosis has called man the all-encompassing being because this small existent includes all things in his simple domain but not in the sense which is true about Almighty God.

In other words, the purpose of creating all existents is the perfect man; he is the fruit of the tree of being and its ultimate cause, who,

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13. Ibn ‘Arabi has a treatise on this subject called al-Shajarah al-ilāhiyyah.
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although secondary in appearance, is prior to all in the hierarchy of causes.\textsuperscript{14}

Believing that the “perfect man” is God’s vicegerent, Mullà Šadrā divides the position of vicegerency into two levels:\textsuperscript{15} minor vicegerency (ruling the world of nature) and major vicegerency (ruling the world of being).

In his spiritual journey on the right path (that is, a path parallel to the laws of nature and \textit{fitrah} or primordial nature), man initially dominates the world of nature and, then, after attaining the “realities of the macrocosm” and perceiving some of the secrets of the “realities about Almighty God” which are revealed to him, he dominates the whole world (the world of nature and supranature). This is the very position of major vicegerency, which is the highest level of Allah’s vicegerency. It was because he held this level that angels prostrated before Adam (\textit{al-Baqarah} chapter: 33).

According to Islamic gnosis, the position of major vicegerency among human generations is exclusively for the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), his Household, the rightful Prophets, and God’s Favorites.

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\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, the perfect man (and the most perfect of all men, the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) or the Muḥammedan truth) is introduced as the cause of the creation of the world, the truth above all truths, and the source of other truths (there are some \textit{ḥadīths} in this regard). The Muḥammedan truth is the first emanation and the same \textit{Logos} in Greek and the first word. Therefore, it is not in contrast to related \textit{ḥadīths} (“God’s first creature was my light”, “The first created thing was the intellect”), and oneness is the origin of the intellect, and the intellect is the origin of souls.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{al-Asfār}, vol. 5, p. 595.
3. Man’s Duty and Role

After gaining knowledge of man (the microcosm) and his status in the world (or the macroanthropos), it is now the right time to study his role, which is the philosophical end and purpose of his creation, and to inquire about the relationship that exists between the microanthropos and the macroanthropos.

As mentioned before, man is the ultimate purpose of the creation of the beings of the world. Islamic gnosis calls him the all-encompassing being, involving all beings. However, man’s being the “all-encompassing being” is a kind of inherent disposition like a seed that should be developed. Nevertheless, unlike other animate beings, the responsibility for whose training (i.e. concerning their growth, productivity, and other vital tasks) has been given to nature and is deterministic and unchangeable, man is responsible for his own training, spiritual growth, and existential development on account of possessing free will. In addition to the trans-substantial motion (both automatic and forcible) which exists in both the world and man, there is another motion which is voluntary, only exists in man, and is the stimulus driving him towards transcendence and spiritual development.

Any natural disposition, which is a kind of potency will naturally be realized one day. However, man is duty bound to realize his potential for attaining divine vicegerency and becoming a perfect man in the light of his active will. Otherwise, a person without spiritual training and evolution, i.e. one who fails to reach the position of divine vicegerency, will remain an animal and be imperfect. Since such an imperfect man has

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not accomplished his duty, he is considered to be guilty and will be punished in the Hereafter.

There is a wisdom and purpose behind the creation of all existents, and the gathering of these purposes leads to the attainment of the main purpose and end intended by creation. We read in the following hadith, “I created the existents in order to be known.” In other words, the Almighty God states:

I put all My names and attributes (except Allah) on display to be known. I manifested each name in an existent so that the world is developed and the divine locus of manifestation appears in it. I created man so that all of them are gathered in a single form and man becomes perfect. In this way, the divine form of “Allah” will appear in the perfect man and the external name of Almighty Truth will be actualized. I created man for this duty and granted him an all-encompassing being. I made him my own vicegerent so that he plays his role and accomplishes his duty and makes both himself and the entire world of being perfect.

The above sets out the philosophy of the creation of man according to the view of gnostics and philosophers, and this is man’s role in the world of being and the wisdom of the Almighty God in the creation of man.

The world could not attain perfection without man, and without the perfect man, who is the all-encompassing name of all divine names and performing the duty of divine vicegerency, the macroanthropos would remain imperfect, and creation would not reach its intended end.

According to Mullà Sadrà, “Man is the last existent by whom God brought the creation of the existents of the world of nature to an end. He has also brought together all the realities of the worlds above and below in human beings.”

17. Ibid.
Nevertheless, there is a long and difficult way leading from the microanthropos (imperfect man) to the perfect man. Any person can bring his predispositions from potentiality to actuality during the course of this burdensome path and add to the magnitude of his existence at each step. The essence of this material world is intertwined with motion. Moreover, according to the principle of the permanent motion of substance, this world and all of its material existents are in a continuous one-sided motion. Through the effusions that they receive from the source of being, that is, the Almighty Creator, and through continuously gaining knowledge, they travel along the path of being. Therefore, each human being must move and make spiritual journeys until he becomes perfect, attains his as ordained by nature end, and becomes a perfect man. The driving force on his journeys is his will, and it works through a mechanism called love.

A loving wayfarer or a gnostic who is moving based on his free will towards playing the role of the divine vicegerency in order to perform his divine duty of attaining the divine purpose of creation must perform certain duties: the first is beginning the same mystic wayfaring and journey and developmental motion; the second is gaining acquired and presentational types of knowledge, and the third is being continuously involved in remembrance (dhikr) or not forgetting the end.

Gnostic teachings and the philosophy of continuous mystic wayfaring for man, civilizations, and even human societies are intended to prevent them from forgetting the end of the journey. They must never forget about the difficulties of the journey and should be aware that their life or identity is the same permanent trans-substantial motion that begins at birth. Man is corporeally created, thus he is doomed to experience the trans-

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18. Known as the trans-substantial motion of matter.
19. Remembrance means to remember the end of the creation of the world and one’s duty and mission at all times. This word has been frequently used in the Qur’an.
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substantial motion of matter; since he is spiritually persistent, he must turn his back at the world of matter, follow the path of spirituality, and begin his four-fold journeys (asfār al-arba’ah) in order to attain the position of the “divine glory”.

Because of his potential for attaining the station of divine vicegerency, any normal person can travel the difficult path of spiritual development through mystic wayfaring and reach the station of the perfect man.

On the basis of the philosophical principle of “trans-substantial motion”, which is a coercive motion, Mullâ Ṣadrâ believes that man’s nature is ready for spiritual growth and development. However, a wayfarer must benefit from this readiness and should try to attain perfection and reach his end with the help of other forms of voluntary motion.

This motion consists of two parts: one part is a cognitive and intellectual journey for attaining presentential and acquired knowledge, which, according to Mullâ Ṣadrâ, adds to the spiritual dimensions of the wayfarer and grants him an “existential openness”. He refers to this as the four-fold journeys and others as the stages of travelers. The Qur’an calls it the external and inward journey, and philosophers call it theoretical wisdom and define it as man’s turning into an intellectual world similar to the objective world.

The second part, which is the moving force of the journey, is “love”, which triggers behavior and action. This loving motion and life is called “practical wisdom”. These two parts move in a circular manner in order to help man to do “righteous deeds” and practice religious worship through attaining acquired and intuitive knowledge. As we read in the Qur’an, “To Him mount up (all) Words of Purity: It is He Who exalts Each Deed of Righteousness.”


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The phrase “righteous deeds” in the Qur’an refers to a wayfarer’s effort to take his achievements in the field of knowledge to a supreme human destination which, in another verse, has been called “divine glory”. Reaching the level of divine glory, which is the same as “fulfilling the duty of God’s vicegerency” and “assuming the characteristic traits of God”, will only be possible in the light of theoretical wisdom and through beginning an indefatigable journey on the “right path”, which is the same as practical wisdom.

Man’s true perfection and fulfillment of the duty of the divine vicegerency will be realized when man, in the light of this station, not only tries to perfect himself but also tries to lead the entire world of being towards its natural perfection. This is because man is the all-encompassing being and the locus of the manifestation of the holy name “Allah”, which embraces all the divine attributes. Man’s reaching the culmination of the all-encompassing name “Allah” is concomitant with the realization and acquisition of other divine names and attributes. Indeed, with the perfection of the perfect man, all the other loci of the manifestations of Almighty God will become perfect.

Man is the offspring of the macroanthropos and, according to philosophers, he has attained his growth under the supervision of the “seven-fold fathers” and the “training of the four-fold mothers”. Once, the macroanthropos acted like a mother to the microanthropos and brought him up in her arms. However, at the end of this process it is man, or yesterday’s microanthropos and today’s perfect and great man, who should take care of his old parents. In other words, he should take all the loci of the manifestations of the divine names and attributes to the end of creation, i.e. the all-encompassing name (Allah). This is because everything returns to God, and “We have come from God and we will return to Him.”
The true perfection of the perfect man is the perfection of the whole world and, following the way of God’s names, which is the perfectional journey of all existents, must end in the all-encompassing name (Allah) so that the period of perfection for both the micro- and macroanthropos is completed.

That is why we say that any person who does not try to attain perfection and, as a result, does not step forward in order to perfect the world has not been grateful for God’s gifts; he has not appreciated the motherhood of the world of being and will be cursed by both of them. Humanity is cursed, and Hell and otherworldly torture is the meaning of this curse of the mother of the world and nature.
The question of the human being is a complicated one which is discussed in most scientific and philosophical fields. In fact, it is one of the most important philosophical problems if not the most important of all of them. Thus it deserves to be discussed and examined carefully not only in this conference but also elsewhere.

The reason behind the importance of human problems is the existence of various dimensions of the human being. The complexities of one’s spirit or soul, the multiplicity and amazing nature of one’s internal and mental powers and even the marvelous physical features of the human body.

* This paper is the written form of the speech delivered by Professor Seyyed Mohammed Khamenei, President of the Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute at the inauguration ceremony of the Conference on “The Human Being in the Transcendent Philosophy” held in 2007.
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have turned him into an unknown existent who comes second to the Almighty Being in this respect. Here, it is the right place for them to say, “We did not know You as You be fit.”

In addition to a human’s internal intricacies, each person has a specific status in terms of his relationships with God, nature, and the macrocosm, which adds to the complexity of a human’s essence and acts. This very specific and unique situation and innermost being of each human makes him so different from others of his kind that no two human beings can be considered similar to each other.

Since a human is considered to be an independent species in the field of logic and consists of both an animal and a rational being, unlike other material existents, we cannot consider him to be a single being in a logical framework and a so-called compound species consisting of an animal and a rational being. This is because the changing dimensions of human individuals continually change their nature, and each substance from each human being seeks a specific way of its own to pass through its own perfectional journey. This way is different from the ways of others and the world that they build for themselves.

From this point of view, a human can be viewed as a “unique species” like immaterial things. Each animal is dependent on its own species, and every rule that applies to each individual animal is also true about all other animals of its own species. However, this is never the case with human beings.

Animal nature is a fixed nature that is known on the basis of the natural rules and data for each species and is called instinct. An animal has no freedom and free will and cannot step outside the framework of its instincts. However, a human can overcome his instincts, the obligatory program of creation, in the light of his free will. A person can obtain softwares for himself, write programs, act on the basis of his own practical
and administrative plan, choose a way that is different from those of others, and create a world for himself that does not match those of other human beings.

Of course, this principle holds true only for that group of human beings who, unlike animals, are not enslaved by their own instincts, anger, and lust. Such (enslaved) people have the form of human beings but the nature of animals; the rules governing animal-like humans are other than those for real humans as discussed here.

In anthropological discussions one must make true human beings the center of one’s attention. The difficulty of the problem of knowing human beings lies in the existence of this group of people; a group each individual of which is unique and different from pseudo-humans with animal natures.

One might object here that all human individuals are the same in their primordial nature (fitrah); all are the offspring of Adam and have the divine breath of his spirit in themselves; and all of them, from a philosophical point of view, enjoy logos (which can be defined as the intellect, free will, word, or the like). This is because all of these common human characteristics are related to the arc of descent and the tradition of creation rather than to the arc of ascent, in which the control of one’s life, future, and destiny is to a great extent in one’s own hands. Here, he deserves to be given responsibilities, has turned into a divine vicegerent on Earth, and is satiated by the spring of absolute effusion.

The differentia of the “rational” in human beings is merely potential, i.e. all humans are potentially rational. Nevertheless, an animal-like human being who has failed to bring his rational power into actuality through perfection-seeking efforts and holy war will remain in the same lowest world of animal nature. As the Holy Qur’an says, “We have indeed created man in the best of moulds, then do We abase him (to be) the lowest of the low, -
except such as believe and do righteous deeds: For they shall have a reward.” (al-Tîn chapter: 4-6)

The phrase “the best of moulds” might be the same rational faculty that distinguishes a human from other material existents and, if it is not actualized, he will remain at the lowest level. According to al-`Aâr chapter: 1-3, “By (the token of) Time (through the ages), verily Man is in loss, except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy.”

In the view of the Qur’an, belief and righteous acts or theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom, lead to man’s progress and freedom from the lowest level and safeguard him against losing his treasure of rationality and human nature.

Accordingly, a human’s voluntary perfectional movement is not a species-specific and collective movement. Unlike a human in the arc of descent, a perfect human in the arc of ascent is a lonely traveler on a quiet road. That is why each person has a separate world for himself in his relationship with God, the world and the macrocosm. More importantly, each human being is a world within the limits of its essence and conduct that has its own independent life alongside other worlds. In my view, the term “possible worlds” is appropriate for such human beings, and human beings are the true referents of this title.

Among Western philosophers, Leibnitz referred to the term “possible worlds” in his philosophy and concluded that some other worlds were also possible in God’s mind (i.e. His Knowledge). However, He eventually favored this world and created it, and no other world is practically possible.

Our Muslim philosophers had previously stated that God has chosen the best design for the creation of the world and named it the best order. We are well-aware that Leibnitz’s best order or possible world is related to the
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arc of descent and the stage of creation. Nevertheless, the point that we make about perfect human beings under the title “possible worlds” is related to the arc of ascent. There are also some references in this regard in the hadiths. For example, we read in a hadith, “The paths towards God are as many as the human souls (the number of human beings).”

This means that if we assume any path towards God, any wayfarer, any traveler, any type of journey, or any intention of wayfaring as a world, there will be an infinite number of possible worlds each one different from the worlds of other wayfarers depending on the purpose, intention, and acts of each wayfarer. Perhaps the Qur’anic verses “And everyone of them will come to Him singly on the Day of Judgment.” (Maryam: 95) and “And behold! ye come to us bare and alone as We created you for the first time.” (al-Ana‘äm: 94) refer to the same problem.

Each human being is an independent world for themself, not because one is the microanthropos, but because everything that there is in the macroanthropos also exists in the interior of human beings and, in the macroanthropos, there are no differences among human beings. As our Imām (‘a) said, “The world of being has a place inside you.” The reason is that this view also depends on the arc of descent and, as a result, like the external world, human beings are a collection of wills, programs, phenomena, and graded motions. All or most of these elements and pillars of human life and one’s spiritual journey are personal and specific to each individual wayfarer. This is because there are infinite paths for travelling towards God, and these paths are similar to the geodesic lines on the globe or the curved space of the world which is both direct and infinite.

Human free will is an exceptional and personal faculty (unlike human instincts) the applications of which in each human individual are different from the other, and they must not be confused with the applications of instincts (which are the same for all human beings). The differences
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among human wills portray various possible directions for humanity, and all the historical ups and downs, as well as the variety of the events in human societies, are the effects of the same plurality of wills and their differences. That is why other existents have no history.

The differences among the worlds of human beings are not merely rooted in their diverse wills; rather, they are also related to their power of imagination. Since animals have no imagination – as we believe – they are incapable of creativity. However, a human being is the king of the world of his imagination (i.e. the microcosmic world of imagination), and each human being is an independent world in which tens and hundreds of creatures are created and destroyed without being related to others’ worlds of imagination, or without one’s imagination being similar to or in unity with the imagination of any other human individual.

According to Mullā Śadrā and some other gnostics, it is this very faculty of imagination in a human being that creates their otherworldly life, Paradise or Hell, and leads him towards that immaterial world.

The other factor that separates a human being from others, and even from his own world, and creates a new world for him is “love”, which is a phenomenon that liberates human beings from the material rules of the world. This is an important ontological problem by itself and is different from the intellect, which works mainly in the field of epistemology.

The path of the intellect is a single common path that is not prone to multiplicity, and the opposition of intellects means that they are mistaken. However, the path of life is the path of wilderness and the byway where everyone has a way of their own different from others.

Here, I would like to recommend our scholars and philosophers not to limit their studies on the human being in such conferences to a discussion of the human being in the arc of descent and also deal with his other aspects and dimensions.
Reason and Spirit

Introduction

Before entering into a discussion of reason and spirit, it is necessary to define these two terms. The difficulty here arises from the fact that neither of them has a clear definition. Indeed, since the time of ancient Greece until now, various definitions have been posited for them; however, they are so different from each other that one is reminded of the ironic story of “the elephant in the darkness”. Accordingly, it is very difficult to discuss them accurately. In this paper, we have limited our discussion of reason and spirit mainly to the related views in Islamic philosophy and, particularly, Mullâ Şadrâ’s theory in this regard.

* This paper was prepared for a Congress on Reason and Spirit held by American Institute of Phenomenology in 2007.
I. Reason

In Islamic philosophy, the word reason is usually used as an equivalent for ‘aql. However, since the latter is also considered as an equivalent for the word intellect, one must always be careful not to confuse them with each other in comparative philosophy. Nowadays, in Islamic philosophy, in order to avoid this confusion, the word reason is sometimes translated as particular or terrestrial ‘aql and the word intellect as universal or heavenly ‘aql.

In order to open the discussion of reason and spirit, it is useful to refer to the different meanings and explanations of the word reason, the most well-known of which are as follows:

A. Reason is a faculty that can arrive at new answers and conclusions based on given data and experiences. In the logical sense of the word, it can lead us from evident propositions to optimal theoretical ones and function as a means for solving philosophical and scientific problems. This is sometimes called theoretical reason or the knower’s reason.

B. Reason is an essential intelligence in human beings which distinguishes between good and evil, and true and false. This reason has practical and social applications, is discussed in philosophy and ethics, and is commonly called practical reason or agent reason. Philosophers believe that these two types of reason (theoretical and practical) are not completely different from each other and maintain a kind of logical relationship between them. They also state that they depend on each other.

Inspired by the Holy Qur’an, Islamic philosophers have based their discussions on these two meanings of reason because in the Qur’an people are encouraged to use their intellect, think, and activate their power of logical reasoning. In Islamic philosophy, thinking is defined as the shift of
man’s mind from the given data and knowledge towards an answer to the unknown; in other words, a move from evident propositions towards the required theoretical ones.

The Qur’an has also frequently referred to the use of reason in distinguishing good from evil and has sometimes called it wisdom. Therefore, in this Holy Book reason has two meanings and two functions. Muslim philosophers have been greatly inspired by the Qur’anic views in this regard, and Muslim Peripatetic philosophers have also agreed with them. Since the time of Aristotle four levels, which have also been discussed in Islamic philosophy, have been considered for theoretical reason, i.e. a faculty that can acquire knowledge and develop it. These four levels are as follows:

1. Material reason, which, as defined by Ibn Sinā and the philosophers succeeding him, is the same pure disposition for having knowledge and is potential.¹

2. Habitual reason, which means the mind’s power for acquiring new knowledge based on apriori data.² Muslim philosophers have sometimes equated material reason and habitual reason with each other.³

3. Reason in Act, which means a mind abounding in knowledge and ready to pay attention (intentionality).

4. Acquired reason, which refers to the active part of the human mind and is, in fact, one of the faculties of the soul. In the case of the need to acquire new knowledge, it can resort to the reservoir of background knowledge and, in other words, pay attention to its intended subject (intentionality). By formulating premises for logical syllogisms based on the

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² Ibid.
³ Ibid., p. 485, quoted from Fārābī.
given data, it can also arrive at answers to questions and solve philosophical problems.

If this process of inference and search for answers concerns scientific and theoretical problems and issues, it will be related to the domain of theoretical reason; however, if it concerns the distinctions between good and evil, beautiful and ugly, virtue and vice, and goodness and corruption, it will be related to the domain of practical reason.

Through an accurate analysis of these types of reason, we can claim that the Aristotelian division of reason lacks precision because his “material reason” is not reason in the real sense of the word. Rather, it is a negative, non-existential entity and a kind of pure disposition. Habitual reason is also a kind of mental readiness for receiving knowledge and is considered, in Mullâ Șadrâ’s words, “the acquisition power”. Fârâbî also believes that material reason and habitual reason are both the same potential reason rather than two independent things.

Aristotle’s actual reason is not reason in the common sense of the word; rather, it is a kind of so-called data-bank or “package of knowledge existing in the mind”. In fact, it consists of man’s background knowledge. Hence, the Aristotelian classification of reason does not contribute much to our understanding of the issue. The only component of Aristotle’s four-fold classification which can be viewed as an equivalent to reason or intellect is the same acquired reason, which enjoys actuality and active presence in the soul (psyche). Some have referred to it as “permanent intentionality” or an entity leading to actual wisdom (noûs poletichos). Actual reason in Peripatetic philosophy is the same other-worldly element that is the origin of all supreme knowledge, scientific discoveries, and creativities. The problem

5. Ibid.
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of actual reason and its role in epistemology have been forgotten to a great extent in modern Western philosophy. It has also been rejected particularly in the empiricist, positivist, and other similar schools. Later we will see that, if we omit the theory of the relationship between acquired reason and actual universal reason, which highlights the difference between the human mind and computers, in this classification the human mind would not be much different from a machine. Consequently, we will face many difficulties in dealing with epistemological problems.

* * *

In Islamic philosophy, reason is mostly considered as a part of the entire world and in relation to it. In other words, it apparently exists in the human species – or even in each individual human – as an independent and self-sufficient reality, and can offer its views in both theoretical and practical areas and guide the human mind and soul in both theoretical and practical wisdom. However, because of man’s dependence on the world, his natural structure, and his active presence as a part of the whole world and an organ of the entire cosmic system, it is logical to assume that man’s reason enjoys a kind of organizational relationship with a universal center or cosmic and beyond-matter reason (actual reason) and can receive a series of realities through this connection.

In this view universal or actual reason or, according to the philosophers of ancient Iran, ravānbakhsh (life-giving reason), is the regulator of the world, the source of motion, and the guide of man’s thinking and truth-seeking instinct. It is this universal faculty that helps the human mind and leads him at every step towards gaining knowledge of the world, entering into harmony with it, acquiring the knowledge of realities (and
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nomena), and moving beyond phenomena. It also contributes to his spiritual and intellectual perfection. It is based on this mental and organic relationship between man and the world (actual reason) that he can go through several developmental stages in the course of his life and stay out of the circle of animal attributes. Mullā Ṣadrā and some other philosophers have named these stages the second and third stages of birth and, sometimes, the first man, the second man, and the third man.

In most Western philosophical schools, reason is usually viewed as an independent and sometimes a material entity without bearing any relation to any immaterial supreme origin. That is why they sometimes confuse epistemology with the physiology of the mind and brain. In contrast, in Islamic philosophy, the material and immaterial worlds are related to each other in an integrated system.

* * *

Given the above definition of reason (nòus), it becomes clear why it has been used since ancient times until now in Islamic gnosis with two different meanings, namely: as a human faculty; and as an immaterial and cosmic truth that conforms to the concept of macrocosmos and can introduce the realities of the world, whether ontological or epistemological, to human beings and guide their intellect.

6. We can see a similar idea in the philosophies of ancient East, e.g. in Hindu philosophy (Dharma).
8. al-Asfār, about Alexander of Aphrodisias.
II. Spirit

Disagreements concerning spirit that have risen between new Western philosophies, on the one hand, and Islamic and Greek philosophies, on the other, are no less than those related to the issue of reason. Nowadays, the word “spirit” has replaced the Greek-derived word psyche.

Possibly by the introduction of the word “spirit” in Islamic philosophy and theology (here, spirit means both the human soul, and breathing and being air-like), this word that is derived from the Latin spiritus, meaning fairy or djinn) later became common in Medieval philosophy and theological philosophy.

In ancient Greece, in order to refer to spirit in its modern sense, writers sometimes used the word noüs (which was mainly employed in the sense of the intellect or the first substance). Accordingly, it was used as a synonym to logos. In new Western definitions, the word spirit is sometimes used as a synonym for “soul” and at other times with other meanings, such as any immaterial object, or as an antonym for a body or corpse (mainly in psychology). In the latter sense, spirit has been introduced as the cause of life in animate beings.9

The word spirit (rūḥ) has also been used with a variety of different meanings in Islamic philosophy. Some believe that it is the very energy resulting from the activities of the body organism (temperament). This meaning is apparently the legacy of Alexandrian physicians and the translations of Gustav, the son of Luke, from Greek into Arabic.10 Muslim theologians mainly considered spirit as a synonym for the soul11

and, sometimes, equated it with life (the human soul) in terms of its meaning.

According to Ishrāqi (Illuminationist) philosophers, spirit is an immaterial and independent entity that descended from above. Basically, they viewed it as an immaterial existent which is created before the human body, accompanies it after its creation, makes it alive, and leads it towards perfection. Sometimes, they also introduced it as an existent higher than other existents and an intermediary between God and other existents in the process of creation. This idea was very close to that of pre-Socratic philosophers.

In the view of Iranian Muslim philosophers, spirit is the cause of life in human beings and the essence of their intellect and perception, particularly, in terms of universal concepts (rational issues). They also call it the rational soul. In some cases, spirit is considered as the essence of man’s rationality and, to some extent, as equal to it. It is also viewed as something beyond and separate from the feelings, emotions, and instincts common to human beings and animals.

* * *

The various disagreements concerning the definition of spirit were rooted in the existence of different philosophical, medical, and material naturalist schools and their ideas in this regard. They also originated in the translations of Greek books, and disagreements between the Platonic and Illuminationist schools and the Peripatetic school, on the one hand, and the conflicts between philosophers and Alexandrian and Greek physicians, on the other. However, later Iranian philosophers and all Muslim and Sufi

Illuminationist philosophers have considered spirit (rūḥ) as an immaterial and disengaged reality and the origin of man’s spiritual development, as well as man’s connection with the immaterial world.

In the Holy Qur’an, the word rūḥ (spirit) has been used in two ways: 1) with the definite article al and 2) without it in relation to a pronoun or noun (rūḥī – rūḥānī). “Al-rūḥ” is the name of the unique noble angel that mediates between God and His creatures and is a general and unique word (similar to logos). However, “rūḥ” (without the definite article) is a life-giving and personal existent that has been sent from God, and there are as many spirits (rūḥān) in the world as there are human beings.¹⁴ This Qur’anic definition has influenced the Islamic culture and philosophy and is accepted by Muslim philosophers.

* * *

Although reason and spirit are examined as two separate phenomena, an accurate study of these two entities begins when we study their meeting point, that is, human beings. Man is a phenomenon that, while being obvious, is extremely ambiguous and even unknown.

Unlike the justifications of physicists, not only the origin of the creation and development of man, but also even his anatomy and physiology are unknown (inconnue)¹⁵ to experts. For example, scholars have not scientifically experimented on the chakras and energy circuits in the body (according to Chinese medicine) yet.

When the time comes to know the spirit and its immaterial aspects – such as thought, will, inspiration, and the like – it becomes much more

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¹⁴ Seyyed Mohammed Khamenei, Spirit and the Soul.
¹⁵ Alexis Karel, L’Homme, cet Inconnu.
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difficult to know man. Therefore, we will postpone the introduction or knowledge of man to another time and merely deal with the reason-spirit relation and its place with regard to human beings.

* * *

III. Reason-Spirit Relationship

Although there is no unanimity concerning the real relationship that exists between reason and spirit, generally speaking, we can refer to three ideas in this regard.

First, reason and spirit, despite their differences in meaning and form, in fact refer to the same thing. This assumption has had its own advocates. For example, we have previously seen that Anaxagoras and the Stoics, even Plotinus, equated noûs, which philosophers considered to be the same as reason, with logos and viewed it as the intermediary in the process of creation. Plato also used noûs generally in the sense of first reason (or the same intermediary of creation) in his Republic.

Second, reason and spirit are two completely different things with different characteristics. This idea is more commonly held today.

Third, while being separate from each other in terms of meaning and essence, there is a logical relationship and connection between reason and spirit. For example, reason is considered to be one of the faculties of spirit and a part of its reality.

Based on the third theory, which is accepted by Islamic philosophy, in addition to being the essence of his life and being, man’s spirit controls all of his perceptions, which also include his reason. Therefore, reason is one of the inner and intangible faculties of spirit, and any developmental changes in reason directly contribute to the development of spirit and affect it.
According to the theory of Peripatetics, who believe that spirit and the soul are the same, this process always accompanies matter. Reason and the perfections of spirit or the soul arise out of man’s sense experience during his life time, and this process begins with matter (that is, the body) and moves in a direct and linear fashion forwards towards perfection.

Nevertheless, according to the Illuminationists’ theory, which is rooted in the “Khusrawâni” Wisdom of ancient Iran, the development of spirit and its relation to reason are not direct and linear; rather, they are circular. Hence, spirit initially comes in a descending motion from the higher pole (heaven) towards the lower pole (man’s material body) and, after a shared journey with the body, continues its ascending and perfectional motion.

This circular line, the lowest level of which is the material point, i.e. the meeting point of the body and spirit and the highest level of which lies beyond matter and in the firmaments, not only reveals the start point of man’s life (matter) but also reveals his relation to the world above.

Therefore, the human spirit, which is created by and originated in the heavenly Holy Spirit or logos, not only enjoys the possibility of connecting to the Holy Spirit and obtain knowledge and realities from Him but also, like that same Holy Spirit, has the power of creativity and is responsible for the administration of the body and all of its faculties.

The means and faculty by which the human spirit attains new knowledge and obtains the realities and teachings from the Active Intellect is “reason”. Along with spirit, it is the intermediary between the corporeal spirit and heavenly spirit (the universal and active intellect). This mediation or relation is on various levels:

The lowest level of its relation to the holy and active intellect entails guessing and similar perceptions, and the highest level entails
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revelation, which is exclusively reserved to the Prophets. Between these two levels, there are gnostic intuitions and even poetic and artistic inspirations.

In this school, spirit is an immaterial and heavenly reality and is, therefore, not pure potency. It enjoys actuality and has some knowledge that is called foreknowledge. According to this theory, from the beginning of his life man possesses some knowledge in relation to this world, and instruction is a means by which he recalls his underlying knowledge.

This theory has been set out in a more logical form in ancient Iranian gnosis and Plotinus’s gnosis. Later it was accepted by two other Iranian philosophers, namely, Suhrawardí and Mullà Sadrà, who developed an ontological and epistemological form for it. According to these thinkers, there is an immaterial reality which can be called “the universal spirit” in the world and beyond the material world. This is the same intermediary between God and His creatures in creation and their material and spiritual growth and development; it is also the same thing that was called “ravānbakhsh” in ancient Iranian philosophy, and can be considered the same as the Peripatetic “active intellect” and even the Holy Spirit and Gabriel in the Qur’an and other religious books.

This immaterial and heavenly reality is the “active intellect” or “universal intellect” which not only is the cause of creation but also leads them to the end of creation. The human spirit is created from this spirit; hence, it is not only the cause of life in his body, but also protects it and oversees its process of development.

In this view, because of this very closeness between man’s substance of spirit and the Holy Spirit (active intellect) and their natural relation, provided that he is in harmony with that universal spirit or active intellect and is pure from material defects, man can have a spiritual relation and connection with the Holy Spirit and, in this way, attain knowledge.
Mullā Ṣadrā’s Theory

In order to understand Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory (in terms of the reason-spirit relationship), we must initially pay attention to the fundamental principles of his philosophy. He based his philosophy on three fundamental principles: the principality of existence, the gradation of existence, and the flowing motion of the substance of objects (the trans-substantial motion of matter). According to the theory of the principality of existence, existence (its reality rather than its mental concept) is not an entity abstracted from the differences between the ontological levels of existents. Based on the principle of the gradation of existence, external existents (such as the light of a lamp) are of various degrees; hence, they are gradational and prone to qualitative growth, and each external existent enjoys a specific level of that existence. Finally, according to the principle of trans-substantial motion, the substance of the world of matter is in flux and in a state of becoming and, as Heraclitus said, “No flower can be smelt twice.”

Mullā Ṣadrā’s idea concerning the creation of the soul is different from those of Plato and Aristotle. Plato believed that the soul is an independent, disengaged, and heavenly existent that comes to Earth in order to administer the body. Aristotle and the Peripatetics maintained that the soul is created simultaneously with but separately from the body and accompanies it until death.

However, Mullā Ṣadrā believed that the soul originates in the body and grows along with the developmental growth of the body and, then,

16. The quiddity of an object marks its ontological limits and boundaries.
17. In another place, reference has been made to the difference between absolute real existence and other existents (al-Asfūr).
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separates itself from it and becomes independent. Although he sometimes distinguishes the spirit completely from the soul, in some cases he uses them interchangeably and in the same sense. In this way, like Plato, he equates the spirit with the soul.

Based on the above principles, at the beginning of creation each person enjoys a specific quantity and share of existence; nevertheless, by his natural and essential motion, which includes the growth of the body and soul, and the spirit of both, he gradually rises up from the lower levels of existence and traverses the path towards perfection. The soul, spirit, reason, and other realities belonging to man’s existence also share in this process of becoming and development.

Following the trans-substantial motion of matter, which is an essential and spontaneous motion, the soul, spirit and reason (as the symbols of each human being) are in flux and must traverse a specific path in order to attain greater perfection and a deserving status.

In Mullâ Sadrâ’s school, the growth and development of man’s spirit and soul is only possible through developing and increasing his knowledge. In his view, existence and knowledge cannot be essentially included in the same category and, like existence, knowledge (or science in its general sense) does not belong to the Aristotelian logical categories either but is higher than them. It is because of this symmetry that the perfection of “man’s existence” is directly related to the “growth and perfection” of his knowledge.

18. Asrâr al-âyât, țaraf 2, mashhad 1, p. 147.
19. Ibid., țaraf 2, mashhad 2, tanbih. Orthodox advocates of Mullâ Sadrâ might not agree with this idea; however, following a critical approach, it is difficult to accept the hypothesis of the materiality of the createdness of the soul without accepting the interference of spirit.
20. Ibid., p. 145.
Accordingly, the more man adds to his treasure of knowledge and experience, the more complete his existence will be. Likewise, following existence, his quiddity, which is an abstract entity and is derived from the dimensions of existence, increases. As a result, the growth of human knowledge leads to a change in his infinite quiddity, and this process makes man greater and more perfect in terms of his spiritual dimensions at each moment.

In the same way that the addition of construction materials makes a building bigger and more complete, intellect and learning lead to man’s perfection, growth, and gradation in terms of existence, i.e. his spirit. This is because man’s life and existence originate in his spirit, which functions as the main variable in a living person. The material body and its changes depend on the changes in spirit, which, in turn, depend on the becoming of reason, which is one of the faculties of the soul or spirit, in man.

In other words, spirit has various faculties, and the one whose role is the acquisition of knowledge is called reason. According to this point of view, reason is the cause of man’s growth of knowledge and, in fact, the engine of the motion and becoming of the soul or spirit. It helps the growth and perfection of man and his spirit and, at every step, adds a further level to the levels of man’s existence.

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21. Similar to the roles of the variable and function in mathematics.
22. Here, reason can be considered to be the same as the Peripatetic acquired reason, and the method of its acquisition of knowledge is to connect with the spirit of the world, the cosmic spirit, or the macroanthropos to whom all types of knowledge lead. Of course, in a more accurate sense, the word “intellect” here is more suitable than reason.
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Given the above points, we can identify the relationship between reason and spirit in Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s philosophy. The task of reason (as one of the faculties of the soul) is to acquire knowledge through obtaining experience and connecting with the cosmic spirit or active intellect. This continuous motion of reason is the cause of man’s spiritual perfection and ontological growth and, like an engine, drives the process of the becoming of the soul and spirit, which accompany and dominate the trans-substantial motion of matter and are responsible for it.

As long as man’s disengaged spirit is in the body, it is limited by time, which, in Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s view, is nothing but the cosmic and continuous motion of the substance of matter. The impact of time and becoming on the spirit is the same as the provision of the opportunity for scientific and rational growth through which the human spirit attains its perfectional purpose. Islamic gnosis believes in the Platonic spirit and maintains that its promotion is the reason for the descent of the disengaged spirit and its accompanying the body. They say that the immaterial spirit needs the body, which is material, in order to promote its ontological level. This is because it is alongside the becoming of the body and its material time-creating motion that it can have a gradational motion and go beyond what it is.

Mullâ Ṣadrâ’s student, Mullâ ‘Abdulrazzâq Lâhiji, states the same issue in a poem in which he assimilates man to the earthly mould of the body and a trap or workshop for substantial perfection so that the small earthly bird, at the end of its residence in the body and staying with its matter, turns into a high-flying mythical bird and reaches the peak of its choice.

The reason for the descent of spirit from the immaterial world (malakūt) to the material world is believed to be the acquisition of more
perfection. Philosophers usually maintained that the transfer of the separate spirit, which is higher than the material existent, into the body, which is material, is incorrect and illogical because they assumed that by this the separate spirit has made a regressive motion. Nevertheless, the advocates of this theory believe that in this motion and transfer, the spirit does not go through a regressive motion and does not leave immateriality. Rather, it increases its level of immateriality through the material and developmental motion of the body, and at this time the small bird of Dominion (*malakīt*) turns into a mythical bird, flies high into the sky, and lands on the highest place possible.
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