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Ontology of Human's Eschatological Observations from the View of Mulla Sadra

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ABSTRACT

The afterlife (also the world to come) has been one of the major humans' concerns throughout history. Although heavenly religions and Islamic philosophy have recognized the very foundation of the Hereafter, there are questions surrounding the existence and characteristics of that world. In the meantime, there is a myriad of theories about it, and Mulla Sadra's view is a key theory here. This research analyzes the philosophical basics of Mulla Sadra's views to distinguish his perspective from those of others and to portray a different aspect of the world-to-come observations. The findings suggested that Mulla Sadra argues that man achieves actualization over time and transfers to the world to come by abandoning the matter. In that world, there are no objects for man to observe; rather, he will create all his observations by himself, with every human creating a more transcendental world made of imaginary perceptions which, unlike imaginary observations in this world, assumes an external reality which is also formed in the existence and life of the human psyche.

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Introduction

A major philosophical discussion surrounding life after death is the explanation of such issues as the existence of the world to come, type of the human existence in that world, humans' relations with each other and other creatures in that world, and the existence of things which are observed and perceived by humans, etc. Debates over the world after death is so philosophically critical that they can be regarded as a fruit of metaphysical and philosophical discussions, including Islamic philosophy; in this connection, Mulla Sadra bases his eschatology on the principles which result from all his philosophical discussions.

In this way, the spiritual (soul-based) and corporeal theory of human eschatology is what constitutes the foundations of analyses, though the ontology of human observations has received little attention. However, this subject is a critical point and discussed by people who believe in the afterlife. Having said this, man will observe gardens, rivers, wine, heavenly Huris, snakes, scorpions, fire, etc., when experiencing rewards or punishment for what he did in this world. However, the Islamic philosophy initially accepted the spiritual afterlife through interpretation and simile, as if they could serve as concrete mundane descriptions that God used to encourage man to another world where no word is ever able to convey their true senses. However, with Mulla Sadra's corporeal eschatology, this issue cannot be easily resolved as various principles should be put forward to explain what man will observe in the other world.

Although Mulla Sadra recognizes the corporeal afterlife, he denounces the materiality of that world in a way it dis-resemble the current mundane affairs. Thus, seeking to justify it based on the soul actualization. This aggravates this subject under study and raises serious questions: How can one regard his own eschatological observations as real while regarding them as immaterial and simply attribute them to soul actualization? How

does soul actuality work? Where is the place for these observations? And do these observations exist within the souls or outside them?

Theories on eschatological observations

There are four major theories over eschatology.

1. What is entirely pertinent to eschatology is its concrete characteristics resembling those of this world (Bahrani, p. 157; Taftazani, 1998, p. 83; Helli, 1995, p. 405 and 406; Ershad Al-Talebin, p. 405), which is concluded from the theories of most Theologians (Motakallem). Consistent with this perspective, human observations of the afterlife will be exactly the same as his observations in the pre-death state; i.e., it will be another material world which man goes to and experiences the rewards and suffering of that world through his senses.
2. Some believe that the afterlife is intellectual and spiritual and consider partial man's observations, as demonstrated in the Koran, to be simply an expressive and figurative statement aimed at encouraging and warning people. Because the human mind cannot perceive the very essence of the problem, there is no choice but to follow a thinking style commensurate with the public understanding (Ibn Sina, 2003, p. 103). This is a perspective put forward by the Peripatetic School which maintains that the realm of reasoning only embraces the basics; thus, no partial observations will be available to man to experience partial rewards and agonies, such as gardens, rivers, wives; rather, there will be a general perception of agonies and pleasure.
3. Concerning the heaven and hell of undeveloped people, thinkers like Farabi and Ibn Sina argue that most people have illusory and imaginary happiness because they are mainly preoccupied with corporeal affairs and lack an understanding of what transcends them. They also provide theories in this connection (Ibn Sina, 1984, p. 114; Ghotb Al-Din Razi, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 356). This

eschatological view holds that there is some image that is not real, though affecting one's suffering and pleasure.

4. Eschatological affairs are immaterial and externally concrete affairs; however, they are corporeal affairs as stated by religious texts (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 1975; p. 402-407). According to this view, since eschatological affairs are immaterial, they cannot be observed with visual senses such as eyes as the mundane affairs are observed; this is because this kind of observation requires specifically incremental actions and reactions established between the visual senses and the to-be-observed object, and these reactions need changes realizable in material affairs. Hence, an immaterial affair is not necessarily to be observed by a material tool. Another key component is that these observations have an external objective existence which makes it different from the third view. However, as will be discussed, eschatological observations are, like the third theory, regarded to be imaginary observations; thus, these two views are considered to resemble each other. However, the *imaginary* which is put forward by these two theories is a completely different concept. For the third theory, imaginary denotes illusion and unreal, while for the fourth theory, it is a kind of real perception transcending Sensual perceptions.

Another component in this regard is the corporeality of the affairs. One may encounter the question of how one may regard an immaterial affair as based on the first component, but to assign it corporeality. To answer this, one would need to understand that materiality refers to changes a creature can achieve, whereas corporeality simply denotes the capability of triad dimensions of length, width, and depth that occur for a specific object and are distinguished from others. Thus, a creature with form may either have a varying essence, i.e., a material affair or a non-varying essence. In fact, Mulla Sadra's position holds that eschatological

observations, while being philosophical, should not be regarded as non-corporeal; because this may arise a wrong idea that God, who guides mankind, expresses unreal and fake discussions. This subject distinguishes it from the second theory.

Table 1: Comparison of popular theories on eschatological observations

Theories	Realm	Type of observations	Material perception	Partial or detail	Relation with religion
Most theologians	All people	Sensual observations	Material perceptions	Partial	Consistent with the religious text
Peripatetic proponents	Some people (using the second theory)	Intellectual observations	Abstract perception	Detailed	Inconsistent: using simile and metaphor to interpret religious texts
Thinkers like Farabi and Ibn Sina	Incomplete hell and paradise (held by most people)	illusory observations	Material perception through belonging to heavenly objects	Partial	Inconsistent: illusory and unrealistic ideas
Mulla Sadra and his proponents	Most people	Imaginary observations	Abstract observations	partial	Consistent with the religious text

Essential principles

To explain his views on the world after death, Mulla Sadra provides basic principles in his various works. He predominately aimed to substantiate the corporeal afterlife and elucidate the objectivity of an identity that the eschatological being bears with its own mundane being, which is a different goal we have been looking for. Hence, the principles which pertain to our current discussion (commensurate with eschatological observations) are as follow:

- **First principle:** Every material being is potentiated with its form than with its matter, thereby remaining in its objectivity, assuming its separation from matter. The only factor which makes forms depending on the matter is their disconnection from a non-reasonable being, a being that requires a matter to convey its capability of change and lays the ground for the fulfillment of its talents under appropriate time and place.
- **Second principle:** Every object is identified by its own specific existence than by transforming identity-giving states (Avarez Mushakheseh).
- **Third principle:** Creatures in this material world lack a fixed existence, with their existential essence being inter linked and capable of potentiation. The more developed the existential essence, the more developed their conducts.
- **Fourth principle:** Imagination creates imaginary forms upon the will, without needing matter or previous predisposition when it creates these forms. These forms are non-existent in a place like a brain or heavenly objects (third view in Table 1) or illusory worlds like those of the ghosts; rather, they are self-consistent, though not reincarnating in it, as the beginning of the creation of the matter world by its transcendental causes took place without the matter and its previous predisposition. These imaginary forms have a poor existence but are capable of finding

externally stronger existence than material forms; thus, if man possesses the necessary ability in this world, he will be capable of creating externally self-consistent creatures.

- **Fifth principle:** Soul, falling under the imagination category, is an essence higher than the concrete body, which is also separate from the concrete body from an existential and action point of view, thereby remaining with the disintegration of the body.
- **Sixth principle:** Natural and real perceptions are not distinct phenomena of human essence and his existential identity. They exist within human essence. These perceptions in the world rely on the contribution of the matter and a specific situation due to the potentiality of the soul.
- **Seventh principle:** Psychic states are associated with external effects, which are substantiated with various factors such as changing facial color, anxiety, fear, wrath, and shyness. Now, if a soul belongs to decaying body because of weakness, it'll be influenced by the material body, but if a soul does not belong to a body due to its strength, it'll have the dignity of issuing a plan to the body, without the contribution of the material or being affected by body (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 1965, p. 245-249; Ibid, 2007, p. 342-346, Ibid, 2014, p. 161-171).

Post-death Human survival and his transforming observations

The form of a being carries over its actualization and fulfillment, as based on the first principle, while the matter only embraces his later development capabilities, as the matter takes all of its existence through its form. This is a pervasive rule for all material phenomena. For instance, suppose an element like water. The form it has, i.e., being water, constitutes all its actualization and existence, though the water is capable of developing into vapor. However, this very capability enjoys a portion of existence through its own existence of water. Now, if a being lacks a development capability, i.e., one that gets out of being matter, will it

annihilate? This requirement does not certainly ensue and remains objectively. In his developmental process following acquiring the actualization, not necessarily all the actualizations, man will arrive at a stage where he must separate from the matter and the material body, and this arrival ushers in the stage of death, to be regarded as material-dimension death. After this stage, the human soul remains objectively, though different from a previous stage and in a specific world of its own beyond the matter world, which may affect all of its states, including its observations. Thus, different observations should be considered for this being with a different existential position.

The difference between human observations in the current world and the world to come does not ensue a problem and does not denote that the after-death human is the before-death non-human, because as consistent with the second principle, every being is identified with his own specific existence. However, the states and characteristics of his existence can change and disintegrate. That the human's eschatological observations differ from those of this world does not denote he has lost his identity; because he has preserved his existential principle and taken on specific states commensurate with the current existence.

On the other hand, as per the third principle, this difference is based on the developmental movement, which is a key principle in Mulla Sadra's theory. Creatures can take on existential development and transform into the plant from a lifeless matter and into an animal from a plant or into a human position from an animal state. They can develop into humanity in a way to abandon their material body and observations which do belong to the world outside but to create observations they have originated it.

The developmental movement also takes place in the transition from the world to the afterlife, and it is the man who achieves stronger observations than those of this world.

The example of this world to the afterlife human is the example of a child to an adult who, in his material world, needed a cradle called the place and a nanny called time, and when he developed his essence, he

came out of this worldly existence and moved to the afterlife existence. Mulla Sadra states: in this natural process, there is neither a difference between the just and oppressor nor between a happy and a wretch (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 1978, p. 411). This is because despite the fact there is no conflict between existential perfection and happiness or agony, this existential development results in the intensity of suffering and perception of the agonizing affairs.

Existential relation between mundane and eschatological observations

Speaking of different observations, it is argued whether human's eschatological observations are of a completely new type or pertain to his mundane observations. This subject is elucidated using the fifth and sixth principles. First of all, imagination, which is the origin of eschatological observations, always accompany him in this world; this is because after the sensual relationship is severed from external objects, every human being will be able to imagine them and see, hear or even smell them while dreaming without using the senses.

Thus, his partial perceptions are not reduced to feelings alone; rather, he has some particle perceptions through imagination. Second, the human's real perceptions and observations in this world are not objects in the material world; rather, they are scientific forms of those objects which are observed and perceived by humans. The same is also true of the eschatological observations, i.e., man makes observations within his sensual levels. As long as the human soul belongs to the body, his feeling is beyond his imagination because he needs an external matter as well as some specific conditions for feelings; however, he does need none of which in imagination. In the meantime, when the man is out of this world, externality between imagination and feeling is annulled because the imagination, which is a reservoir for senses, gets stronger in the development process and then sees through imagination what can be seen with eyes (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 2014, vol. 9, p. 167; Ibid, n.d., pp. 133).

On the other hand, even though the eschatological human loses a material world-based feeling, this does not mean his perceptions suffer from defects, which may contradict the developmental movement. Thus, imagination replaces feelings, and imagination unifies in a transcendental existence; hence, imagination controls feelings at a more developed state.

Origin and external fulfillment of eschatological observations

In this world, the human soul affects the surrounding environment to some extent, which was discussed with some examples in the seventh principle (e.g., effects from the human soul involve imaginary forms). As well, the fourth principle regarded the dependence of imaginary forms on the human soul to be an issuing rise. Although the soul's creative power for the creation of these imaginary observations is poor at first, the less the soul is preoccupied with corporeal affairs, and the more imaginary forms will be consolidated, thus, unifying its power, science, and wants. Thus, perception of its wants is its power over them and the way they are readied. The soul uses the imagination to create its eschatological affairs in the form of imaginary forms. Thus, the soul, having been separated from the body, imagines its essence exactly like its mundane form. It also imagines the affairs which are commensurate with rewards and punishment, thus revealing all the affairs (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 2014, p. 166-169; Ibid, 1984, p. 596 and 597, Ibid, 1978, p. 409 to 429).

Thus, human observations in the world to come is of imagination (however, few people have intellectual observations). Human's imaginary observations in the world will eventually rely on external observations and take form accordingly; because the soul in this world has potentiality in terms of imagination and requires actualization, with its internal characteristics established over time. When the soul enters another world, the same characteristics it already has will be revealed. Despite the fact that the human soul is the doer and origin of its imaginary observations in the world, it also requires other objects which are beyond its imagination to form its existence. On the other hand, the human soul actualization is

potentiated in the world to come and creates all of its observations in an imaginary way without help from its outside environment.

To sum up, for the Mulla Sadra School, eschatological affairs have perceivable existence, actually constituting the spiritual imagination and intellectual reasoning of humans. Eschatological observations are not the same as mundane observations. Whatever exists in the world has a corporeal matter which takes on an externally-mediated form or soul; in fact, living matter has an accidental life, as all eschatological affairs have essential life (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 2014, p. 258; Ibid, 1979, p. 178). For him, all these affairs rely on the human soul and take on all their existence from the soul existence. As a result, they are not like non-living creatures in the world who take on life through their developmental process; rather, they enjoy soul and life from the very beginning of their creation, and one would say that life is an essential component of them.

It is inferred that, according to this perspective, eschatological observations are a series of illusory and unreal affairs which are not externally existent, as imaginary affairs in this world have such states. Imaginary states are, by themselves, simply mental perceptions contradicting the external existence of objects; i.e., the effects resulting from the external existence of an outside fire conflict with those of an imaginary fire.

Mulla Sadra strongly dismisses this suspicion and argues that eschatological affairs are stronger, more intense, and influential than those of mundane affairs. The external existence of eschatological observations is the same as their imagination and illusory existence.

Human's worldly imaginary observations lack an external existence and a sensual presence because they have a weak existence. Thus, human enjoys sensual affairs more than imaginary affairs in the life before death because they are more accustomed to sensual objects and entertainment as they are made of matter; however, when a material death takes place, and this dependence is severed, imagination replaces senses and improves its efficiency; human is no longer in contact with weak material objects;

rather human is faced with objects which are present with all their existence, and it is human who has imagined these objects along with his demands.

The world of eschatological observations

Where is the eschatological world? Is it a world parallel with this world that can be discovered by the advancement of technology? This is a major question that is ingenuously answered by Mulla Sadra. He argues that this question for the world to come is, in principle, nonsensical; because the Hereafter contradicts this world from an essential point of view and cannot be associated whatsoever. On the other hand, the Hereafter is a complete world with a perfect essence, and such a world has no place, as the entire world is not a place to be referred to from both inside and outside. A place is characterized by measuring objects together under different situations; however, assuming perfect conditions, there is no reason to ask place for it, which is null. It is a falsehood originating from analogy and wrong between the imperfect and perfect (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 1984, p. 601 and 602; Ibid, 2014, vol. 9. Pp.176-178).

This world has the potentiality of disintegration and destruction, whereas the Hereafter is indestructibly stable and is independent of matter; thus, each of these worlds embraces what is made of its own genus and thus creates a single world.

Thus, a complete concept should be introduced for the world. The world does not mean a set of stars, galaxies, and constellations with attractive and repulsive forces; distancing from another hypothetical set-as parallel worlds are simply a hypothesis. One may call each of these sets a world from an astrological point of view; however, Mulla Sadra considers whatever made of matter, though separate sets, to be under a larger world, a world larger than which cannot be perceived to have been made of matter. This is because the largest possible world may be assumed as the main world, which leaves no room for being called a place. This fact also holds true of the next world, which is the largest

world that cannot be called a place.

The situation for the happy and wretched in the world to come is ontologically different. The world of a happy person is materialized with what his soul demands, as nothing happens except for the soul wishes. Here, the Koran says, "*and you will have in it whatever your souls desire, and you will have in it whatever you ask for*" (Surah Fossilat, verse 31). For the happy ones, God gives the paradise, which is as vast as the heavens and the earth; however, for the wretched ones, they are engulfed by the fire and their feet in chains. The Koran also says, "*The hell shall engulf the unbelievers*" (Ankanboot, 54). For all humans, both good and bad, it will be a separate world, each larger than this current one.

For this, Mulla Sadra characterizes the mundane objects with turbulence and disarray, arguing that eschatological objects will experience no disturbance because each human will have a separate world based on his own spiritual perceptions (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 1965, p. 252, vol. 9; Ibid, 1978, p. 397). Thus, good or bad humans will all create a world distinct from each other, with the difference being that a good man will create a world consistent with his own demands via their own unconscious; however, a bad human will create a world with his own unconscious, i.e., characteristics founded on his wrong conduct. In the previous view, he believed that the entire hereafter was one world, and here, he believes that each person has a separate world. While these worlds are of the same genus, and according to the formula discussed in the previous discussion, everything that is of the same genus is affected by a world; there is no contradiction between these two views because one would suggest that the multiple worlds, while having different origins and are separate from each other, are falling under the main single world.

The in-soul and out-soul characters of the Hereafter

To Mulla Sadra, anyone's world originates from his imagination. He suggests that eschatological imaginary observations are the same as externalities due to their existential intensity, thereby bearing the effects

of an external phenomenon. After death, every human soul begins to co-exist with existence and live with life and reflect different forms; imaginary observations are not outside of the human soul after death; they are forms present in his soul. In fact, the genus of eschatological observations is understood from the perceptions, as they enjoy essential life. For example, they make their living from a spiritual life that is understood by the soul.

First, a mild object is imagined like movement or writing; it is then practiced and then reimagined. However, the perceived objects appear when imagination without any contradictions, because action and perceptions are one thing in the Hereafter (Sadr Al-Din Shirazi, 2014, vol. 9, pp.191, 235-237; 257-258; 281, 297 and 302). It is thus concluded that Mulla Sadra believes that the eschatological observations of each human are materialized inside his own soul and considers affairs and objects to enjoy an external existence. It is their existential intensity that is associated with external effects; that does not mean being outside the soul; rather, the external existence of these forms takes shape inside the soul.

Here, it is important to pay attention to two points. It is true he stresses the out-soul character of eschatological observations with different interpretations; however, as discussed in the fourth principle, this relation is a kind of rising phenomenon, not of reincarnation. Because every object independent of the matter is cognizant of the other abstract, all the humans are always observed through his complete world, and this awareness helps them form a unified hereafter world.

Criterion of measurement	Observations and mundane objects	Observations and eschatological objects
Possession of life	Some with life and some without it	All with life
Life being essential or accidental	Life occurs to them	They essentially enjoy life
Priority and posteriority of soul over the body	The body has a dispositional priority over soul	Soul has an existential priority over the body
Ascension or descension	Objects move upwards to enjoy soul	Souls descend towards having a body
Finiteness and infiniteness	finite	Infinite
Interference and disturbance	With interference and disturbance	Without interference and disturbance
Unity or multiplicity of worlds	All are in a world	Every human's observations have a perfect world for itself
Wishes	Nothing is fulfilled simply by asking for something (unless the human soul is potentiated)	For a happy person, everything is fulfilled, while a wretched one suffers from his inner qualities
Impermanency	Essentially impermanent	Not essentially impermanent, and they last as long as man aspires

Conclusion

1. In his developmental process, man preserves his existential identity and transfers to the world after death in a way that he abandons matter and achieves actualization. This makes his existence more intense.
2. Eschatological observations are imaginary, with the difference being that imagination and senses in the world after death will be united, and the imagination takes on the functions of the senses.
3. The origin of eschatological observations is the soul itself, which creates for itself eschatological affairs and the Hereafter; this helps its power, awareness, and wishes be unified. That does not mean that there are objects outside the soul, and the soul observes them.
4. Eschatological observations possess perceivable existence, and they are, in fact, human's imagination after death.
5. Eschatological observations are externally existent and have external effects. However, their externality differs from that of this world.
6. The eschatological observations world cannot be conceived of having a place due to being a perfect world.
7. Eschatological observations have no interference or disturbance because they are made of spiritual perceptions.
8. Since eschatological observations possess an intense existence, their suffering and agonies reach a pure point and become more concrete and intense than those of this world, whereas mundane observations combine pleasure and suffering due to lack of purity. Thus, they are neither enjoyable nor agonizing.
9. Although happy and wretched humans are both creators of their eschatological observations, the happy ones enjoy an existential dominance over their own observations, while the wretched ones are affected by observations arising from his inner characters.
10. Eschatological observations of each person are fulfilled inside his soul, though this depends on the soul rather than being reincarnated in his soul.

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