



# An Investigation into the Role of the Governance of Reason in Spiritual Health from Mulla Sadra's Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Spiritual health has recently attracted serious attention from scholars across diverse disciplines. The present study investigates the role of the governance of reason, both theoretical and practical, in spiritual health from Mulla Sadra's perspective. It concludes by outlining his proposed approaches to confronting mental and psychological illnesses. The research method is philosophical analysis, and data collection is library-based with an emphasis on Mulla Sadra's works. The central issue concerns the maladies of the heart and the causes of their prevalence. Hence, to attain a comprehensive understanding of the humankind, it is necessary to consider the inner structure and multiple dimensions of human. Mere attention to the human—without regard to the origin and ultimate destination of his existential journey—does not suffice for his perfection and spiritual well-being. This is because a truly sound soul, by its very nature, is one whose perfections are actualized, which in turn depends on the health of the rational (speaking) soul. Mulla Sadra's anthropology is grounded in religious teachings, and since man possesses multiple dimensions, extraordinary human phenomena can be readily explained within his philosophical framework. Nevertheless, despite the strengths of Mulla Sadra's anthropological approach and its deep connection to the health of the soul, it can be argued that an excessive focus on rational aspects, coupled with insufficient attention to the motivational and practical dimensions of human nature—as well as the abstract nature and diversity of some of its topics—constitutes a limitation of purely philosophical approaches to this subject. Therefore, it is emphasized that alongside honoring human intellect, the presence of revelation and the supervision of religion over reason are indispensable.

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### Introduction

Safeguarding health and, in the event of disorder, providing appropriate treatment is among the most fundamental concerns of humankind. However, due to the complexity of the dimensions of human existence, prevention and therapy are not straightforward (Firuzi, 2016, p. 8). The penetration of empiricist and materialistic presuppositions into the intellectual sphere of Muslims has significantly influenced both medical education and therapeutic approaches (Firuzi, 2016, p. 8). In Mulla Ṣadrā's view, however, a proper understanding of the humankind requires attention to the inner structure and extensive dimensions of the self so that a comprehensive picture of the human person may be attained; mere attention to the human without regard to the origin and ultimate destination of his motion is insufficient for his spiritual perfection (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 3, p. 402). For this reason, since the levels of human existence remain veiled from sense experience, the reality of the humanity transcends what can be captured by experimental studies and quantitative methods.

Today, the dominant trend in human studies is empirical and quantitative, and "experience" has been reduced largely to statistical procedures and questionnaires. Such studies constitute a narrow corridor that can never contain the breadth and grandeur of the humankind; the unitary reality of man is fragmented, and this fragmentation is itself a consequence of the prevailing methods borrowed from the natural sciences (Nasr, 2013, p. 1393). Consequently, revelation and divine knowledge take precedence over all sciences and methods, and both rational and mystical approaches are prior to empirical approaches. Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn holds that a soul is intrinsically healthy when its perfections become actualized, and this actualization is principally dependent on the soundness of the rational (nāṭiqah) soul (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2001, p. 132). From the perspective of Shaykh al-Ishrāq as well, the health of the "pneumatic spirit" (rūḥ-i bukhārī) is a determining factor in the health of the soul, and some other thinkers have considered the

balance of temperament (i'tidāl-i mizāj) to be effective in the soul's health.

Mulla Ṣadrā's philosophy introduces the true ontological status of the soul and indicates the path to knowing its health, thus restoring the humankind—who in modern sciences has been subjected to a degrading descent—to his proper rank at the apex of beings and the highest levels of existence. In modern medicine, and even in many contemporary branches of the human sciences, the greatest attention is paid to the lowest level of the humankind, namely the bodily dimension, while the other dimensions are either entirely neglected or even outright denied. In Islamic philosophy, and particularly from the standpoint of Mulla Ṣadrā, the humankind possesses far more elevated and noble dimensions. Therefore, with respect to spiritual health, disciplines that consider only the material aspect of the humanity are of limited value. For example, in contemporary psychology the “soul” as such is virtually absent from the field of study, because the dominant schools are committed to an empirical method that cannot demonstrate, interpret, or analyze the true reality of the human (the *nafs*). Behaviorism, for instance, infers inner states and dispositions solely from outward behavior and performance. This inferential procedure from effect to cause is one of the most rudimentary methods of understanding the humankind: first, because not all inner states manifest themselves behaviorally; and second, because observable behavior may result from multiple and diverse causes. Contemporary empiricist psychologists lack a stable metaphysical framework and therefore remain continually uncertain within the inherently fallible domain of experience and observation (Mīrbāqerī, 2004, p. 83). Consequently, a purely biological conception of the human is subject to critique in light of Mulla Ṣadrā's philosophical foundations. The most important and influential point here is the affirmation of the dual-dimensional nature of the humankind and the insufflation of the divine spirit into man, which sharply distinguishes this conception from a merely biological account of the human person. Mulla Ṣadrā's philosophical anthropology, grounded in religious

teachings and recognizing multiple dimensions for the humankind, thereby renders extraordinary human phenomena amenable to philosophical explanation within this system.

It should be noted that the health of the soul (nafs) is a precondition for spiritual health. Thus, in order to ascend, the soul must be liberated from material attachments so that the humankind may attain spiritual soundness (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 9, p. 352). Health of the soul means the moderation of its faculties, the purification of character, and the conformity of the intellect to the Truth, and without such psychic health, spiritual health is unattainable. Accordingly, the present study investigates the role of theoretical and practical intellect in the health of the soul from Mulla Şadrā's perspective. The soul possesses various levels and faculties, each with its own specific pleasures, perfections, and felicities, and the function of the theoretical and practical intellects in realizing these perfections is indispensable. The principal question of this research is therefore: How can the theoretical and practical intellects establish moderation among the diverse faculties of the soul? On the basis of this main question, the subsidiary questions are: (1) In what does the pleasure and felicity of each faculty of the soul consist? (2) What role does the pleasure and felicity of each of these faculties play in securing the overall health of the human soul?

The method of this study is descriptive–analytical, and in processing the findings it draws upon Mulla Şadrā's philosophical doctrines concerning the soul and its faculties. To answer the research questions, key notions such as the faculties of the soul, the perfection of each faculty, the moderation of psychic powers, the pleasure and felicity proper to each faculty, and the obstacles to psychic health and spiritual maladies from the standpoint of Mulla Şadrā were examined. This examination was conducted using the “Mulla Şadrā” software and his other written works, along with a review of relevant academic databases. On this basis, the theoretical foundations and findings of the study were systematized, and in the subsequent stage the role of theoretical and

practical intellect in spiritual health was analyzed from Mulla Ṣadrā's viewpoint.

## 1. Foundations of Research

### 1.1. Wisdom and Its Types

Based on the general division of philosophy into theoretical and practical branches, *ḥikmah* (wisdom) likewise, according to its diverse functions, is in some of its senses synonymous with philosophy. It has been defined as knowledge of righteous action, understanding of the realities of beings, imitation of the Creator in governance to the extent of human capacity, and resemblance to the Creator ([Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī], 1993, p. 137). Moreover, *ḥikmah* has been defined as the knowledge of the states of external existents as they are in themselves—realities in which the humankind has no active role ([Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 1, p. 338]); for instance, knowledge of the spherical form of the heavens ([Ḥusaynī Ardakānī, 1996, p. 93]). This form of wisdom constitutes a perfection for the humankind, and the greater its degree, the more perfect the person becomes, for in this view, human perfection lies in the apprehension of universals—the more universal truths one comprehends, the greater one's perfection becomes ([Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 4, p. 115]).

The ultimate end of theoretical wisdom is for the images of the realities of the world to become imprinted in the soul, leading the humanity to resemble the objective world ([Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 20–21]). The faculty that attains this knowledge is known as the *theoretical intellect*.

In contrast, *practical wisdom* (al-ḥikmah al-ʿamaliyyah) concerns knowledge of matters in which human volition and intervention are possible ([Ḥusaynī Ardakānī, 1996, p. 94]), such as knowledge of the acquisition of moral virtues or the removal of bodily or moral maladies. The outcome of practical wisdom is the mastery of the soul over the body and the body's obedience to the soul ([Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1981,

vol. 1, pp. 20–21]). In this respect, it is termed the *practical intellect*, for it employs the motive faculties and bodily organs in carrying out particular acts ([Ḥusaynī Ardakānī, 1996, p. 469]).

From Mullā Ṣadrā's perspective—as with many ancient philosophers—theoretical wisdom is superior to practical wisdom, for the latter serves as a means to the former, and every instrument is inferior to its end. Therefore, in the order of rank, practical wisdom is subordinate to theoretical wisdom. In fact, knowledge takes precedence over action: theoretical wisdom perfects the soul's speculative faculty, which represents its higher aspect, whereas practical wisdom perfects its active faculty, corresponding to the lower aspect of the soul. Theoretical wisdom concerns knowledge of origin and return and contemplation of divine creation, while practical wisdom pertains to the regulation of worldly life and salvation in the hereafter. Consequently, practical wisdom depends upon theoretical wisdom for its realization ([Ḥusaynī Ardakānī, 1996, p. 469]).

## **1.2. The genuine union of the (human) soul with the body and its powers**

Humankind possess two dimensions—material and spiritual—that are intrinsically interconnected. The phenomena and actions occurring in one dimension invariably influence the other. According to Mulla Sadra, the soul (*nafs*) and the body constitute a single gradational existence, since the body represents the lower degree of the soul's being (Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 8, p. 128; Ḥasanzādah Āmulī, 1992, p. 215). Within this form of unity, the influence of physical and material factors—such as the impact of nutrition on thought and cognition—becomes intelligible. When the soul yields to bodily desires and passions, and these become habitual, the body gradually attains dominance over the soul, making recovery from such a state arduous. Conversely, when the rational soul gains mastery over the body, intellectual forms govern corporeal functions (Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1974, p. 362).

The soul and the body represent existential levels within the humankind, and given their unitive relationship, any alteration in one level affects the other. This mutual influence applies not only to cognitive or practical states but extends across all existential dimensions. Hence, lifestyle choices affect the health of the *pneumatic soul* (*rūḥ bukhārī*), just as the well-being of this soul influences the integrity of the rational soul. Likewise, spiritual well-being reinforces the health of the *rūḥ bukhārī*, while this latter, in turn, affects the condition of the rational soul. Spiritual health also contributes essentially to sustaining a wholesome lifestyle.

Contemporary research confirms the reciprocal influence between soul and body. By stimulating specific brain regions, diverse emotions—such as excitement, joy, or anxiety—can be generated. Hormonal secretions from endocrine glands constitute key factors shaping mental states. For instance, serotonin levels significantly affect mood and depression, while diminished thyroid secretion in adults leads not only to physical consequences but also to memory impairment and depression (Morton, 2003, p. 432).

Certain human actions primarily affect the soul and secondarily the body—for example, anger, sorrow, joy, and grief. Others originate in bodily functions yet influence the soul, since body and soul exist in unity.

Evidently, the human soul comprises various faculties; yet these faculties neither exist independently of one another nor are they identical in essence. To articulate their relation, Mulla Sadra employs the principle “*al-naḥs fī waḥdatihā kull al-quwā*” (“the soul in its unity is all the faculties”) (Ḥusaynī Ardakānī, 1996, p. 185). According to this doctrine, the operations (*afʿāl*) of the soul are ascribable both to the soul as a whole and to its individual faculties, since these faculties are emanations of the soul itself, not entities distinct from it. Thus, while the soul serves as both perceiver and mover, this does not preclude multiplicity among its faculties nor its use of them (Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 8, p. 71).

A profound interconnection exists between the faculties; each higher

faculty acts through an inferior one when influencing lower domains. Therefore, perfect continuity unites the soul and its faculties, so that the act of the faculties is simultaneously the act of the soul (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2000, p. 118; 1981, vol. 8, p. 122). In Mulla Sadra's view, the relation of each level of the soul to the level above it mirrors that of act and agent (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 8, p. 71). Consequently, the soul is unified even with the bodily organs that host these faculties (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2013, p. 277). Hence, in tactile sensation, the soul itself constitutes the sense of touch; sometimes it is even identified with the sensory organ itself (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2000, p. 118; 'Ubūdiyyat, 2013, vol. 3, pp. 240–241). Though some philosophers reject this interpretation of the soul's union with organs, it remains evident that in perceiving bodily phenomena, the soul necessarily employs its perceptual faculties; nevertheless, it is the same soul that, in the degrees of sight and hearing, both sees and hears (Fayyāzī, 2010, p. 93).

### **1.3. The Role of the Soul's Substantial Motion in Defining Health**

Accordingly, human health should not be understood as a static condition confined to biological functioning; rather, it is an existential, gradual reality intrinsically linked to the teleological course of the soul's perfection. Since the human soul, in light of its substantial motion, is continuously undergoing intensification of existence, any perfection or deficiency in the cognitive, ethical, and practical domains is directly reflected in the state of human health. Moral cultivation, the acquisition of true knowledge, and the purification of the soul are therefore not merely psychological factors but constitute the ontological foundations of health, insofar as a balanced and refined soul guides the body toward natural equilibrium and proper functioning. From this perspective, the doctrine of the soul's substantial motion in Transcendent Philosophy provides a theoretical framework for articulating a comprehensive conception of health that integrates the bodily, psychic, and spiritual dimensions of the human being within a single, purposive, and developmental process.

#### 1.4. The Perfection of Human Faculties and Its Analysis

In the concept of perfection (*kamāl*), the ideas of elevation and transcendence are implicit. Perfection is a gradational notion that arises from the analogical (*tashkīkī*) character of *kamāl*; that is, it admits of varying degrees of intensity and weakness (Motahhari, 2004, vol. 10, p. 377). Every being possesses a determinate degree of existence that it cannot surpass and enjoys a fixed and definite share of being appropriate to its ontological station. The humankind, however, in each of the perfections stands between pure potentiality and pure actuality. Since the human is not a fixed being, so long as one lives in this worldly life, one does not have a final and closed rank, but is always capable of passing from one mode of existence to another (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1981a, p. 160).

Thus, “when philosophers speak of the ‘perfect human’, they mean a person whose intellect has reached its perfection, such that a comprehensive blueprint of the structure of existence has been formed in the mind; in the domain of practical wisdom as well, human perfection consists in the dominance of the intellect over all instincts, faculties, and powers of the soul” (Motahhari, 2009, vol. 23, p. 99). Motahhari does not regard this understanding of the perfect human as adequate, because the ‘perfect human’ sought by the philosophers is only half-perfect: such a person knows well, but is devoid of longing, movement, and ardour (Motahhari, 2009, vol. 23, p. 99). Accordingly, on the basis of the two faculties of the theoretical and the practical intellect, human perfection must also be understood in terms of these two powers (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1981b, vol. 9, p. 368). Yet the question as to which kind of actuality most effectively accelerates the attainment of perfection remains, from a strictly rational-philosophical perspective, veiled from our grasp. It can, however, be said that factors such as knowledge, adherence to religious injunctions and devotional rites, reflection, and religious forms of spiritual discipline (*riyāḍāt shar‘ī*) play an effective role in human perfection. From Mullā Ṣadrā’s viewpoint, “hunger” brings

luminosity to the soul, “wakefulness at night” (sahar/shab-zindedārī) polishes the soul, “silence” strengthens the intellect, “seclusion” reduces the distractions of the soul, and “constant remembrance (dhikr)” adorns the soul with inward acts of worship; through such practices, the soul is elevated to higher degrees of perfection (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2001, pp. 224–226).

Every contingent being possesses a proper perfection, and the humankind is the perfection of all entities inferior to itself, while at the same time seeking its own higher perfection. Since the true reality of the human is the soul (nafs), and the soul has multiple faculties, each faculty likewise has its own specific perfection. The highest principle in the macrocosm is the intellect, which governs all beings; similarly, in the microcosm, the intellect rules over all psychic and bodily faculties. The diverse powers of the human soul constitute a graded series stretching from vegetative life to the angelic realm. Therefore, from Mullā Şadrā’s standpoint, God has created no instinct or faculty within beings in vain. Each being advances toward a specific end by means of its substantial motion (ḥarakat jawharīyah) (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1987, vol. 1, p. 46). By broadening the scope of human life and refusing to confine it to material existence, Mullā Şadrā locates the ultimate end of the human in spiritual and immaterial realities. Consequently, comprehensive health is attainable only through a comprehensive view that encompasses all dimensions of the humanity (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1981b, vol. 9, p. 127; idem, 1993, p. 586). Health is crucial in two respects: first, Islam emphatically commands recognition of the spiritual dimension of human life; and second, the material dimension is also important insofar as it provides the field of operation for the spiritual dimension, such that any impairment in the bodily aspect of life proportionally disrupts the spiritual aspect as well (Ja‘farī Tabrīzī, 2009, p. 126). For this reason, the spiritual dimension and its soundness enjoy a higher degree of importance (Ja‘farī Tabrīzī, 2009, p. 127). Once the spiritual dimension of life reaches actuality and perfection, all forms of knowledge that are mixed with darkness and

limitation—because they are acquired through the senses and other cognitive instruments—are correctly evaluated, placed in the service of human life, and made to function according to sound rational standards (Ja‘farī Tabrīzī, 2009, p. 129).

Accordingly, human perfection consists in the equilibrium and balance of all capacities and dispositions. The humankind is truly perfect only when one does not incline exclusively toward a single capacity while neglecting and suspending the others; for the very reality of justice is harmony and proportion, and what is meant by harmony is that all human potentials develop and that their development proceeds in a balanced fashion (Motahhari, *Collected Works*, vol. 23, p. 112). Beatitude (sa‘ādat) is identical with perfection, and human perfection lies solely in knowing God and establishing a living connection with Him; the path to this end is the realization of justice (Motahhari, 2009, vol. 15, p. 977). In a similar vein, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī strongly emphasizes the moderation of the soul and its powers (al-Rāzī, 1996, pp. 28–33).

## **2. The Felicity and Misery of Theoretical Reason**

Sadr al-Din Shirazi regards the human theoretical faculty as nobler than the practical faculty and, accordingly, locates human felicity in this nobler part of the soul, since the perfections of the practical faculty—though effective in human growth and perfection—do not belong to the very essence of the humankind; in the order of priority, the theoretical dimension is therefore superior. Thus, in his view, the mere avoidance of sins does not suffice for attaining felicity, because such avoidance is of a “negative” nature, whereas the soul, in order to reach perfection, requires “positive” perfections. Hence, the felicity of the soul consists in the cognition of immaterial, self-subsistent being, and the direct intuition of intelligible realities produces a stable and enduring delight in the human person. The reason is that, according to the gradation of being, the more intense the mode of a thing’s existence, the greater its felicity; conversely, the weaker and more deficient its existence, the less its felicity. The

felicity of each thing lies in attaining that by which its existence is completed, and its wretchedness lies in that which opposes its perfection; moreover, the perfection of every faculty is of the same type and order as that faculty itself. Accordingly, the perfection of appetite is pleasure, the perfection of anger is domination, the perfection of estimation is hope and desire, the perfection of imagination is the production of beautiful images, and the perfection of the soul (intellect), in accordance with its intellectual essence, is the attainment of intelligibles and becoming a receptacle for divine forms. In some of his works, Mullā Ṣadrā identifies the ultimate purpose of creation as the humankind's attainment of the stage of the "acquired intellect," that is, the direct vision of intelligibles and conjunction with the highest celestial realm, and he describes the cause of felicity as the realization of delight and the cause of wretchedness as the experience of pain. In Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's view as well, felicity consists in the delight that arises from a wise and philosophical disposition, which represents the highest degree of pleasure.

Mullā Ṣadrā holds that the sciences play a constitutive role in human felicity, but does not consider all forms of knowledge to be of the same rank; one must pursue that knowledge which perfects the very essence of the humankind, namely knowledge of God, His attributes, the angels, the messengers, the revealed books, the manner in which things proceed from the Real, as well as knowledge of the soul and of the Hereafter. Other sciences are beneficial only insofar as they serve as a prelude to these higher cognitions. Knowledge of these realities leads to salvation and the completion of the human essence. From his perspective, felicity is achieved through intellectual and scientific activity together with the purification (tahdhīb) of the soul, whereas wretchedness is brought about through sensory, appetitive, and irascible sins, the dominance of vicious psychic dispositions such as ostentation, the denial of true sciences, and the following of falsehood. The subordination of the soul to bodily powers (appetite and anger) thus becomes a cause of its wretchedness, while bodily acts of worship function as a barrier against the soul's

inclination toward sensual desires and its preoccupation with bodily inclinations.

It must be noted, however, that, first, felicity itself is distinct from the factor that brings it about; faith, as the cause of felicity, cannot itself be identical with felicity. Second, faith is other than mere knowledge, for faith is an inner bond and heartfelt attachment that arises after cognition; knowledge is therefore not identical with faith but is one of its conditions. Moreover, knowledge belongs to the theoretical intellect, whereas faith pertains to the practical intellect, whose operations are of two kinds: inward (affective) acts, such as faith, love, and will, and outward (bodily) acts, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and almsgiving. Accordingly, the learning of religious and divine sciences, insofar as it remains at the level of acquired (*ḥuṣūlī*) knowledge, cannot by itself constitute the sufficient cause of felicity; if, however, what is intended by “knowledge” is presential (*ḥudūrī*) knowledge, this state is not attainable through acquired concepts alone, but also requires the engagement of the practical faculties and bodily disciplines (*riyāḍāt*). In those contexts in which Mullā Ṣadrā identifies knowledge with the ultimate end and felicity of the humankind, he does not regard ordinary discursive methods and formal philosophy as the path to that goal; rather, he considers it to consist in the presential intuition of the divine Names and Attributes, in which case the usual objections raised against other philosophers do not apply to him. Therefore, in the theoretical dimension, the felicity of the soul lies in attaining the stage of the acquired intellect, while in the practical dimension it consists in the realization of the annihilation of the soul (*fanā’ al-nafs*) in the Real.

### **3. The Role of Theoretical and Practical Pleasure in Happiness**

According to Mulla Sadra, there exists a perfect correspondence between pleasure and happiness; wherever happiness is found, pleasure is also present, and the converse is equally true. Likewise, wherever human perfection is realized, both pleasure and happiness are attained, and the

reverse also holds. In his view, every faculty possesses its own specific pleasure, and the degrees of pleasure correspond to the degrees and ranks of the objects from which pleasure is derived. If the object is sensory, the pleasure will also be sensory; if the object belongs to the intellectual realm, the pleasure will be of a higher kind, since intellectual perception represents the highest level of understanding. Hence, Sadra considers pleasure to be the fulfillment or perfection of a cognitive faculty, just as pain and suffering are its opposites (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, vol. 4, p. 123).

Undoubtedly, the most sublime intelligible and the noblest being is the Divine Essence itself; therefore, it is the most delightful, for the more perfect and evident the object of desire, the greater the delight in its apprehension. Consequently, from Sadra's perspective, degrees of happiness correspond to degrees of pleasure — the higher the pleasure, the greater the happiness. Sensory pleasures, being related to the appearances of things and perceived through the senses, are thus superficial, since not all sensory experiences are pleasurable. In contrast, intellectual activities are inherently pleasurable to all (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, vol. 9, pp. 122–123).

According to him, the reason for one's failure to perceive and appreciate intellectual pleasures lies either in ignorance or in attachment to the body and preoccupation with the sensory realm (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, vol. 9, pp. 122–123). Accordingly, Mulla Sadra explains the degrees of human happiness in relation to the degrees of the theoretical intellect, since the human soul, at its inception, lacks both primary and secondary intelligibles — a stage he describes as *potential intellect* ('*aql hayulānī*). When the soul acquires a number of intelligibles, it reaches the stage of *habitual intellect* ('*aql bi'l-malaka*); upon attaining theoretical knowledge through reasoning, it becomes *actual intellect* ('*aql bi'l-fi'l*); and upon uniting with the *Active Intellect*, it achieves the level of *acquired intellect* ('*aql mustafād*), wherein all intelligibles are present to it (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1974, pp. 273–278).

The *practical intellect* also encompasses several levels, through which humankind differ from one another. The first stage involves purification of the external self through adherence to religious laws, worship, and divine ordinances. The second involves purification of the inner self from immoral dispositions and base character traits. The third is the adornment of the soul with sacred and divine forms; and the fourth and final stage is the annihilation of the self and detachment from all but God. Each of these stages includes numerous sublevels that can only be realized through spiritual vision and witnessing (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1974, pp. 273–278). Therefore, the pleasure of the soul in its practical dimension lies in the annihilation of the self (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2001, pp. 234–235). Ultimately, however, Mulla Sadra locates true perfection and genuine happiness in the realm of the theoretical intellect.

#### **4. The Role of Practical Reason in the Health of the Soul**

The stations of humankind differ according to the faculties of their souls. The inner reality of every person is a compound of various dispositions and faculties—some bestial, some predatory, some satanic, and some angelic. Lust, greed, and sin belong to the bestial aspect; envy, rancor, and hostility to the predatory; deceit, fraud, cunning, pride, love of status, vainglory, and domination to the satanic; while knowledge, purity, and sanctity arise from the angelic faculty.

From Mulla Ṣadrā's perspective, these four principles constitute the foundations of ethics, interwoven in the very essence of human nature, and inseparable from one another. Deliverance from the first three depends upon the guidance of revelation and reason (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 9, p. 93; Ḥusaynī Ardakānī, 1993, p. 561). If the first three faculties gain ascendancy in the soul before intellectual maturity and become attached to the heart, the soul tends to follow its appetites. When the light of reason finally dawns—if it is weak—the lower faculties dominate the heart and reside therein; but if reason is strengthened by the illumination of knowledge and faith, all the powers of the soul become

subjugated to it, and the person will be raised among the ranks of the angels, as the Qur'an declares: "No soul knows in what land it will die" (Luqmān, 34) (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1974, p. 366).

For the purification of the soul, there are various paths; yet all are founded upon the fulfillment of devotional duties, steadfastness in the practice of justice, and the eradication of satanic insinuations (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2001, p. 117). The first pillar lies in moral refinement and the stabilization of virtuous habits; the second, in preserving the forms of servitude and expressing gratitude for divine blessings; and the third, in renouncing worldly attachments and casting aside the pursuit of sensual pleasures (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1993, pp. 276, 523).

Elsewhere, Mulla Şadrā writes that: (1) if man awakens from the slumber of heedlessness and ignorance; (2) repents from unlawful deeds and returns to the Divine Truth; (3) with determination seeks spiritual perfection through detachment from worldliness and turning toward God; and (4) migrates away from the domain of the lower self (Ḥusaynī Ardakānī, 1993, p. 474; Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1993, p. 690), then his heart and vision will be illuminated by the Light of Truth and higher realities.

### **5. Moderation of Powers; an Index of Psychological Health**

In the philosophy of *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah* (Transcendent Theosophy), there are four inner faculties (*arkān al-bāṭiniyyah*): the faculty of knowledge, the faculty of desire, the faculty of anger, and the faculty of justice. When moderation manifests within them, moral excellence (*ḥusn al-akhlāq*) emerges.

The moderation of the faculty of knowledge ('aql) lies in the establishment of a disposition enabling one to distinguish truth from falsehood in speech, right from wrong in belief, and what is virtuous from what is vile in action. When this faculty attains balance, it bears the fruit that constitutes the essence and root of all virtues and perfections—"That is the grace of God which He bestows upon whom He wills" (Qur'an, 62:4).

The moderation of the faculties of anger and desire is realized when they are governed by wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and divine law (*sharīʿa*). The moderation of the faculty of justice lies in maintaining both anger and desire under the guidance of reason and religion (Hosseini Ardakani, 1993, p. 560).

Thus, the moderation of anger constitutes courage; its excess leads to recklessness, and its deficiency results in cowardice. From its balance arise noble traits such as bravery, forbearance, and the suppression of wrath; from its excess emerge arrogance and conceit; and from its deficiency, fear, humiliation, avarice, and lack of zeal ensue.

Similarly, the moderation of the faculty of desire gives rise to chastity, while its excess produces passion and lust, and its deficiency leads to apathy and indolence. From the balance of the faculty of knowledge emerge sound judgment, insight, discernment, and sagacity; from its excess arise cunning and deceit; and from its deficiency, ignorance, foolishness, and dullness result.

In summary, *moral virtue* in all dimensions of the fourfold inner faculties and their branches lies in moderation—not in excess nor deficiency. Hence, if the human soul, in its inner attributes and moral dispositions, deviates from the middle path in its affective and intellectual traits—leaning toward excess or deficiency—it becomes susceptible to internal maladies, vices, and sins. Once these dominate the inner being, they corrupt the integrity of the soul and lead to its spiritual ruin and eternal punishment (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2001, p. 125).

Accordingly, the equilibrium of the soul's faculties yields spiritual well-being, and such well-being is the prelude to ultimate spiritual salvation.

## **6. The fundamental issue: Disease of the soul (spirit) and its causes**

The disease of the soul arises when one of the appetitive or irascible faculties prevails over human reason. This condition causes the soul to deviate from its ascending path toward perfection and fall into a

descending trajectory. Mulla Sadra refers to this state as the *existential descent of the soul*, which leads to the inner degradation of the humankind (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1981, vol. 7, p. 139).

Hence, the soul is not only prior to the body but also preserves and unites its constituent parts. The body's preservation and stability thus depend on the soul. Accordingly, both physical and spiritual illnesses should be traced back to their original source—the soul—rather than the body. Physical strengthening means empowering and maintaining the body's health, a matter to which Islam invites human attention. The numerous statements concerning the harm of gluttony and the benefits of temperance illustrate this teaching (Motahhari, 2009, vol. 22, pp. 557–559).

A sign of divinity-oriented love is the inner and heartfelt detachment from the world and its contents. Therefore, the sickness of the heart is far more severe than bodily illness, and its causes are threefold. First, the patient is unaware of his own ailment. Second, he does not immediately perceive the outcome of his condition in this world, unlike bodily diseases whose consequence—death—quickly becomes apparent. Consequently, aversion to carnal desires seldom occurs. For this reason, in spiritual illness, people tend to rely on God's grace and mercy, while in bodily diseases they hasten to physicians, often neglecting divine assistance. Third, the most incurable pain stems from the absence of a true healer for the heart. Those who claim to cure such diseases are often afflicted themselves, incapable of treating their own souls. The prevalence of this sickness gives them a deceptive sense of comfort, rendering their deficiency unnoticed. Thus, they mislead others, urging them toward actions that intensify their ailment, since the most destructive disease is attachment to and love of the material world—a sickness that has seized even the supposed physicians. Consequently, they lose the moral authority to encourage others toward asceticism, as they themselves are liable to the reproach: “Why do you preach to others what you do not

practice yourself?” Hence, the malady of the soul has become widespread, while both remedy and healer have become scarce (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 2001, p. 140).

Excessive indulgence in sensual desires distances the humankind from the Divine Truth and diminishes attraction toward spiritual pleasures, culminating in the sickness of the heart. Achieving equilibrium among the human faculties requires a comprehensive framework; thus, the presence of religion and the ordinances of the Shari‘a become necessary. The path to the health of the soul lies in adherence to religion and the sovereignty of reason, each of which provides specific guidance for every level and faculty of the soul.

### **7. The Role of Anthropology in the Health of the Soul**

Anthropology encompasses diverse dimensions. In *Transcendent Theosophy (al-Hikmat al-Muta‘āliyah)*, a comprehensive view of the humankind is presented—one that integrates theological, mystical, philosophical, and religious perspectives. Accordingly, Mulla Ṣadrā maintains that “*The existence of the human soul is the key to the treasures of the knowledge of God, yet most people remain heedless of it*” (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1987b, p. 294). From his standpoint, in addition to the exaltation and appreciation of human intellect, the presence of revelation and the supervision of religion over human reason are deemed essential.

Contrary to empirical sciences—which have reduced reason to mere empirical rationality and excluded religion from the domain of inquiry—*Transcendent Theosophy* recognizes a profound interrelation between the two, placing each in its proper epistemic position. In modern times, however, the dominance and extremity of the empirical method have led to a narrowing of vision, such that from the boundless ocean of human existence, only its empirically observable aspects are acknowledged. This is because contemporary anthropology has been influenced by humanistic thought and by a conception of reason detached from divine revelation.

Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in discussing modern medicine’s view of the

humankind, notes:

From the fascination with the anatomy of a lifeless body—known at the time simply as “the body”—to the mechanical conception of the human organism... the result has been the emergence of a form of medicine that is at once astonishing for its successes and terrifying for its failures, especially its ultimate dehumanization of patients. This very dehumanization has now become an ethical issue. Alongside the excessive commercialization and technologization of medicine, it has driven many, even in the West, toward alternative forms of healing (Nasr, 2024, p. 308).

In fact, contemporary medicine has come under the full sway of materialistic ideology, treating the humankind solely as a physical entity. For this reason, elucidating the metaphysical foundations of medicine and reforming its underlying principles is a matter of urgent necessity. Yet, despite the strengths of anthropology within Mulla Ṣadrā’s intellectual system, some deficiencies must be acknowledged—particularly its strong emphasis on rational aspects over motivational and practical dimensions, as well as the abstract and divergent nature of certain philosophical discussions.

## 8. Conclusion

Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), like many other Muslim philosophers and mystics, believes that the integrity of the soul is intimately connected with the sovereignty of reason and its mastery over carnal desires. He emphasizes that there exists an intrinsic relation between theoretical and practical reason such that true knowledge, which is the product of theoretical reason, inevitably leads to righteous action. In such a condition, the soul’s health is preserved, and spiritual well-being cannot be realized without the soundness of the self, for a contaminated soul can never attain the state of immateriality or union with the Divine.

Spiritual health, according to him, represents the ultimate end of

human existential movement, a state in which the human spirit and soul are liberated from everything non-divine and from all worldly attachments, ultimately attaining the station of subsistence through God (*baqā' bi' Llā*). Mulla Sadra attributes the origins of spiritual and psychological maladies to several causes:

- a) neglecting the precedence of the soul over the body;
- b) physicians who themselves are trapped in heedlessness of the Hereafter;
- c) excess and deficiency in inner dispositions and moral characteristics, which, when they dominate the inner self, corrupt the constitution of the spirit and lead to eternal perdition and torment.

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, harmony between theoretical and practical reason enables the humankind to attain a correct understanding of existence and its truths, thereby making proper choices and acting accordingly. Such action perfects the soul in its truest sense. Hence, in Sadrian wisdom, spiritual health is fundamentally grounded in the purification of the soul, achieved through the governance of reason over both the realms of knowledge and action so that each faculty may reach its full perfection. His anthropology, therefore, insists on a proper understanding of human nature, happiness, and the existential dimensions of being, maintaining that this realization becomes possible only through the dominion of reason under the guidance of divine revelation. Thus, spiritual well-being, without adherence to the divinely ordained path of the *sharī'a*, is but a mirage.

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, the soul's substantial motion implies that spiritual health is not a static state but an existential condition tied to the soul's continuous movement toward perfection. Spiritual health is realized when this motion proceeds in a proper and purposive direction, while ethical deviation and cognitive neglect disrupt the soul's existential growth.

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