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Mulla Sadra's Philosophy's Capacities for Contemporary Religious Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

Given that most religions have significant claims regarding truth and salvation, their exclusivist approach often hinders the realization of rational interfaith dialogues. In this context, Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy and Wisdom offers valuable capacities for engaging in interfaith dialogue from a religious perspective. These capacities include the principality of existence, the gradation of the reality of existence, and the substantial motion. By acknowledging the principality of existence, in dialogue with followers of other religious traditions, the belief in a divine truth or God can serve as a focal point, with its nature considered subsequently. Through the notion of gradation of existence, it can be demonstrated that adherents of all divine religions, and occasionally some non-divine religions, benefit from the truth of their faith to varying degrees and proportionally share in the gift of salvation. Considering the substantial motion, it can be argued that all or most believers are evolving toward God according to their level of faith and that we are continually evolving until death. Consequently, the principle of belief in divine truth is highly valuable for dialogue with followers of other religions, suggesting that as we are always in a state of evolution, we should never claim exclusive possession of the absolute truth or consider ourselves self-sufficient without others. Therefore, Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy (Wisdom) has the potential to facilitate the discourse of dialogue with most or all religious and, occasionally, philosophical traditions, which should be reconsidered in the light of our contemporary needs.

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Introduction

Dialogue among religions and cultures stands as one of the most crucial issues, needs, and questions facing contemporary humanity. Indeed, the occurrence of wars and sectarian conflicts pose threats to peace and human being coexistence, casting the shadow of potential new conflicts over modern human being. One reason for such conflicts among nations is the lack of mutual understanding and appreciation for shared cultural, religious, and historical commonalities, particularly focusing on the differences and perceived superiority of our cultural, philosophical, and religious systems over others. Therefore, dialogue among religions and cultures is an unavoidable necessity in today's world, requiring the extraction of theoretical foundations and practical strategies from various intellectual systems. However, interreligious dialogue can only develop when common ground on issues of truth and salvation is achieved. A sympathetic reading of these two categories, especially the issue of truth (righteousness), is key to initiating shared religious dialogue. Adopting an exclusivist approach to one's religion, or philosophical system, and culture is a principal barrier to dialogue, as it prevents listening to others, reinforces a sense of self-sufficiency, promotes the idea that others must be converted to one's path, and views others as misguided and in need of guidance by us; this could lead to violent behaviors towards others. Conversely, avoiding exclusivism and focusing on historical, cultural, philosophical, and religious commonalities can open the doors to the discourse of dialogue and bring intellectual horizons closer together.

In this context, considering the necessity for successful contemporary interreligious dialogue, the capacities and capabilities of Mulla Sadra's¹

1. Sadruddin Muhammad Shirazi, known as Mulla Sadra (1572-1641), is one of the greatest Iranian Muslim philosophers and the founder of the Transcendent Philosophy (Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah) in Islamic thought. Some of the key principles of his philosophical system include the Principality of Existence, the Gradational Reality of Existence, the Substantial Motion, Knowledge by Presence, Corporeality of Emergence and Spirituality of Persistence, Eschatological Resurrection, and the unity in multiplicity

Transcendent Philosophy (Wisdom) appear particularly valuable in addressing the needs, crises, and questions of contemporary humanity. Establishing a connection between Transcendent Wisdom and the discourse of interreligious dialogue demonstrates the potential of Transcendent Wisdom to provide the necessary foundations for responding to one of the most pressing religious and philosophical needs of contemporary humanity, potentially indicating the efficacy and efficiency of this philosophical school compared to others. Therefore, the research question explores: What capacities do exist within Transcendent Wisdom for developing foundations, providing rational justifications, and advancing the process of interreligious dialogue? In answering this question, we focus on three significant philosophical principles within the intellectual system of Mulla Sadra, showing that this school is equipped with important theoretical and practical capacities for establishing foundations and providing rational justifications for interreligious dialogue. These three notable philosophical principles are the Principality of Existence (Isalat Al-Vojoud), the Gradation of the Reality of Existence (Tashkikeh Haqiqate Vojoud), and the Substantial Motion (Harakate Jouhari). Additional principles such as the optimality of the creation system, the predominance of good over evil, unity in diversity, the impermanence of coercion, and the majority aspect of human salvation can assist in this process.

This effort aims to demonstrate that these three principles can be adopted from Transcendent Wisdom to create a new framework for the foundations and logic of religious dialogue, its two key foundations are the gradational nature of religious truth and the gradational levels of

concurrently with multiplicity in unity. Mulla Sadra is the only Muslim philosopher who endeavored to integrate Avicenna's Peripatetic philosophy, Suhrawardi's Illuminative wisdom, Shi'a theology, and Ibn Arabi's Islamic mysticism, creating a new wisdom that synthesizes these four significant Islamic intellectual currents. His most important works in philosophy include his magnum opus, the "Asfar Arba'a" (Four Journeys), and his last book, "Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah."

human being salvation. The outcome is the establishment of necessary foundations and logic for dialogue with all or most religious orientations, avoiding religious exclusivism and acknowledging the reality that the divine mercy of guidance, truth, and salvation is not monopolized by any nation or religion but is granted gradationally according to the existential (ontological) and cognitive capacities of human beings and followers of religions. Thus, the door to dialogue with all human beings is open, and by relying on shared human being, ethical, religious, and cultural commonalities, dialogue with followers of all religions is possible.

In this research, while briefly explaining the meaning of the aforementioned principles within the context of Transcendent Wisdom, it is shown how their transfer from the philosophical and religious context of Transcendent Wisdom to the context of interreligious dialogue yields fruitful outcomes and brings valuable lessons for embracing the logic of interreligious dialogue.

1. The Principality of Existence

The principality of existence is the cornerstone of Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, upon which all other components of his philosophy are built. According to Sadrian wisdom, the existence, not the Quiddity (essence), constitutes the reality of being. In philosophical terms, while one can conceptualize beings in terms of both their existence and quiddity, it is an existence that fundamentally fills the fabric of reality, not the manner or mode of being of entities. In simpler terms, the entirety of being is nothing but the truth of existence; quiddity does not exist externally but serves as various manifestations or "garments" that the reality of existence adorns. Quiddity may exist mentally only in the realm of the mind, not externally. Furthermore, in Sadrian wisdom, all human beings' attributes, including knowledge, are reduced or paralleled to existence, implying that existence itself correlates with felicity, pleasure, goodness, and beauty. Therefore, all beings, by being, are inherently blissful, and any being that can expand its existential (ontological)

capacity will enjoy a higher degree of happiness (Mulla Sadra, 1975, p. 363; *Ibid.*, 1990, Vol. 9, pp. 153 and 121).

The question then arises: What is the application of this principle in the process of interreligious dialogue? To answer this question, it is crucial first to recognize that one of the most significant barriers to interreligious dialogue is the exclusivist religious outlook or approach. This perspective views a particular religious tradition as inherently superior, focusing on its specific attributes or qualities. Such claims of superiority are fundamentally grounded on two essential elements: including truth (righteousness) and salvation. For instance, in the Christian tradition, religious exclusivists believe that salvation, redemption, perfection, or any ultimate religious goal is exclusively found within or achieved through a specific religion. While other religions also hold some truths, there exists, according to this view, only one true religion that offers the sole path to salvation and liberation (Peterson, 1997, p.402). Therefore, from an exclusivist perspective, even genuinely devout and ethically upright followers of other religions cannot achieve salvation through their faiths but must be shown the unique path to salvation found within the Christian tradition (*Ibid.*). Thus, exclusivism, in any form, is a qualitative perspective that neglects the value of existence and judges its exclusive superiority based on the specific nature of religious tradition.

Herein lies the practical application of the principality of existence, setting aside the qualitative differences among religions and focusing on their ontological commonalities in dialogue. This means that in fostering interreligious dialogue, we should not focus on the specific attributes or superiorities of our religious tradition over others but should pay attention to our shared ontological commonalities. These commonalities in dialogues between theists and atheists are the principles of humanity and ethics; that is, our logic as believers in dialogue with non-believers should not emphasize our theistic qualities but rather our shared humanity and ethical principles. Similarly, in dialogues between followers of theistic

and non-theistic religions, such as Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, the important ontological principle is belief in a theistic deity, specifically the Abrahamic God, not a particular interpretation that our religion offers of this deity.

Thus, the principality of existence and the accidental nature (not-principality) of quiddity, when transferred from the context of Transcendent Wisdom to the discourse of interreligious dialogue, assumes a new function, in dialogue with others, we should view shared attributes as ontological and different attributes as accidental and secondary. Commonly, in dialogues among followers of theistic religions, what is crucial and authentic is the belief in a singular Abrahamic deity, not our specific understanding of the deity's attributes and actions. Therefore, the principality of existence means focusing on the fundamental principles shared among dialogue parties and overlooking the qualitative differences that hinder dialogue realization.

In fact in the position of dialogue logic, the principality of existence teaches us that what is fundamentally important is our existence as human beings and our shared human perfections. This shared basis can serve as the initial foundation for interreligious dialogue, with further bases potentially added later. In summary, our existence and being constitute a significant capital that can serve as a foundation for dialogue with others, rather than focusing on our identity, religion, race, sectarian orientation, or similar attributes.

2. The Principle of the Gradation of Reality

The principle of the gradation of reality as the second principle of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, plays a significant role in advancing the logic of interreligious dialogue. According to Mulla Sadra's philosophy, all beings possess a gradational reality; they form a longitudinal series in which each being is positioned according to its level of reality. In other words, the reality of existence, which is manifested in various forms among different beings, varies in intensity and weakness. Thus, the totality of

beings forms a hierarchical sequence, beginning with the most intense and rich entity, such as the Divine, and extending to the weakest and poorest, such as prime matter and body. In this longitudinal series, the extent to which beings partake in the reality of existence determines their ontological rank and position. Consequently, the gradational series of beings is primarily longitudinal, although some beings can occupy the same rank due to equal participation in the reality of existence (Mulla Sadra, 1981, pp. 431-432). Alongside this longitudinal series, attention can also be paid to a horizontal and accidental series of beings. Furthermore, the depiction of the longitudinal series of beings, through their participation in the reality of existence, illustrates the series of unity and plurality; that is, the collection of beings manifests unity through their existence and plurality through their differences in partaking in the reality of existence (Mulla Sadra, 1995, pp. 103-104). Thus, the gradational reality justifies the principle of unity in diversity and vice versa. Also, Mulla Sadra equates existence with knowledge, felicity, and goodness, the gradational nature of existence naturally leads to a gradational manifestation of knowledge, felicity, goodness, and beauty in the cosmic system. As a result, gifts such as knowledge, wisdom, happiness, salvation, truth, goodness, and beauty exist gradationally in the cosmic system, and human beings, according to their existential gradational rank, benefit gradationally from such gifts. To further understand this principle, it can be said that, according to the principle of gradational reality, all epistemic, ethical, aesthetic, spiritual, and the like human beings' perfections are not absolute but are realized in various degrees longitudinally and even horizontally or transversely according to human beings' gradational existential (ontological) rank. Thus, human beings are not merely divided into scholars and the ignorant, or the virtuous and the wicked, or the beautiful and the ugly, or the just and the unjust; rather, many individuals are a mixture of knowledge and ignorance, a blend of goodness and wickedness, an average of beauty and ugliness, and a balance of justice and injustice. The principle of the gradation of reality

reminds us that human beings are not purely black or white but that a significant number of them exist in shades of gray, embodying a combination of perfection and flaw, intensity, and weakness.

Now, with a deep understanding of the gradational reality of existence, we can effectively apply this concept to interfaith dialogue. This gradational reality helps us overcome a major obstacle to achieving fruitful religious dialogue: the exclusivist understanding of some believers regarding the righteousness and salvation inherent in their religious tradition. As previously mentioned, this exclusivist view posits that one religious tradition holds absolute righteousness and complete access to salvation, while denying these to others (Richards, 2005, pp. 111-113). Such an approach rigidly divides all aspects of existence into absolute categories like believer and non-believer, guided and misguided, destined for heaven or hell, and insiders versus outsiders, with no middle ground acknowledged. However, embracing the principle of gradational reality allows us to avoid these rigid, and inflexible divisions. Instead, we can accept that the blessings of righteousness and salvation, like other divine gifts, are distributed among human beings in varying degrees, both longitudinally, occasionally, and transversely. This means not all creation (and creatures) is/are strictly categorized as believer or non-believer, and guided or misguided, and the like. Various intermediate states likely include many individuals. Consequently, the gifts of righteousness and salvation are also distributed according to the existential (ontological) ranks and capacities of individuals to receive such blessings. Numerous people exist who, while they may not fully comprehend the highest levels of religious truth, are not necessarily misguided; instead, according to their existential capacities, they perceive and benefit from the lower levels of religious truth. Similarly, many believers exist who, although they do not experience the highest degrees of salvation and deliverance like the saints, are not necessarily lost or doomed; rather, due to their level of divine truth participation and their other ethical and moral virtues, they can experience the subsequent levels of salvation. In essence, the

blessings of righteousness and salvation, like the reality of existence, have a hierarchical and gradational structure through which believers benefit according to their existential ranks and their level of participation in these blessings. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the gradational differences in faith among the Prophets, Imams, Saints, religious scholars, philosophers, mystics, scientists, and the general populace. While all these groups are part of the faithful, they possess varying degrees of faith that correspond to their differential access to certainty, divine truth, and salvation. Additionally, the gradational reality of existence within the context of religious righteousness fosters a distinction between scholarly religious understanding and imitative religiosity. The clear outcome of appreciating the gradational nature of the gifts of righteousness and salvation in religions is that we avoid the arrogant approach of exclusivism and accept that all, or at least the majority of people, benefit from these blessings to varying degrees. Thus, by acknowledging that both we and others partake of such blessings to different extents, we can avoid pride and superiority in religious matters. Instead, we should open our eyes to truths expressed by others in religious dialogues, since how do we know that, we have the absolute truth and the religious other is deprived of it? It may well be the reverse. Therefore, it is better to embrace an open approach to interfaith dialogue, recognizing the relative participation of all human beings in divine righteousness and salvation, thereby fostering an environment where the extent of such blessings can be explored and where mutual guidance and invitation become essential.

3. The Substantial Motion

The Substantial Motion and its intensification, concepts integral to Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom, can also be adapted to the context of interfaith dialogue. Mulla Sadra emphasized that all material and semi-material beings are in a state of constant intrinsic and substantial change, acquiring new existences over time. Thus, substantial motion is an inherent and inseparable characteristic of these beings, moving

perpetually from materiality towards immateriality (Mulla Sadra, 1989, vol. 3, pp. 61-64). This motion is considered an evolutionary movement for all material and semi-material entities. Mulla Sadra specifically applies this characteristic to the human being's soul, described as the Corporal in its Emergence and Spiritual in its Persistence (or the Soul's Corporeality and its Spirituality of Survival (Al-Jismaniyat Al-hodous va Rouhaniyat Al-Baqa). The soul, initially linked to the body's material creation, gradually acquires the capacity to move from materiality to spirituality, preparing it for transition and endurance in the immaterial realm (Mulla Sadra, 1996, pp. 328-331). Therefore, the soul, which represents the authentic reality of human existence, does not have a fixed form but is characterized by its material creation and potential for spiritual permanence in another realm. Over the years, for Mulla Sadra, the soul evolves through substantial motions from material deficiency towards immaterial perfection, becoming increasingly immaterial and perfected from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, an adulthood person has a more detached and perfected ego than a childhood or teenager. Essentially, according to Mulla Sadra, our human life fundamentally involves this evolutionary substantial motion from the lower levels of materiality to the higher levels of spiritual and moral perfections. While primarily referring to material entities, this principle seems to encompass all aspects of human beings as semi-material entities, suggesting that we are continuously undergoing substantial evolutionary motion in all aspects—material, spiritual, ethical, and cognitive—and through this, gaining new existential identities.

Now, the relevance of substantial motion to contemporary interfaith dialogue lies in its emphasis on the gradual and evolutionary nature of attaining perfection in human beings, teaching us that merely adhering to a religion, even a complete one, does not make us complete. Instead, all of us, due to our human nature and the material and spiritual conditions of life, are in a constant state of acquiring religious perfection progressively. Thus, we cannot claim to have mastered all aspects of a religion; rather,

each of us recognizes and accesses aspects of religious truth according to our individual, ethical, and cognitive capacities, which are in perpetual flux and evolution. Indeed, all human beings, particularly adherents of major theistic religions, irrespective of being Jewish, Christian, Muslim, or the like, are engaged in a continuous struggle to reach the hidden truths within their faiths. However, as their existential capacities differ and are evolving, they generally cannot claim complete access to the absolute truths of religion but are instead approaching the truth, albeit at varying degrees of closeness.

4. The Benefits of Transcendent Wisdom's Capacities in Contemporary Interfaith Dialogue

The above sections outlined three main features of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom. Now, to explore how these teachings can enhance the process of interfaith dialogue, it is essential first to identify the primary barriers to such dialogue and then discuss how Transcendent Wisdom can address or neutralize these obstacles. As it was stated, historically, the primary theoretical and presupposed mental barrier to the success of interfaith dialogue has been the exclusivist approach to religion. Thus, until followers of religious traditions don't give up their exclusivist attitude, and its theoretical and practical requisites, real and successful religious dialogue will not be formed and actualized between them. Here, it is necessary to further investigate the nature of religious exclusivism. This approach maintains that divine righteousness and salvation are exclusively bestowed upon a single religion or religious tradition, consequently deeming all other religions devoid of divine righteousness and salvation. In this view, God is perceived to have chosen only one religion (or denomination) and its followers as the worthy of divine truth, while followers of all other religions (or denominations) are considered misguided and excluded from divine salvation. In this view, people are divided into religious selves and others, while the religious self has all or most of the qualities and virtues of God, and others are mostly

deprived of it. According to this attitude, mutual structures have been created between the self and the religious other, which generally separate us from them, such as we are good/they are bad, we want good/they are selfish, we know the truth/they pretend to know the truth, we have known God/they are far from God, and things like, have created an unfillable distance between the self and the religious other (Baumann, 2004, p25-28). So, exclusivism fosters a lack of desire to recognize or listen to the religious other, a reluctance to learn from the other, and a denial of the possibility that other religions could hold any truth. It positions the adherent as a saved individual and the religious other as doomed to perdition.

Now with these words, it can be observed that the exclusivist's attitude towards religion is one of the most important obstacles to openness to the possibility of religious and interfaith dialogue with other religious traditions, and some of the reasons for these obstacles will be mentioned below. One of the most important previous and subsequent reasons that led to the refusal of openness concerning religious dialogue can be said to be exclusive to the religious truth (righteousness). This idea evokes in the mind of a believer that God has given us all that was necessary from the truth, and He has chosen us as His worthy children. Therefore, we do not need to pay attention to religious others or hear from them (Swidler, 2014, p. 24). In addition, since God has placed the best and only way of salvation for us, there is no need to search for a way of salvation in other religious traditions (Moyaert, 2011, p. 51). This self-sufficiency in one's divine gifts of truth (righteousness) and salvation effectively shuts down any possibility of religious dialogue or understanding, as religious others are viewed as misled infidels deprived of divine truth and destined for damnation. Exclusivism naturally leads to a sanctification of almost all aspects of our own religious belief system, where even the minutest details of one's own religion are deemed supremely sacred, while simultaneously overlooking the sacred and elevated values of other religions (Moyaert, 2011, p. 21). So, these dynamics underscore

exclusivism as a significant barrier to openness toward engaging in dialogue with other religious traditions. Because others are misguided disbelievers who are deprived of the divine truth and righteousness, and that are people of fire, there is no need to listen to their words. Religious exclusivism naturally leads to extreme sanctimoniousness regarding all or the majority of religious belief systems. It results in a dismissive attitude towards the values, beliefs, and truths of other religions, preventing any genuine engagement or appreciation of the values presented by others. In this context, the other is not seen as having anything of value to offer or any new truths to introduce. Things like they also worship the One God and are His servants, they also adhere to moral values and believe in the Hereafter, and the like is not very important from the exclusivists' viewpoint. Because they are not part of our religious tradition, it is not important if they have any other beliefs. Therefore, religious exclusivism naturally leads to ignoring the epistemological, moral, and spiritual values of other religions and making one's religious attitude appear sacred, in which case the possibility of any openness to religious others' words and trusting their values is excluded. The religious other has nothing to give us and no new truth to introduce us.

On the contrary, if we appreciate the inclusive or pluralistic approach to religious righteousness and salvation, we can welcome religious dialogue. In this context, religious dialogue essentially involves a bilateral and reciprocal communication between individuals with differing views on a religious topic, aimed at learning more about the truth from each other. The most fundamental rationale for interfaith dialogue initially involves recognizing the difference in religious others and the mutual effort to understand each other. Dialogue also acts as a process through which we see ourselves reflected in our conversational partners, making the observation meaningless without the other's presence. Therefore, understanding truth and the world becomes more comprehensive only when we consider perspectives other than our own; viewing from just one angle never leads to the absolute truth. Every understanding of truth

depends on historical, linguistic, practical foundations, and interpretive assumptions. Self-knowledge is not just achieved through introspection and inner contemplation but is complete when we see ourselves through others' perspectives and define our identity through that of others. Thus, dialogue means learning new truths from each other, and it's through listening to how others perceive us that we learn more about our place in the world and our impact on others (Swidler, 2014, p 20, 22, 26). Accordingly, rational religious dialogue is a discourse in which, without a pre-existing religious mindset, we explore both our own and others' religious identities through each other's viewpoints. This rational process teaches us that religious phenomena and beliefs are multifaceted and can be understood from various angles. For instance, while the Christian doctrine of the Trinity may not be logically acceptable from a strictly Islamic theological standpoint, through rational religious dialogue, we may realize that Christians view this doctrine from a different perspective that might seem somewhat reasonable. It is only through such dialogue that our experience informs us that the real differences between us might lie elsewhere than our pre-dialogue beliefs. So rational dialogue reconstructs and corrects our understanding of religious belief systems, much like someone who realizes the beauty or lack thereof in their attire only by looking in a mirror or by considering another's opinion on the style and color of the clothes they wear. It is through dialogue that we understand some shared beliefs are more valuable than we thought before the conversation began (Swidler, 2014, p27). Thus, until rational religious dialogue is achieved, an objective evaluation of our own and others' beliefs is not possible, and only through such dialogue do we become aware of the transcendent value of some of our religious possessions.

Now, considering stated notes, it should be reviewed that in the light of mentioned challenges concerning taking religious exclusivism, Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom's teachings on evolution and interconnectedness can provide a philosophical foundation to counteract the rigid barriers of exclusivism through taking religious inclusivism or

pluralism. By emphasizing the inherent motion and transformation within all entities and the interconnected nature of existence, these teachings may encourage adherents of different faiths to see each other as fellow participants in a shared, evolving journey toward understanding and truth. This perspective can foster a more inclusive approach to dialogue, where each tradition is viewed as a valid pathway in the broader human being quest for spiritual and moral perfection. In considering the doctrines of Transcendent Wisdom, we must explore how they facilitate the transition from religious exclusivism to an inclusive or pluralistic approach, thus enabling contemporary interreligious dialogue. To address this query, we revisit the nature of these teachings and apply them to the context of modern religious dialogue, revealing their capacity to overcome religious exclusivism. In this case, initially, the doctrine of the principality of existence is focused upon. As previously stated, the principality of existence highlights that among the dual realities of existence and quiddity, the principality belongs solely to existence, which constitutes the external text of reality, whereas quiddity merely delineates the limits or measure of existence. It is also noted that the reality of existence is synonymous with perfection and goodness. By applying the principality of existence to the discourse of contemporary religious dialogue, we emphasize the crucial fact that primarily, our existence as human beings is what matters—not the specifics of our conditions. This acceptance of existence allows us to engage in dialogue with all human beings, including atheists and non-believers, as they too exist and benefit from the gift of being, which is equivalent to goodness and perfection. In interactions with believers, it is essential to recognize our shared existence as believers rather than focusing on whether the deity worshipped is singular or plural, divine or otherwise. It is only through establishing common ground in belief and advancing dialogue that differences gradually become apparent. In dialogues among adherents of monotheistic religions, what matters is our existence as believers in a divine religion, not whether one is Muslim, Christian, or Jewish—the

principle of theistic belief is crucial, not its derivatives. Similarly, in dialogues within a single religious tradition, such as between Shia and Sunni, Catholic or Protestant, what is important is our mutual existence as Muslims or Christians, rather than individual sectarian affiliations. The function of the principality of existence in religious dialogue is to emphasize the commonalities of our existence, not the differences in essence (quiddity); these commonalities, like our shared humanity, belief in God, adherence to a divine religion, or identity as Muslims or Christians, enable us to gather diverse groups for dialogue and foster empathetic understanding of substantive differences.

The principle of gradation in the reality of existence also plays a crucial role in religious dialogue. This principle illustrates that the distribution of intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic virtues among beings occurs in a hierarchical and graduated manner, reflecting their varying degrees of participation in the reality of existence. Therefore, in the process of religious dialogue, this principle teaches us that our access to the absolute religious truth is not uniform and complete but graduated; no believer, even of a divine religion, can claim exclusive possession of all religious truths and exclude others from such knowledge. Rather, the reality is that the absolute truth belongs only to God, and human beings, by being human, participate in divine truth at different levels. Given that all humans possess varying degrees of perfection and imperfection, there is no place for arrogance or superiority in religious dialogue. How can we know for certain that our level of existence and virtue is superior to another's? How can we assume that simply because we follow a divine religion, potentially the latest one, we are necessarily the best servants of God and at the highest level of the hierarchical chain of divine creation? Indeed, there seems to be no guaranteed correlation between the bestowal of divine truth and its complete reception. Although God is the absolute benefactor, our share in the divine truth is commensurate with our existential capacity. Furthermore, it is undeniable that not all human beings share the same existential capacity; otherwise, all would be

considered the Prophets.

As a result, the differences in our existential ranks and our graduated participation in the divine truth and other spiritual virtues necessitate humility in our religious dialogues. We are not God; we do not possess all perfections or full knowledge of every human being's existential state. We do not even grasp all the truths presented within our religious tradition. It is therefore wise to approach interfaith interactions with humility, avoiding the irrational claim to monopolize truth. We must consider that God, in His profound wisdom, may have granted others virtues and insights unknown to us, which we can only discover through interreligious dialogue. Indeed, our varied and gradual levels of participation in existential, cognitive, and ethical virtues show that none of us are entirely virtuous or wholly flawed; rather, we exist in shades of gray, a mix of light and dark, with only the degree of each defining our place in the universe. This hierarchical nature of virtues underscores that no believers understand religious teachings identically, but their understanding is hierarchical, since, if they did, all followers of a Prophet would either fully believe or disbelieve. However, religious traditions, such as Islam or Christianity, demonstrate that responses to prophetic messages are a mixture of faith, disbelief, and doubt, with both faith and disbelief themselves being varied and layered. So it is wise, in the process of religious dialogue, to maintain both religious and ethical humility, recognizing the potential in others for virtues and insights that are currently beyond our understanding, and being open to learning from their strengths.

Moreover, Mulla Sadra's theory of substantial motion teaches us that all of us, as long as we live, is in a state of continual, gradual evolution, whereby our existing virtues are enhanced by new ones. Our knowledge, ethics, and aesthetic values are all evolving. Our participation in divine truth and our faith are also advancing progressively toward higher perfection. As long as we exist in this material world, our destiny is a journey of evolution through time, acquiring new perfections. If we are

continuously evolving and accessing new perfections, this potential and opportunity exist for all of God's creatures; they too are in a gradual process of acquiring spiritual virtues.

So, in the context of religious dialogue, there is no place for arrogant behavior or an exclusivist attitude. Another individual, even assuming our adherence to a "superior" religion, might have progressed further in their spiritual journey. Moreover, neither we nor they have attained absolute truth; each of us, according to our existential capacity, is approaching it through evolutionary movement. Our Muslim or Christian identity does not necessarily match the ideal standards set by Islam or Christianity; rather, assuming a devout religious path, we are continually approaching the reality of Islam or Christianity, a possibility also available to adherents of other religious traditions.

This reality shows that the validity and righteousness of a religion do not guarantee the correctness of its adherents' understanding or their salvation; rather, it depends on how accurately they interpret and practice their faith, both of which are also subject to evolution and change. This explains why within some religious traditions, adherents experience remarkable ups and downs throughout their lives. As a result, the possibility of evolutionary advancement in knowledge, ethics, and existential virtues is present among adherents of most or all religious traditions, it is logical in our dialogues to set aside an exclusivist and absolutist view. We should accept that even in less esteemed religious traditions, there may be many faithful and virtuous individuals who have achieved high levels of cognitive and ethical perfection through their evolutionary spiritual journey. It is sensible to extend a hand of friendship to all humans, recognizing the potential for spiritual growth in them and the possible flaws in ourselves, to open up opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding.

5. Conclusion

Transferring philosophical concepts and theories from one intellectual

context to another may enhance their latent potential and even reveal their practical dimensions. It appears that certain teachings of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom possess the capability and capability to transition from their original philosophical contexts to new intellectual realms, allowing for the exploration and testing of their abilities in these new spaces. Accordingly, this research sought to demonstrate, through the transfer of three significant teachings of Transcendent Wisdom to the space and discourse of religious dialogue, that these teachings can exhibit new capabilities in this arena. Specifically, the doctrine of the Principality of Existence emphasizes the importance of focusing on existential commonalities, the doctrine of the Gradational Reality of Existence underscores the significance of recognizing the varied capacities of believers in perceiving and grasping religious truths, and the doctrine of Substantial Motion points to the process of essential evolution in the religiosity and religious knowledge of believers. The outcome of integrating such teachings in the space and discourse of interreligious dialogues is the avoidance of religious exclusivism and the eschewing of arrogance toward other religious perspectives. Instead, it recognizes our mutual need to understand each other's conditions and thoughts. By focusing on our shared existential traits and acknowledging that none of us has yet reached the absolute truth, but are in evolutionary proximity to it, we can empathetically comprehend the differences between ourselves and others. In summary, employing these teachings leads to the adoption of religious humility, a welcoming attitude towards dialogue with others, and a keenness to learn from them. If these teachings are utilized effectively, it indicates the efficiency and efficacy of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom and Philosophy in addressing our contemporary needs in the realm of religious dialogue.

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