

Soul-Body Relation and Immortality in Mullā Sadrā and Descartes

Fahīme Jameei¹
Mūsā Akramī²

A **BSTRACT:** Plato argues for the immortality of the soul. He presents his "substance dualism" in which the body is moving, material, and mortal, while the soul is unmoving, immaterial, and immortal. Aristotle states the unity of the soul and body on the basis of his "hylomorphism" in which the soul is the form of the body, so that it may not exist without the body. Descartes' restating substance dualism to prove the soul's immortality is an explicit objection to Aristotle's view on human immortality and eventually leads to reduction of the soul to the mind. On the contrary, Mullā Sadrā holds that the soul enjoys unity and simplicity, really being identical with the body. He considers the soul as an entity having been created with the body. It becomes spiritual (and immortal) according to increasing its gradation of being through substantial motion. In this way, Mullā Sadrā argues for the soul's immortality without ever referring to the soul-body dualism.

K **KEY WORDS:** Mullā Sadrā, Descartes, Soul, Soul-Body Relation, Immortality.

-
1. Graduated in Comparative Philosophy, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch of Tehran, Tehran, Iran; *Corresponding Author's Email:* jamei_fahimeh@yahoo.com
 2. Associate Professor, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

Introduction

Among the most puzzling questions that the human being has faced regarding himself is the question concerning his immortality. Is it possible for human being to exist after demise of his body? How his soul (*psuchê*) can live after his death? And what is the nature of the soul-body relationship? The latter problem consists of two related questions: (1) are the soul and the body two real distinct unexplainable substances/ entities, or is each of them a kind of form or function for the other? (2) How can we understand the obvious bilateral causal relation between the soul and the body? The former question deals with the dualism and the latter seeks for some logical explanations for mutual causal interaction between the body and the soul. The main problem in finding an appropriate answer to the first question appears when one must explain how a non-physical (non-spatial) entity such as a soul is related to a physical entity such as a body. Indeed, the discussion of the human soul and its relation to the body occupies a highly important position in the question of human immortality, so that there are a number of different interesting answers in the history of philosophy.

In spite the fact that most of ancient doctrines of immortality of the soul are not specifically theoretical, some works of Plato and Aristotle on the soul and its immortality can be taken seriously. In general we may claim that there are two main controversial views on the relation of human soul to his/her body: dualism and the unity of the soul and body. Obviously, the first one, that seems to present a better explanation for human immortality is stated by Plato. Indeed, Plato is known as a forerunner for soul and body dualism, and tries to argue about immortality of the soul after demise of the body. One may discover his reasons for dualism in the

Phaedo. But, his theory is different in the *Republic*, where, explaining the problem of the soul-body interaction; he offers a theory of the soul, in which the unity of the mind is accepted. The soul-body unity has been presented by Aristotle who has done the most exhaustive work on the theory of the soul in his *De Anima* (On the Soul). In this work, he holds that the soul is not a material object, but a form of the body. As we will discuss, through presenting the soul as a form of the body, he cannot explain both the separability of the body from the soul (especially soul's existence without the body after death) and independence of thinking while acquiring the knowledge. Later on, in seventeenth century, Aristotle's view on human knowledge and immortality made Descartes to claim that there is a separate soul. He presented the view that the mind and the body, being distinct from each other, could be separately distinguished. In fact, Descartes restated Plato's view on dualism, though we are not entitled to say that both of them are genuine dualists. To be more precise, we try to show that Descartes' dualism is not sufficient to prove immortality of the soul, because he cannot remain faithful to substance dualism, a thesis that is unable to explain the soul-body interaction.

In a comparative study, we are going to do an investigation on Mullā Sadrā's opinion concerning the soul and the body to show how he tries to prove the immortality of the soul not, of course, on the basis of dualism; instead, he presents a theory of the soul that seems similar to Aristotle's theory about unity of the soul and the body, and the material origin for the soul. Of course, he soon chooses another way that cannot harm human immortality after his death.

1. Substance Dualism and Immortality in Plato

From Homeric poems onwards, we find a development in philosophical theories of the soul, presented by Plato, in which a human soul would survive after death. Plato puts forward two theories of the soul in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. In the former, he mentions that after the death of a person, he “still possesses some power and wisdom” (70b). There one sees Socrates arguing that the soul is immortal after death and even contemplates truths after separation from its body. This argument shows that the soul not only has no parts (being simple), but also is intelligible and imperishable; accordingly, the soul is not a form (78b-80b). In fact, for Plato, body and soul are different; the former is perishable and perceptible, while the latter is intelligible and exempt from destruction, being deathless or immortal.

Socrates again states that since the soul, as an intelligible being is generally invisible and imperceptible, can share its natural function with the divine, especially for to ruling and leading (79c). It seems that for Plato a human being consists of two parts: soul and body. The essential part of the human is the soul, to which the mental life is pertained. This view, being known as substance dualism¹, normally includes the

1. In the philosophy of mind there is another view that is called “property dualism”: “A compromise position between substance dualism and materialism. Like materialism, it holds that there is only one type of substance: physical. Property dualism denies the existence of immaterial minds that somehow interact with the physical world, animating unconscious bodies. Where property dualism parts with materialism is that it does not attempt to reduce mental states to physical states. Mental states, according to the property dualist, are irreducible; there is no purely physical analysis of mind. Property dualism thus holds that although there is only one type of substance--physical--there are two types of property--physical and non-physical. Our bodies have physical properties such weight and height, and mental properties such as beliefs and desires. This position is intended to combine the plausible aspects of both dualism and materialism, while avoiding the problems of each”. See:

<http://www.philosophyofmind.info/propertydualism.html>

theory that the soul is simple and has no parts; otherwise, one of its parts may have properties which another part does not. Here, for Plato, the soul and the body are separated. Accordingly, the body perishes at the time of death, while the soul would have another life. Plato, in the *Phaedo* (73a-78a) and *Meno* (81b-86b), gives several arguments to prove the immortality of the soul.

Moreover, while it is the soul that undertakes the important affairs such as thinking, feeling, and even choosing, body is responsible for other parts. It is undeniable that body and soul interact. Psychic states often cause bodily states and vice versa. In the *Republic*, Plato suggests the ordinary concept of the soul that seems somehow different (352d-354a). It seems that his concept of soul in the *Phaedo* is somehow narrower than his conception of mind in the *Republic*, where Socrates attributes to the body, and not to the soul, a large variety of mental states, such as pleasure, belief (83d), and also desire and fear (94d). In the *Timaeus*, he holds that plants in this sense have souls, exhibiting sense-perception and desire (77b). In the *Phaedo* the soul has desires too (81d). It also enjoys the pleasures of learning (114e). It seems that Plato in the *Phaedo* cannot support the unity of the soul. The various activities such as desire and cognition don't seem to belong only to a plurality of distinct units with separate operations. Socrates' contemplation in the *Phaedo* directly appoints to the soul and its desire for food as a 'bodily' desire that is related to the soul.

We can say that Plato presents the new theory of soul in the *Republic* in which at least the human soul has three aspects or parts of reason, spirit and appetite. Reason is the own nature of the soul and attached to truth and knowledge. It is the guide for regulating the life. We have to notice that though these three parts are separated, the soul itself is considered as a whole (442c).

Comparing both theories of the soul, in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, it seems that the first theory involves a division of the soul and the body and the latter presents the soul as an integrity that involves of mental or psychological functions that somewhat problematically had been assigned to the body. The conflict in the *Phaedo* is between the body and the soul, and in the *Republic* is between two aspects of the soul: spirit and reason. In the *Republic*, Plato states a theory of the soul which allows attribution of all psychological or mental functions to the soul as a single subject. Therefore, the theory respects the unity of the soul, while it seems that in the *Phaedo* the theory does not. Besides, In the *Republic*, the theory of the soul can support the articulation of desire into different kinds in a better way. Perhaps we can say that the concept of the soul offered in the *Republic* is somehow broader. It is important to notice that his theory of the soul is not completed, being incapable of answering this question: how can the soul relate to these non-mental vital functions? By concentrating on Plato theory of the soul in the *Phaedo*, we can say that, according to Plato's theory of the "Ideas", it is the soul which is real, and the body is just a shadow or a participation of the "Ideas". Though, there would be no soul-body problem for Plato, the opinion engaged him to another problem.

Accepting the Parmenidean constraint that knowledge must be unchanging, Plato must admit the obvious consequence of this idea that sense experience could not be considered as a source for knowledge. He has stated this point in the *Theaetetus*, where the objects apprehended are changing ones. But we know that humans have knowledge; accordingly, one might ask the question that how is it possible to attain knowledge? Plato holds that a human being attains his knowledge of the objects through perception of their earthly shapes in the first step; later on, his knowledge

ascends to the higher realm of the Forms, so that the human mind will be able to approach the Forms. In the seventh book of the Republic, while offering his famous myth of the cave, Plato resembles the philosopher to a man who is in a cave and looks at a wall on which he can see nothing but the shadows of real things (i.e. the real world of the Forms, behind himself). Coming back, he, due to the outside light, hardly can distinguish the shades. Accordingly, he attempts to conduct his life because he is the only one who knows the truth. In the *Theaetetus*, Plato also criticizes the empiricist theory of knowledge, arguing that knowledge through the senses is not always accurate. To him, genuine knowledge must be gotten by a thinking soul that would turn away from this world; it is the soul that can obtain knowledge of 'Forms'. Plato, in his theory of the Forms, states that the sensory world, being experienced as real by human beings, is just a shadow of a higher realm in which the Forms exist, so that this world is just a copy of these 'Forms'. Aristotle thinks in a different way and holds that sense perception is very important. Plato's theory of knowledge, as well as his view on soul and body, cannot be accepted by Aristotle.

3. Descartes' Dualism

Aristotle's view on both human immortality and human knowledge, compel some philosophers to restate Plato's view in such a way that the soul is separated from body. Among them, Descartes tries to establish the idea that soul and body are really distinct, so that one can distinguish them. In his *Meditations*, Descartes recognizes himself as an indubitable and substantial essence, i.e. a mind. For Descartes, a human being is a 'thinking thing', being a substance whose essence is thought. Think (mind), in contrast to mater (body), is of particular characteristics: it has no extension and spatial position, being invisible. After establishing the existence of

Soul-Body Relation and Immortality in Mulla Sadra and Descartes

the mind, Descartes argues for the existence of external world, including human body that seems to belong to the corporeal world. It is important to notice his thesis that we can conceive ourselves existing without bodies; while it is impossible to conceive ourselves existing without minds. Indeed, using the "Argument from Doubt" in *Principles of Philosophy*, he establishes the "Cogito", leading to a "real distinction" between two substances (Descartes, 1985, Sec.60). To exist, a substance does not need any other existent but God (*Ibid*). Here Descartes states the idea that he, as a human being, is essentially and primarily a "res cogitans" (a thinking thing), and can be distinguished as a distinct essence. He again states that he is a "thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions" (Descartes, 1985, AT VII 28: CSM II 19).

Insisting on the view that mind is a 'complete thing' leads Descartes to state that mind does not require other attributes than its sufficiency, yet the claim does not explain how it prevents the body of being an essential part of him. Even his explanation on the basis of God's lack of deception shows that he may make a mistake. In fact, these kinds of critical objections prevent Descartes' Cogito to continue to assert existence of the soul without its body, for the soul may require some corporeal attributes to be capable of thinking. In order to distinct soul and body, Descartes tries to attribute certain opposing properties to them, showing the mutually contrast between matter and thought. Matter is divisible, while thought is not. On the other hand, it seems that mind cannot occupy a particular physical position, not being divisible or extensible. At the end of the arguments, Descartes establishes the dualism. Moreover, he accepts that soul and mind are identical in order to prove the immortality of the soul. For this purpose, he must prove that the human essence

is the same as his 'thought'; in other words, he starts with the traditional term of the soul and ends with the term of the mind. Besides, Descartes' argument makes his readers wonder about his absolute conclusion: Human beings have immortal souls and their souls are continuously thinking. His devaluing the human body to emphasize the existence of human soul after the death reminds of Plato's metaphor in proving the immortality of the soul. It seems that Descartes is not a pioneer who appeals the dualistic distinction between soul and body in order to prove the soul's immortality.

In addition to the substantial theory, with respect to totally physical things, Descartes mentions the doctrine of "configuration and motion of parts" by saying that each body is determined by the motion and configuration of its parts. He indicates that voluntary movements of the body and sensations are solely not modes of the mind or body, but rather could be modes of "the soul and the body together." Descartes confirms (at least partially) this idea in *Principles of Philosophy*, part I, article 48:

But we also experience within ourselves certain other things, which must not be referred either to the mind alone or to the body alone. These arise, as will be made clear in the appropriate place, from the close and intimate union of our mind with the body. This list includes, first, appetites like hunger and thirst; secondly, the emotions or passions (AT VIIIA 23: CSM I 209).

It seems that the main problem for Descartes' dualism is with the restrict division of the body and the mind, not being capable to explain the interaction between these two distinct substances. The problem is about the voluntarily bodily actions in the framework of contacts between the body and the mind: because of non-extended nature of the mind, such actions would not be possible. Descartes must explain that

how there would be a contact between these two surfaces when the surface is considered as a mode of the body, as he maintains it in section 15 of part II of *Principles of Philosophy*. Accordingly, there is no surface for mind to help it in contacting with the body in order to move it. Therefore, if he considers body and mind totally different, how he can intelligibly explain the voluntary bodily movements. Hence, as he doesn't have recourse to the substantial forms, Descartes not only cannot have recourse to the configuration of matter but also to the dispositions to which it gives rise, including "all the dispositions required preserving that union" (AT IV 166: CSMK 243). Thus, any effort to classify Descartes in "Cartesian Dualist" class would be inconsistent or simplistic. On this basis, we may not consider Descartes as a real 'Cartesian Dualist'. Instead, this definition seems too loose when considering Descartes' conception of human nature as a blending of different elements such as sensation and imagination, a conception that tends to put his official dualism under considerable pressure. Partly as a result of this, we often see in Descartes' writing on human psychology an emergence of a grouping of not two but three notions- not a dualism but what may be called "trialism".¹ At the end of his contemplation, Descartes implies almost trialism by listing 'primitive' categories, including body-mind union to accommodate the 'passions and sensations'. May be it seems easier and more meaningful to state that this kind of trialism seems necessary to help him to distinguish between inanimate objects and animals, though he is careful to avoid the situation that the third category is established

1. "Trialism in philosophy was introduced by John Cottingham as an alternative interpretation of the mind-body dualism of Rene Descartes. Trialism keeps the two substances of mind and body, but introduces a third attribute, sensation, belonging to the union of mind and body. This allows animals, which do not have thought, to be regarded as having sensation and not as being mere automata." See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trialism>

ontologically not epistemologically.

In a letter to Elizabeth, of 21 May 1643, Descartes mentions three *primitive* notions or categories for models on which all our knowledge is patterned. One is 'extension' that comprises motion and shape, and can be assigned to the body alone; the second one is 'thought' that comprises volition and understanding and can be assigned to the mind alone; and finally there is the notion of the 'union' of body and mind that comprises the results of psycho-physical interactions like "sensations and passions" (AT III 665; Ki38. See also letter to E of 28 June 1643: AT III 691;K141). On this account, we can conclude that Descartes' arguments for the mind/body distinction are amongst the most contested in his works. Besides, we can find lack of coherence and compatibility to dualism in some of his writings, recalling that there is also the problem of incorporating the subjective phenomena which take both domain of body and mind.

Accordingly, the question remains to ask: are there compelling reasons to introduce a doctrine with materialistic explanations based on mind as a proper alternative to dualism? If the answer is yes, how can Descartes' theory on soul/mind prove the immortality of the soul?

4. Unity of the Soul and the Body

In contrast to Plato, who is known for dually of the soul and the body, Aristotle is famous for his doctrine on unity of the soul and the body. In his major work on psychology, "*De Anima*" (or "*On the Soul*"), *he* gives us some coherent explanations concerning all living organisms and their functions. There he can claims that a living thing (an animate thing) is able to move itself just because of having soul, so that all human beings, animals and plants are like each other, all,

unlike inanimate objects, possessing soul. According to Aristotle, such beings may have different kinds of souls. All of them are enjoying a nutritive soul by means of which they are initiating their basic needs such as growth, the food absorption and reproduction of their kinds. Besides, all of the animals have a sensitive soul that helps them to have a perception of their environments. In addition to nutritive and sensitive souls, Human beings possess a rational soul too by means of which they can think and understand. Though he mentions different kinds of soul for each living thing, we must note that they have only one soul with different degrees of nutritive, sensitive, and rational functioning in itself. Thus, the soul is the final cause for the organism's existence; it is also formal and efficient causes. Therefore, the body possesses only the material cause in itself. Hence, all of the organism's operations can be considered as the function of its soul.

Now we can ask the question: what is the nature of this soul? Aristotle in *De Anima*, defines the soul as “the first entelechy (or perfection) of a natural organized body having the capacity of life” (II, 1,412 a 27; 412 b, line 5). The definition clearly means that the soul is a form or function for an organized body and is incapable of independent, separate existent. Aristotle holds that the forms are universals and they are capable to instantiate in different kinds of things. It is all the properties such as appearance, shape, pattern and even reaction that make the soul the kind of thing it is. For a living thing, its form is the soul that may change over action and time. He maintains that plants enjoy vegetative souls while animals have sensitive and vegetative souls, human beings ,besides, possess rational or intellectual ones. He claims that the separated human soul is not united with matter and cannot be instantiated in many different individuals. The matter of human body makes the particular

human the one it is. In Aristotle's view a form of a thing, that is instantiated in it, cannot be separated from its particular substance. Consequently, the human soul also cannot exist apart its body. If we, like Aristotle, claim that a soul has parts, the whole soul remains united to the body (413a), though we can say that some parts of the human soul (e.g. the mind that is responsible for thought) may be separable.

Aristotle claims that the soul is created with the body. Indeed, he, contrary to Plato, does not believe in the spirituality of the soul. According to him there is a natural relationship between the body and the soul. In other words they are not two different things in the real world, but a natural unity that can be considered separately just in the mind. The soul-body relationship is almost alike the relationship between the material basis of a statue and its Hermes-shape; indeed, human being cannot be separated in reality. There are inevitable consequences regarding such a relationship between soul and body. An interesting one is that it seems true to claim that his view is similar to what the materialists say about soul-body relation: the mental states are the same as physical states; this is in contrast to the substance dualists' view that the human soul is the subject for mental states and is able to exist alone after its separation from the body. Furthermore, if it is not important or interesting to ask whether the statue and its material basis are really one, we are not forced to answer the same question concerning the soul and its body. Hence, Aristotle claims:

“It is not necessary to ask whether soul and body are one, just as it is not necessary to ask whether the wax and its shape are one, nor generally whether the matter of each thing and that of which it is the matter are one. For even if one and being are spoken of in several ways, what is properly so spoken of is the actuality” (ii 1, 412b6-9).

Here it seems that he does intend to say that it is meaningless to ask of the unity of the soul and its body; rather, he perhaps wants to show that the problem is unimportant and needless to be answered. We have no time to worry about the unity of wax of a candle and its shape; we must not spend time over the same question about the body and the soul, too. Here, Aristotle applies his famous hylomorphic¹ pattern for the relation between soul and body to avoid of arising the normal question about their unity. Indeed, he does not say that they are identical. He neither insists that soul and body are one in some weaker sense; instead, he evidently rejects this idea (ii 1, 412a17; ii 2, 414a1-20). In contrast, we may deny the unity of the shape of a candle and its wax by saying that the wax may exist while that shape of a candle has of no more existence. Accordingly, we can deny that the body and the soul are identical.

Since the soul for Aristotle is generally the form of its body, we can derive from Aristotelian hylomorphism a question concerning the separability of the soul from its body that reminds us of the possibility of Plato's substance dualism. According to Aristotle's hylomorphism, if the Hermes-shape dose not persist after melting the bronze, how we could hold that the soul survives after the death of the body. Hence, according to him, "it is not unclear that the soul - or certain parts of it, if it naturally has parts - is not separable from the body" (ii 1, 413a3-5). Therefore, if the forms generally can exist without their material bases, the souls should not be considered as some exceptions. By itself, Aristotelian hylomorphism is not capable to refute all kinds of dualism; there is no reason, thus, to hold that the souls are separate from the bodies, even if they act as distinct from their

1. Hylomorphism' is a Greek compound word that is composed of two terms: matter (**hulê**) and shape or form (**morphê**); so it can be translated to "matter-formism."

material bases. On the basis of his view on denying the separability of the soul, Aristotle holds that it is possible for some parts of the soul to be separable, since these parts are not parts of the body's actualities (ii 1, 413a6-7). He actually points to an important part of the soul, i.e. the mind (nous) that is an exceptional faculty among other ones of the soul.

Viewing the relation of the body and the soul as a special case of the relation between form and matter, the soul could be considered as a whole part of any kind of perfect explanation for a living being. We may be inclined to treat the soul like the dualists such as Plato. It should be emphasized that Aristotle doesn't decide to stress on the soul-body separability just because of the soul's being the actuality of the body. Thus, he does not claim that the soul is capable of existing without the body. According to Aristotle, the universal intellect is eternal. But in his work, *On the Soul*, Aristotle faces the question: is it possible for the soul to be the entelechy of the body in the sense that a shipmaster is the entelechy of a ship? (413 a, lines 8-9) This question reflects his hesitation about the separability of the human intellect after his physical death, while the rest of the soul perishes. It is quite probable that he believes in the survival of the human intellect after it is developed by purely intellectual operations. It is obvious that, basically, these objections arise against a philosopher as the author of the soul's definition as entelechy of the body who at the same time regards the souls of the heavens as eternally actual and movers of the heavenly bodies (Aristotle. *Physics*, 259 b 20 ff).

Though it seems that Aristotle's hylomorphism provides no grounds for Platonic dualism or reductive materialism, perhaps it is better to say that the Aristotelian view on soul may express the view that human beings do not have souls, but consist only of matter in a very complicated way. That is

Soul-Body Relation and Immortality in Mulla Sadra and Descartes

the reason that it is possible to say that Aristotelianism is a kind of materialism. According to him, psychology (i.e. the science of the soul) is a part of physics, although he, in some of his works, prefers not to classify the science of the soul as a branch of the natural science. When he says, in *De Anima*, that the study of the soul "is already in the province of the natural scientist" (i 1 403a16-28), he seems to involve the body in some psychological states such as anger, joy, courage, pity, hating and loving; while in holding that the mind (nous) may not be related to the body as these sorts of states are, he seems reluctant to put entirety of the study of the soul into the natural sciences (Metaphysics. vi 1 1026a4-6).

It remains unanswered that, having such a naturalistic view on the soul, how can Aristotle interpret the human knowledge. Plato holds that we can attain knowledge of first principles just by acquainting with Forms. Sensory experience is not capable to provide us knowledge, since they are changing, imperfect and particular (in contrast to first principles, which are necessary, unchanging and universal),, so, he claims that knowledge is possible only with universals. An acquaintance with the Forms, before joining the bodies, is the cause of human souls' knowledge. According to what Plato holds concerning the universals and Forms, there would be no real relation between a singular thing and universals. In contrast, Aristotle holds that universals exist in particulars, for they are phenomena immanent in reality. We can interpret this to imply that comprehending the universals (essences) is at root a passive receptivity or intuition.

For Aristotle, alike the naturalistic realists, humans sense experiences are the origin of their valid knowledge, and can help them as valid evidence to be used for reasoning and thought, and there is no need to join or contact other external

objects.¹ Hence, according to Aristotle, thinking isn't potentially dependent on the objects of thought. Even the imagination involves the common sense operation without being stimulated by the bodily sensory organs. Thus, though our knowledge should begin with some information attained through our senses, these are the rational means to achieve its results. Indeed, the soul makes use of some formal logical methods to cognize the relationships among abstract (*De Anima*, iii4).

To sum up, we may rehearse that when one believes that the soul/mind is a form of the body, being united with a physical matter (body), challenge will arise over explaining the nature of the unity of the immaterial soul. In other words, one must explain how the notion of immaterial substance could be understood; otherwise it seems that the human knowledge and his thoughts in some way depend upon something like God or God's intellect. For some philosophers, on the contrary, it is important to try to prove immortality of human soul.

5. Mullā Sadrā on Unity of the Soul and the Body

Among Muslim philosophers who concerned themselves with the subject of the soul (*nafs*) and its relationship to the body, Mullā Sadrā, Descartes' contemporary, presents the most detailed works on this subject and, as compared with other Muslim philosophers, pays more attention to this topic.² At the first step, he excludes the soul from physics and

-
1. One can find doubt in Aristotle's view on essences as metaphysical rather than as epistemological which is how we regard them. One can oppose his intuitionist view that essences are only "intellectually seen" and contend that concepts or universals are the epistemological productions of a classified process that represents specific entity types.
 2. About one fourth of his major works, Asfar, is about his anthropology, consisting of different aspects of the human being and his journey from the beginning to the end. He also wrote about soul and body in his other works.

establishes the knowledge of the soul as a branch of the metaphysics. Mullā Sadrā brings an important change in philosophy, leading to what he has named the "Transcendent Theosophy" (*al-hikmah al-muta'liyah*), with an emphasis on the priority of psychology (the science of the soul = *'ilm al-nafs*). In his major work, *Al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* (The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect) he brings a new philosophical insight into human nature. He tries to create a new theory concerning the formation of the soul, its unity, its relationship to the body and, its immortality.

As a preliminary point, it must be said that definition of the soul for Mullā Sadrā (1383, p.6) is closely connected with the body, i.e. the soul cannot be defined as proved in separation from the body. In the fourth book of the *Asfar*, devoted to the science of the soul, he defines the soul as the first perfection of the natural body. At the first glance, it seems that Mullā Sadrā accepts Aristotle's definition of the soul as "the first entelechy of a natural, organized body possessing the capacity of life."

One may consider Mullā Sadrā with the entire Aristotelian tradition, for he accepts that the soul is originated but not eternal and claims that the soul cannot be separate and independent of matter, unlike the Platonists and neo-Platonists believe that the soul is pre-existence and therefore is separate and independent of matter. Paying more attention to his doctrine, we can find that the soul takes on a meaning totally different from the quasi-material substance of the Aristotelians. Perhaps it is possible that Sadra's well-known principle, i.e. "the soul is corporeal by its origination (*hudūth*) and spiritual by its subsistence (*baqā'*)", implies the impossibility of any kind of pre-existence of souls to bodies. Indeed, his definition of soul is based on his thesis that the

soul is created with the body but becomes immortal and spiritual through the Spirit, or, using his own terminology, the soul is “*jismaniyyat al-huduth wa ruhaniyyat albaqa*” (“the soul is corporeal in its origination and spiritual in its survival”) (Mullā Sadrā, 1383, p.402). Mullā Sadrā even argues that at the beginning the human soul is the same as the body and only through gradual trans-substantial motion¹ does it separate from the body until it achieves complete catharsis (*tajrid*) (1382, pp.7-10). The human soul is related to its body through substantial motion, and it helps the human to reach the development of his soul at the final stage. A soul at this point, is no longer the same as previous one, but becomes an actual intellect and gets ready to join the Active Intellect. According to Mullā Sadrā, though the soul is the independent substance, yet it needs its corporeous bodies (*ajsād*) as a tool for certain organism actions and operations. Indeed, the soul's relation to its body is for governorship (*tadbīr*) of human's affairs, but in its operation and government (*tasarruf*), the soul needs another substance, with a less spirituality, to fill the gap and operate as an intermediary. This intermediary is “the animal spirit” (*al-rūh al-hayawānī*) and it also needs another intermediary – the heart (*qalb*).

Accordingly, one should recall that in Mullā Sadrā (1375, p.132)'s view the human soul has two aspects: it is corporeal regarding its origination and operation in the body, and is spiritual regarding its intellection. It means that at the beginning the human soul is ‘in the body’ and gradually would actualize and reach intellectual level so that, at the same time, its material aspect will dwindle. Therefore, the soul operates in its body corporeally, while its intellection makes the soul more spiritual. More importantly, the

1. This is the motion for the substance of a being not its accidents.

separated intellect is spiritual in both essence and action, though the nature is corporeal both in essence and action. There are certain stations for both separated intellect and natures. When Sadra (1382, p.113) says that the soul is "going through (different) states" (*tatawwur*), he does not mean this to be the case with separated intellect and natures, but he means that the soul passes through different stages or levels of being. In other words, the soul is initially a bodily substance that passes internally through various stages till absolute releasing from the bonds of matter and change. All of these levels are hidden in the primary substance or a life-germ that passes through all the substantial stages, by way of the substantial motion, in order to detach itself from the matter and potential, and attain eternity in the world of pure intelligence. In his opinion, soul is an independent substance, which at first appears as a body. It should be emphasized, however, that the body is not a distinct part of the soul, but is a descendent level of it. For Mullā Sadrā, it is the soul that "carries", and, indeed, it is the subject of the body, not vice versa. For Mullā Sadrā the soul is capable to operate and administrate the body, while the body is the follower of the soul. As a subjugated of the soul, the body is an existential trace (*athar*) of the soul. Surely, Mullā Sadrā holds that the soul is something that gives the forms to the body and its different organs, puts together the opposite elements of the body, and raises the bodily affairs and sense perception. The souls can operate all their affairs by means of the substantial motion and passing through the different levels or stations from beginning of their origination, i.e. the material level, till reaching the levels in which the souls would be to imagine and intellect.

This is the process that makes the soul spiritual and helps it to be united with active intellect, which is none else but the spirit of holiness (*rūh al-qudus*). The soul will be developed,

according to Mullā Sadrā (1383, p.445), by increasing unity and simplicity through passing its successive stages, an evolution that is indeed an application of his principle of substantive motion. Finally, the soul will contain all its lower forms and faculties within its simple nature while achieving its highest form as true unity. Every form includes perfection of previous forms (*lobs ba'd allobs*).

In accordance with the principle of substantive change or transformation, which has close connection with the doctrine of the gradation (*tashkik*) of being¹, Mullā Sadrā (1383, p.384) holds that the soul emerges as vegetative soul in the first step. In the next step it emerges as locomotive and perceptive animal soul that belongs to the animal stage. To get closer to the human soul, it emerges as potential intellect which is a specific human property; at last the soul would be completed as pure intellect. It should be emphasized that the soul is the same being at all these stages and possesses its own being at each of these levels. In other words, this is the same being, i.e. the soul, which is capable of passing through all of these stages and developing itself by increasing its being. Indeed, when reaching its highest level and unity, the soul contains all the lower faculties, having, as well, all the forms within its simple nature. Hence, the soul that was brought into being with the body, is now an independent spiritual subsistence that can exist without the body. Importantly, at the beginning of origination of the soul, it "is" the same as body, and through an inner transformation becomes absolutely free from matter and changes by passing through various levels from materiality and change.

However, the soul-body relationship is not very similar to

1. By gradation, Sadra means that though there are different stages for different beings, they are all noting but simply being, so perfection and imperfection or strength and weakness of everything is subject to its portion of being. The more being it possesses the more perfect it would be.

Soul-Body Relation and Immortality in Mulla Sadra and Descartes

the relationship of any other normal physical form with its matters. Their relationship is in such a way that they are so fused together and can form an integral unity (*ittihad*) in being but not a constitute or a composite (*murakkab*) of two existentially distinguishable elements, they are totally fused together to form a complete unity (*ittihad*) in being, and consequently, the action of the soul in the body is simple, direct, and natural. The body is not the subject or the carrier of the soul; so it should be emphasized that the soul is not following the body when the soul ascends its stages from the beginning. In contrast, the body is the follower of the soul, even in the lowest level of the soul's existence when it is a concomitant of the body. The soul "obtains" its body and other faculties, so is the carrier of all of them. This is the soul that operates according to its will, and makes the body to follow it, as it wishes, through ascending the levels (stages). Or, to be more precise, the soul is the controller of the body and not vice versa. Of course it is necessary for the soul to separate from the body in order to rise to the spiritual heaven and to gain its happiness. It is important to realize that even though the soul leaves its (dark and heavy) corporal body, it carries the (light) imaginal one with itself in another world. Obviously the soul in the imaginal world¹ (the world of the imagination) makes use of imaginal body as it used to operate its affair with the material body in the material world (i.e. the world of the nature). Sadra insists that the imaginal body is the same as material body. This imaginal body is the creation of the soul with the help of the same material body. Hence, the imaginal body is the work of the soul that is made of sensory and imaginal perceptions by soul's different faculties. This phenomenon, in which one power or form works on

1. Sadra holds that there are three worlds: material, imaginal and intellectual worlds. The human being will live in each world according to that, so in he has a material body for material world, an imaginal body for imaginal world and accordingly in intellectual world his body would be intellectual.

matter not directly but through other forms, leads to the meaning of Sadra's definition of the soul as "the entelechy of a material body", implying the fact that the soul "operates through faculties". In fact, it works on its matter through the intermediacy of other lower powers or forms. To sum up, the real perceptive and motive is the soul, and its faculties are necessary to do the actions. By faculty he does not mean "physical organs" of body, like hand or heart, but faculties are soul's powers or actualities through which the soul fulfills different operations such as nutrition, digestion and so on (Mullā Sadrā, 1383, pp.261-267).

It is obvious that this novel interpretation is an intensive violence against Aristotelian theory of the soul, in which the soul appears as a function of the body, clearly attributing the quality of "being organized" or "possessing organs" to "the natural body". On the contrary, Mullā Sadrā attributes to the soul the quality of having "organs" or "faculties". In fact, the position is a radical departure from Aristotle and must be regarded as a first step toward the final idealization of his account of the soul. Defining the soul as an entelechy covering all things from plants to heavenly spheres, and interpreting the term "organ" in such a way that the soul works through its faculties on its body, Mullā Sadrā tries to remove the difficulties experienced. How, then, are we to conceive of the relationship between the soul and its faculties? In this case Mullā Sadrā (1382, p.79) has an innovatory opinion. According to him, the soul is a single totality that contains all of its faculties, since every higher faculty has its lower faculty as a subjugated one. Saying that "the soul is all of the faculties", Mullā Sadrā (1375, p.132 & p.74) insists that the soul comprises all of its faculties. It is important to realize that his claim must be understood on the basis of another general principle in which he states that "the simple reality is everything".

Mullā Sadrā maintains that in comparison to multiplicity, unity is at a higher and simpler stage of being. The soul indeed is a unity of being that comprises all of faculties that are different modes or manifestations of the soul. It should be emphasized, however, that Mullā Sadrā does not here decide to say that faculties are not real; on the contrary, he insists that because of the simplicity of the soul, various levels of faculties, at their own level, are swallowed up by the very soul that is at the higher and simpler level. Each faculty is connected to the soul and serves as a servant. One should realize that the faculties are also based on the different organs in the body and totally construct a human being. Consequently, faculties cannot be considered as quasi-independent or independent *entities that possess essential differentiae*, in the same way vegetative or animal species do. Faculties, as such, do not *exist*; yet Sadra does not say that they are distinguishable only conceptually, and thinks that they are, in a sense, real. Whereas the plants' faculties are diffused throughout their body, animal's sensitive soul achieves a higher level of unity, since the sensitive soul, at the stage of *sensus communis*, is capable of combining all sense perceptions. However, the sensitive soul operates through bodily organs which are diverse and spatially localized even though the subject of perception is not one of these organs but the soul itself (Mullā Sadrā, 1383, p.155).

To sum up, according to Sadra the human soul like every other entity in the world, develops and moves toward the end of all of them, i.e. God. Every being, including the soul, has its "afterlife". An "afterlife" is a relative term. For the organic matter, the plant is an "afterlife", and for the plant, the animal is an "afterlife". Accordingly, the man is an "afterlife" for the animal. In that sense, Mullā Sadrā shows how the soul, by passing through different "afterlives", moves from its multiplicity on the path of perfection towards its unity and

simplicity, reversing to its origin i.e. the One. So, the soul is incorruptible in itself, will not die with the death of body, and enjoys its immortality for its development that is marked by successive levels through increasing its simplicity and unity - an application of Sadra (1383, p.384)'s principle of substantial motion.

Conclusion

From the time of Plato onward, there are many philosophers who insist on immortality of the soul. Among them, Descartes restates Plato's dualism to prove human soul's immortality. Hence, Descartes is like Plato in some respects. He, similar to Plato, believes that surviving of a human soul (or maybe mind) after the demise of its body shows the presence of that soul to other human beings in the same way which in turn makes them present to it through their respective bodies. So it can be said that soul (mind) can exist independently from body. These would be the reasons why Plato and Descartes are often grouped together in the substance dualist theory in comparison to non-dualist theories.

On the other hand, we find that Plato's soul-body dualism is fundamentally different from Descartes' mind-body dualism. Plato accepts the idea that the soul or mind is identical with what animates the body, while Descartes rejects this. Another main difference is about the term "soul" (*psuche*) that is exploited consistently by Plato; instead, Descartes prefers to make use of "mind". In the preface of *Meditations*, we find his claim, addressing the theologians at the Sorbonne, that he is able to prove the soul's immortality. He makes use of the same label that is used by the church for his doctrine. Later on it is doubtful whether he is successful in proving the thesis in the same sense as what church means. Finally, Descartes

Soul-Body Relation and Immortality in Mulla Sadra and Descartes

states that he succeeds to prove the immortality of the human mind or human intellect rather than the human soul. Descartes, at first, identifies the soul with mind, but he explicitly distinguishes soul from mind in his more philosophical texts, where he reserves the term "soul" for the entity which animates the body. To this respect, Descartes rejects the existence of any such principle, or reduces the soul to a physical configuration. He is aware that the biological difference between a corpse and a living body is the purely physical difference that exists between an unfixed working machine and the fixed one.

Perhaps we can say that though the substance dualism can be an acceptable explanation for the immortality of the soul after the death, the interaction between soul and body cannot be explained by a pure substance dualism. This is the point that Mullā Sadrā understands well. He introduces an innovatory theory concerning human being and his soul. First, he removes the discussion of psychology from physics or natural philosophy and makes it a branch of metaphysics, a study that is complementary to the science of the origin of things, to show the spirituality of the soul as a "being". Then, he argues that the soul's origination and its relationship to its body is through its development in the line leading to afterlife. He holds that there are many degrees or stages (i.e. modes or states of being) for the soul, from its beginning to its end, to reach its ultimate goal or principal origin, i.e. God. At the stage of attachment to its body, the soul is a corporeal substance that gradually progresses to self-subsistent and spiritual existence through separation from body and material world. The whole journey is a return to God. The soul, that has been corporeal in the origination, would be spiritual in the survival. Indeed, the substantial motion of the soul and its gradation are the keys of solving the problem of soul-body interaction. He introduces different stages for the

soul and body instead of naming them as different substances. The human soul is a "being" and, like all of the creative beings, enjoys motion and progress. The soul's development in the material world is done through its perfection, i.e. the life as prime faculty of the soul. The soul and its faculties are receptive: it acquires the habit of intellection and learning, achieving the capability of gaining knowledge through which the perfection of its intellect occurs so that it becomes a properly trained acquired intellect. In the next stage, by being an "active intellect", the soul would be capable of producing knowledge actively; at last, it can acquire certainty through its union with the Active Intellect, and this would be the end of travel of the human being (= soul + body) to its goal.

To sum up, it seems that Mullā Sadrā 's view on the immortality of the soul, based on unity of the soul as a being, is more interesting than those that are based on substance dualism. In fact, Sadra, being influenced by both Plato and Aristotle, is able to present a more acceptable theory than Descartes' view. Sadra accurately applies his interesting principles (i.e. substantial motion and gradation of being) to show the unity of soul and body, prove the immortality of the soul, and to solve the problem of the soul-body interaction.

پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی
پرتال جامع علوم انسانی

References

- Aristotle (09.15.2012), *De Anima*. J.A. Smith (trans.) {<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html>}.
- Aristotle (09.15.2012). *Physics*, R. P. Hardie & R. K. Gaye (trans.), {<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.2.ii.html>}.
- Aristotle (09.15.2012). *Metaphysics*, W. D. Ross (trans.), {<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.1.i.html>}.
- Descartes, René (1991). *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. 1. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff & Dugald Murdoch (ed.), New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Descartes, René (1985). *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. 3. John Cottingham & Robert Stoothoff (ed.), New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mullā Sadrā (1383). *Al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a*. Vol. 1. Golamreza Aavani (ed.), Tehran: Bonyad Islami Hekmat Sadra.
- Mullā Sadrā (1382). *Al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a*. Vol. 9. Reza Akbarian (ed.), Tehran: Bonyad Islami Hekmat Sadra.
- Mullā Sadrā (1375). *The Collection of Mullā Sadrā's Philosophical Essays*. Hamed Naji Esfahani (ed.), Tehran: Hekmat Publication.
- Plato (10.05.2012). *Phaedo*. Benjamin Jowett (trans.), {<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedo.html>}.
- Plato (10.05.2012). *Republic*. Benjamin Jowett (trans.), {<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.7.vi.html>}.
- Plato (10.05.2012). *Timaeus*, Benjamin Jowett (trans.), {<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html>}.