

Ethics Based on Primacy of Existence (*Aṣālat al-Wujūd*) with a Focus on Mullā Sadrā's Primacy of Existence

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ABSTRACT

This research endeavors to introduce a novel concept in ethics, namely ethics based on the primacy of existence, drawing upon *Aṣālat al-wujūd*, the theory of the primacy of existence in ontology. Mullā Sadrā's philosophy, which has three basic tenets—the primacy of existence, substantial motion (Ḥarakat-i Juhārī), and gradation in existence (Tashkīk-i wujūd)—is the basis for this doctrine. The primacy of existence holds that quiddity is a mental construct and that existence is fundamental. The writers distinguished between two conceptions of ethics in this regard: one based on existence and the other on quiddity. Human quiddity is fixed and does not grade, hence ethics based on quiddity's primacy will always be fixed and the same for every individual. Moral obligations are universal and shared by all individuals. On the other hand, moral obligations for humans might vary depending on their existential status, according to ethics grounded in the primacy of existence. Moral oughts and ought nots are established by human existential grades in this ethics. This ethical model is flexible and dynamic.

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Introduction

One of the most significant philosophical questions is the primacy of existence (Aṣālat al-Wujūd) or quiddity (Aṣālat al-Māhīyya). Belief in each of these can help explain various philosophical problems. The impact of the primacy of existence hypothesis on the study of ethics, the nature of moral judgments, moral oughts and ought nots, and moral virtues and vices are all examined in this article. According to the authors, the primacy of quiddity (human essence) hypothesis serves as the foundation for popular moral theories such as deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics. Although Mullā Sadrā and other Muslim philosophers examined the implications and consequences of the primacy of existence in ontology and proposed the theory in primary philosophy, they did not develop its implications and effects in the field of ethics.

As some contemporary thinkers have said, if we consider the theory of the primacy of existence as a philosophical system and not a philosophical problem (Akbari, 2013, 21), the different parts of this philosophical system, such as ontology, epistemology, theology, ethics, and etc., must be well explained and separated from the philosophical system of the primacy of quiddity. Accordingly, this article seeks to explain the moral implications and effects of the primacy of existence theory in the field of ethics. As a first step, the authors intend to propose an idea called "ethics based on the primacy of existence" by emphasizing Mullā Sadrā's theory. There is no doubt that by grabbing the attention of other researchers to this idea, more results and effects of this theory can be expressed. It seems that among the moral theories, virtue ethics (Islamic and non-Islamic) is more based on the primacy of quiddity because human nature in this theory is considered stable and equal for all human beings. Moral virtues and vices have a fixed and inclusive list for all human beings and are predetermined in some way, so that all human beings must follow this specific list. People's age and gender have no room in this list. But it seems that believing in the primacy of *existence* and basing ethics on it, will make a profound difference, especially if we apply other elements of this theory, such as existential gradation, substantial motion, and the relation between substance and accidents, to human nature.

No ideal and complete theory could be discovered among the traditional Islamic or Western moral theories as a perfect illustration of them, since the idea of separating moral theories into those based on the primacy of existence and quiddity is a novel idea. Although the majority of moral theories appear to be predicated on the predominance of quiddity, Islamic mysticism offers moral theories that contain certain concepts and language that are more consistent with the primacy of existence.

The main question of this research is what difference will the distinction between the two theories of the primacy of existence and quiddity make in ethics and moral oughts and ought nots? What sort of ethics would these two ideas lead to, and what consequences and implications will

they have? What will be the position of ethics in the attitude of the primacy of existence? Will we continue to have morality with the same and universal rules and commands for all human beings, or will we have a relative and fluid morality by the substantial motion of human beings? What moral principles will human beings be obligated to observe in their substantial motion, from which rank of existence? This research seeks to express the implications of the theory of the primacy of existence, especially Mullā Sadrā's theory, in the field of ethics.

According to the authors, the idea of this article is so new that Islamic philosophers and moral scholars, even Mullā Sadrā himself, have not studied explicitly and independently. Many articles have been written on the primacy of existence and quiddity from an ontological point of view, but none of them has paid attention to the distinction between the two from a moral viewpoint.

1. Philosophical Foundations of Ethics Based on Primacy of Existence

1-1. The Primacy of Existence (Aṣālat al-wujūd)

The theory of ethics based on the primacy of existence, as its name implies, is based on the theory of the primacy of existence in philosophy and ontology. Therefore, we first deal with this theory from Mullā Sadrā's point of view. From Mullā Sadrā's viewpoint, existence is fundamental and principle, and quiddity (māhīyya) is mentally posited. What he means by mentally posited quiddity is that quiddity is subordinate to existence and dependent on it, as the shadows depend on objects (Mullā Sadrā, 2011: 134 & 136). In short, according to the theory of the primacy of existence, what exists outside of our minds in the real world is existence, not quiddity. Quiddity is a subordinate truth. What is established and realized in the external world is existence; Quiddity is abstracted from objective existence. Quiddity is privative and has never smelt the fragrance of being. It is merely posited in the mind as a mode of making sense and of determining reality as 'beings of reason'. What exists in the external world is existence. Existence has degrees. Every existence belongs to a limit of existence. Quiddities are abstracted from existential limits of existents by our minds (Sobhani. 2002. vol. 1. 209). In Sadrā's view, existence is real and has objective reality. Existence exists in every phenomenon, and the quiddity of these phenomena, other than their existence, does not exist; but exists by their existence. Existence is the same as existent, as attribute is the same as attribution. Therefore, what is real is existence (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol. 1. 39). In explaining the primacy of existence, Mullā Sadrā says:

The reality of everything is its existence, due to which the effects and rules of things are arranged on it. So existence is the most deserving thing to be real. Because things other than existence are due to existence that has reality. Existence, then, is the reality of everything that has reality. But existence for its existence does not need another reality (Mullā Sadrā. 1984. 10)

In proving the primacy of existence, Allame Tabatabai says: since quiddity in terms of its essence has an equal relationship with existence and inexistence, if it does not come out from the

state of equality and become existent in such a way that the effects are arranged, then the revolution, in essence, will be necessitated. Therefore, it is existence that takes quiddity out from equality to existence and inexistence. This means the primacy of existence (Tabatabai. 2007. 22).

According to the primacy of existence, not only existence is principal, but also the individuality of every existent consists of its specific grade of existence. The individuality of everything is its existence. All beings are identified with their specific grade of existence. The diversity of existents (beings) is also due to their differences in grades of existence. Different grades of existence distinguish individuals from each other (Mullā Sadrā, 2011, 138, 1998, vol. 2, 72& 112& 114& 113. vol. 4,147).

1-2. Existential Gradation (Tashkīk-i Wujūd)

One of the most important philosophical foundations of Mullā Sadrā is the theory of existential gradation, which means that while existence is a single truth, at the same time, it includes different grades and ranks (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. Vol. 6. 22). Existence is a graded truth in a way that each grade differs from others in the grade of existence, but shares with them the same reality of existence. In other words, existence is both what causes differences between grades of existence and what causes their similarities (Shirvani. 1999. vol. 1. 88). Any form and grade of existence is different from another, but is united in the meaning and truth of existence (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol.1. 120). In Mullā Sadrā's ontology, existence has indefinite grades that begin from the highest grade, which is God, and end in the lowest grade, which is primal matter (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol. 1. 71). The most perfect being is the existence of God, and in the lower grade, intelligence exists, which has no matter, followed by different grades arranged according to their existential intensity. In the next grade, material beings exist, which are composed of matter and form. Human beings are in the highest rank of material beings because of the spiritual aspect of their being, then animals, vegetables, and the primal matter, time, and motion are placed (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol. 9. 121). In his view, the existential grade of different beings counts as their essence and constituent: "In fact, for every rank of existence, being in that rank is one of its constituents" (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol. 1. 412). When a rank of existence becomes the essence of that special being, then its being is not separate from that rank, and its special being is being in that special rank of existence.

Existence, although is a single truth, its shares and grades are different in transposition, poverty and richness ... So, existence in itself, even if nothing is added, becomes a cause, effect, conditional and conditioned. Causal existence is different from effective existence. Conditional existence is different from conditioned existence. All these are due to existence in itself, not for annexing annexes (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol.1. 402-401).

1-3. Grades of Human Existence

According to Sadrā, the reality of an object is its form (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol. 2. 34). Man, in his evolutionary way, goes through different grades of existence. His lowest grade of existence is the

vegetative grade, which is the early stage of fetal development in mother's womb. At this grade, man is only growing and developing, which is an actual vegetable and potential animal. As the fetus grows up, in the final stages of the embryo, human organs and body are created little by little and it begins feeling and movement. At this stage, the human fetus enters the animal stage, gets the animal soul, and becomes an actual animal and a potential human. After birth, the baby goes through more animal stages and becomes stronger in terms of feeling and intentional movement. Then, the baby grows up and enters the stage of childhood, and the signs of intellectual development and intellectual perceptions appear, which show his inner and innate transformation and entrance in the stage of human being and getting a rational soul. As the child grows up reaches the age that can understand moral concepts, such as good and bad, right and wrong, which can be called entering the moral stage of human life. This evolutionary process continues in the same way until the man reaches more maturity and intellectual and spiritual growth and the characteristics of morality appear in him. This is the rank of the actual human being who has the power to become an angelic or satanic being (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol.8. 136-137). The evolution process of man, from the lowest to the highest, is in the form of "existence after existence", not "existence after inexistence". Man does not lose perfection in his evolutionary and intensifying movement, but it has an existential transformation and a higher grade replaces the lower grade (Misbah Yazdi. 2000. vol. 1. 416).

In Mullā Sadrā's view, when the imperfect being perfects with existential intensity and reaches existential perfection, it becomes united with it and gets a kind of existential transformation. Therefore, achieving existential perfection is not like acquiring accidental attributes, but it is a kind of essential and existential evolution. The human soul, in the grade of potential intellect, is devoid of all forms that becomes united with the Active Intellect during his existential intensity process. It passes the grade of passive intellect by obtaining perfect forms from him, and reaches the grade of actual intellect (Mullā Sadrā. 2011. 294). At this stage, the soul is the creator of perceptual forms, not their acceptor.

1-4. Substantial Motion

In general, from philosophers' viewpoint, change is either gradual or instant. Duration and extension are meaningless in instant change, like a car that starts moving in one instant and reaches its destination in another. But a gradual movement occurs in time and duration, like a car that moves between origin and destination (Ibn Sina.1984. vol.1. 81-82; Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol.3. 22). Philosophers have long believed that movement occurs in only four categories (place, quality, quantity, and state) of the ten categories (Shirvani. 2008. vol.1. 126). But there is no movement in other accidental (A'arazi) categories and also in substance (Misbah Yazdi. 2000. vol. 2. 369; Aboudit.1999. 355-363). Avicenna, following his ancestors, believed that motion does not occur

in substance, because in that case, an object turns out to be another thing and it necessitates revolution in its essence (Avicenna. 1994. 98).

According to Mullā Sadrā, motion is the gradual departure of an object from its potential state to its actuality (Mullā Sadrā. 1999. 53). He considers the motion of the accidents as a subordinate and believes that the accidents are in motion due to the movement of the substance. Therefore, unlike his predecessors, he believes in movement in substance (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol.3. 102).

Substantial motion is a motion in the essence and interior of objects, which is the origin of phenomena's apparent motions. Substantial motion is motion in the entity, reality, and origin of an object (Malekshahi. 1997. 278). In proving the substantial motion, Mullā Sadrā states various proofs. According to his philosophy, every material being is temporal and every temporal existence is a gradual being. Therefore, the material substance will be gradual and movable (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol.7. 291-292); In addition, accidents come from the substance's grades of existence. Movement occurs in accidents, therefore, it is impossible to not occur in substance. Sensible movements in accidents are the reason for movement in their substances (Motahari. 1987. vol. 1. 380-381; Misbah Yazdi. 2000. vol. 2. 334-335).

According to Mullā Sadrā, the soul is corporeal at the outset of creation and is born from the body, but it ultimately becomes immaterial in its particular course of development (Mullā Sadrā. 2011. 221). The soul is corporeal at the beginning of genesis, but based on the substantial motion, it reaches immateriality and spirituality by getting perfect and departure from potential being to the actual one (Mosleh. 2012. 328). Man perceives many sensible things from his birthday and his perceptions increase during the time. Therefore, man is potential before the perception of any phenomenon and after every perception, he becomes actual. Man's soul is initially solid, and then, after leaving the stage of solidity behind, turns into an embryo and steps into the vegetative stage (vegetative soul). Later on, it arrives at the animal stage and gets an animal soul. Then, in the process of its real maturity, it reaches the stage of human soul and gets a 'rational soul'. After this stage, in the light of its efforts, practices, and rational and spiritual trainings, it can also achieve human maturity, which is called the holy soul and actual intellect. This is a stage that quite a few are capable of reaching. All these stages, in fact, represent moving in the same route in order to leave potency and enter actuality. Each succeeding stage is a potential for the preceding one, and going through them means passing through grades of intensity, and moving from weakness to strength. However, the collection of these stages comprises the points of a line called 'human life' and 'line of development, which is formed based on the principle of graded existence and the trans-substantial motion (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol. 8. 223).

According to the substantial motion in Transcendent Wisdom, the human soul gets different forms in each grade of its evolution route. Not only human beings, but also all beings have fluid identities in their lives. The human soul is inherently moving toward the immaterial and intellectual

world (Misbah Yazdi. 2000. vol. 2. 420). In other words, a human's quiddity depends on his existence, and his identity is built according to his conscious perceptions (ibid. 409).

1-5. The Nature of Accidents

According to Islamic philosophers before Mullā Sadrā, the combination of substance and accident or the combination of form and matter, are both annexations. It means that each one has its own independence¹, but they have only one being outside; which means the form is united with matter and accident with substance. However, the combination of accident and substance is different from matter and form. The accident takes place in the rank of the existence, but not form (Mesbah Yazdi, 2008, vol.1. 308; Tabatabai, 2010, 32).

According to Mullā Sadrā, the relationship between substance and accident is the relationship between an object and its aspects. He does not regard separate existence for the accident from a substance, but introduces accident as an aspect, apparent, manifestation, and determination of substance (Mullā Sadrā. 1998. vol. 3. 165).

2. Ethics Based on the Primacy of Existence and Quiddity

In the light of the theory of the primacy of existence, which ultimately leads to the primacy of human existence, it seems that the attitude to morality, moral attributes, virtues and vices, ethical judgments, and propositions will be different from the theory of the primacy of (human) quiddity. It seems that the current ethics among human beings is based on the primacy of (human) quiddity. Therefore, it has characteristics like these: 1) since human quiddity is the principle in this ethics and there is no gradation in quiddity and it is fixed throughout the human's life, moral judgments will be fixed and the same for all people forever. 2) Since human quiddity is a distinctive and predetermined thing, the current moral judgments are also predetermined for the human species. 3) Since the revolution in quiddity is impossible, then the transformation and promotion of human quiddity to a higher quiddity is also impossible. As a result, there is not a thing like a rise and upward to a higher moral grade. 4) Moral virtues and vices in this theory are only accidents, characteristics, and qualities that transform human beings from one person to another, i.e. better or worse in terms of moral perfection. 5) In this theory, since human nature is the same to all individuals and sexuality is an accidental thing outside human essence, the morality of men and women and their moral obligations are the same and common.

It seems that all current moral theories, whether in the meta-ethical realm, such as cognitivism or non-cognitivism, or in the normative realm, including virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism, are all based on the primacy of human quiddity. Some moralists consider moral

¹ Ibn Sina considers the relation between substance and its accidents as the relation of cause and effect. He considers the existence of substance and accident as separate and considers substance as the cause of the accident (Ibn Sina, 1984, 89).

obligation dependent on human reason and some on feelings and emotions. Some construct it based on human's fixed and common needs in all societies (absolutism) and some on the differences among cultures and societies or people and individuals (relativism). Some build it based on personal benefits (moral egoism), some on social benefits (utilitarianism), and some on duties that come from divine commands (divine command theory) or social contracts (contractualism) or are determined by human choice (existentialism). The subject of ethics in all these theories is human quiddity.

Islamic scholars have always introduced human quiddity and soul as the subject of ethics (see Fārābī. 2009.6; Ibn Miskawiyah. 2016. 98; Tusi. 2010. 20-21). Regarding the subject of moral virtues, Aristotle says: "Furthermore, it is clear that the virtue we want to know is human virtue; because from the beginning we seek what is good for man and is considered as human happiness. When we speak of human virtue, we do not mean the virtue of the body, but the virtue of the soul" (Aristotle, 2010, 46). In the same vein and regarding ethics, Hasan Qazvini, one of the late Islamic scholars, said: "The subject of this knowledge is human soul because beautiful and ugly actions are issued from soul based on the will" (Qazvini, 2001, 23).

On the contrary, it seems that if we put the theory of the primacy of existence as the base of ethics and believe in the primacy of existence in human species, we will reach different results in ethics. If we regard existence as the principle and consider quiddity and accidents as the limits and aspects of existence and believe that according to the theory of substantial motion, existence is permanently in flux and motion, and consequently quiddity and accidents are in flux and motion, then oughts and ought nots of human nature can be changed as a result of change in his existence. Therefore, the ethics based on the primacy of existence will be dynamic and changing. As a result, morality will have different grades of oughts and ought nots based on the existential grades of human beings. Human being, in his evolutionary course, from the growing body to the abstract rational soul, and higher than that, i.e. the super-abstract soul, will have different moral obligations, duties and virtues according to different grades of his existence. According to the intensification of human existence, moral judgments and commands will also be intensified. In this ethics, it will be possible to consider sexuality and age as factors of moral distinction. According to the theory of ethics based on the primacy of existence, the relationship between moral virtues and vices and the human soul and truth will be creative, not an annexation. Therefore, in this attitude, moral attributes, virtues, and vices will get better ontological explanations and will be interpreted as the limits of human existence.

2-1. Explaining Moral Attributes and Characteristics

As it has been stated in the definition of morality, "moral" is a disposition or strong characteristic in the soul that by achieving it, man can easily do something without thinking procedure. The difference between "moral" and "mood" is that the latter is an inner quality that quickly declines,

but the first is an inner quality that declines slowly. In explaining the cause of achievement of moral dispositions in human beings, Tusī attributes them to two factors of nature and habit. Some people are calm naturally and based on their corporeal constitution, who get angry too late, and some are vice versa. The second cause of achievement of moral characteristics is practice and repetition of an action or emotion and getting into a habit after a long time. The difference between these two moral causes is that a person who has a natural moral characteristic easily performs its related and appropriate actions without thinking. However, someone who has a moral characteristic due to habit does the appropriate actions with thinking and perhaps with a kind of difficulty at the beginning; it is just after a while and with changing that action into a habit that he can do it easily without thinking (Ibn Miskawiyah, 2016, 115; Tusi, 2010,58).

The above explanation of ethics is an explanation based on the primacy of quiddity. In this explanation, the difference between moral and mood is attributed to habit and repetition of action; however, if we want to explain morality and morals based on the theory of the primacy of existence, we must say that they are strong characteristics and existential aspects of the human soul. As long as these existential and perfect aspects have not been created in the soul, what emerges from it is an occasional action that is done through the thinking procedure, which is conception of an action, confirming the benefit of its doing, creating the appetite for its doing, the will for its doing, and the lack of external obstacles. Then by repeating that action and based on the unity of intelligence and intelligible and by substantial motion, the man reaches a stage where some qualities and aspects are created in his substance, which are called morals. By creating these existential qualities in the soul, moral actions are done easily by the demand of man's essence without thinking procedure.

3. Characteristics of Ethics Based on Primacy of Existence

3-1. Moral Attributes: The Existential Aspects of Human Beings

In ethics based on the primacy of quiddity, moral virtues and vices are psychic qualities that occur in human soul and essence. These moral attributes are formed through the repetition of some actions in human soul (Davani. 2012. 67; Qazvini. 2001. 32). Virtues, such as generosity, forgiveness, wisdom, justice, and their opposite vices are gradually created in man and occur in his soul. Human beings do not naturally have these moral qualities from the beginning of creation, but gradually acquire them by performing actions appropriate to them. That is why morality has been called strong characteristics and properties in the soul that are obtained by habit (Aristotle, 2010, 53; Fārābī, 2009, 14; Naraqī, 2000, vol.1. 20-21)¹. According to ethics based on the primacy of

¹ Aristotle defines moral virtue as a habit, and the reason for naming ethics is a change in the word *ethos* meaning "habit". He believes that none of the moral virtues stem from human nature; it is due to habit and repetition of action. That is why morality needs training. Training means forcing a person to repeat the action and get used to it. He says: "By nature, we have the ability to accept virtues, but we can only perfect them through habit" (Aristotle, 2010, 53).

quiddity, there is no substantive and existential change. Human beings are a single type that do not substantially change by getting moral attributes, but an accidental (*Arazy*) change takes place in them, and without moral virtues and values, human beings are the same in being human. In other words, human essence is the same in all human individuals and what makes them different is just accidents. According to ethics based on the primacy of quiddity, ethics is added to human individuals after realization. Moral attributes have an annexation relation to human nature, like a wall on which color is painted. Color and wall are two separate things. If the color is cleared, the essence of the wall is the same. Color has an effect on the beauty of the wall, but does not change its essence. Therefore, according to the ethics based on the primacy of quiddity, moral values will cause accidental changes in human beings and will be separate from human essence. The difference between the just and unjust people, generous and stingy, coward and brave is not in their human essence, but in having or not having a set of accidents and qualities.

However, in the view of the ethics of existential primacy, this is the human essence and existence that have changed and moved substantially and reached a grade, from which moral attributes are abstracted. In other words, in ethics based on the primacy of existence, moral properties and attributes should be called the expansion of human existence. From an ontological view, moral attributes, whether good or bad, are human existential grades and are regarded as perfection. However, some of these existential perfections in terms of morality are called evil. Perhaps this is why Mullā Sadrā calls existence, whatever it is, good and happiness, whether the existence of an angel or the existence of the devil: "know that existence is good and happiness" (Mullā Sadrā, 1998, vol. 9, 121). In the view of existential primacy, all moral attributes and properties return to existential perfection and defect. Moral virtues are existential perfections and moral vices are existential defects. That is the reason why Mullā Sadrā attributes happiness and misery of human beings and also all beings to having and not having, and perfection and defect of existence.

And existences are different by perfection and deficiency. Whatever an existence is more complete, its purity from nihil is more, and its happiness is more, and whatever it is more defective, its association with misery and evil is more (Mullā Sadrā, 1998, vol. 9, 121).

According to the ethics of existential primacy, Wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, as four main virtues in morality, are explained in such a way that a person with these virtues has obtained existential vastness and ontological openness. According to the unity of knower and known, a wise (knower) man has more existential vastness than an ignorant man. Ignorance is the lack of knowledge. Knowledge is an existential thing. So, ignorance is an existential defect. Other moral virtues and vices are also explained like this. Courage is an existential perfection and vastness. Cowardness is the lack of courage and defect of existence in the face of terrible issues.

Temperance is a perfection and existential power in controlling appetite faculty, and licentiousness is a defect and inability to control that faculty. The injustice, which comes either from ignorance and appetite or anger, also goes back to the existential defect in human soul faculties. Justice returns to human existential perfection in the mentioned faculties.

Therefore, in the theory of the primacy of existence, all moral attributes, including virtue and vice, are humans' existential grades and are not rooted in the perfection and defect of human existence. This view of moral attributes may not make much difference in some moral issues with the view of the primacy of quiddity, but from an ontological and philosophical point of view, the differences are quite clear. According to the ethics based on the primacy of existence, moral virtues are not added to our soul and essence, but it is our existence that goes through different existential grades, and moral virtues and attributes are manifested from our existential limitations at any level of existence. The difference between virtuous and wicked men is not in having or not having an additional attribute, but is in their existential grades and vastness.

To better explain, we can pay attention to the difference between a virtuous man and a self-controlled man according to Fārābī. He says:

There is a difference between a self-controlled man who controls his soul and a virtuous man. Although a self-controlled man does good deeds, he has a desire for evil deeds and loves them in himself. But he does what is contrary to his desire and appetite demands. So he does good deeds while he is annoyed by doing them. But a virtuous man pursues in action what his desire and appetite lead him to. He does good deeds, while his desire has enthusiasm for good acts. Accordingly, he is not annoyed by doing them, rather, he enjoys them (Fārābī, 2009, 19).

In this explanation, the substantial difference between a self-controlled (lawful) and virtuous man could be seen. What makes a virtuous person does good deeds with desire and passion, and a self-controlled person does them hardly? This difference is not merely in having or not having an attribute as an additional and sensible quality, but it is in their essence and existence, which manifests itself on the surface as having or lacking an attribute. Kindness, generosity, forgiveness, and other moral virtues have been existential aspects of the virtuous human being or come from his existential vastness. That is the reason why he does them without difficulty and the other with difficulty. This is similar to the natural properties of objects such as the lightness of gases, the movement of fire upwards, and the falling of stones to the ground. This explanation is contrary to the explanation of the primacy of quiddity in ethics, which is seen in Aristotle and Islamic scholars' ethics, who regard morality not as natural attributes, but as obtained attributes and properties that do not originate from human essence. Aristotle says:

Moral virtue is the result of habit ... It is obvious that none of the moral virtues comes from our nature, because there is not a natural being who can get a habit contrary to its nature. For example, a stone that naturally goes down can never get into the habit of going up. We firstly have all our natural abilities potentially and then we make them actual through activity" (Aristotle, 2010, 53).

Aristotle, here, separates the nature of man from his morals. This is the primacy of quiddity viewpoint to ethics. If we want to explain it according to ethics based on the existential primacy, we must say a man does not have moral attributes in an existential grade and his essence does not demand them, but by obtaining knowledge and intellectual growth and obeying reason in his commands to do good, a man substantially and existentially rises and reaches a level of existence that his essence requires those moral deeds without thinking procedure. In this stage, a man is described with moral attributes like his other existential qualifications.

3-2. Ethical Gradation as a result of Existential Gradation

According to moral theories based on the primacy of quiddity, moral virtues and vices, oughts and ought nots, and moral rules and principles are fixed. Ethical principles, such as justice, truthfulness, loyalty, forgiveness, etc. are fixed and the same for all human beings. Current moral principles do not rise into higher principles. Like Kant, the deontologist moralist, and other moral philosophers believe that the characteristic of moral judgments is generality and generalizability. A moral principle can be generalized to all rational human beings (see Atrak, 2013, .84 & 161). The reason for this is the stability and communality of human nature among all individuals of this specie. Every quiddity has its special limits. No one can go beyond his essential limits. Revolution in quiddity is impossible. As a result, a morality based on the primacy of quiddity will have fixed and common principles for all people of that specie.

In the view of the primacy of quiddity, moral values are predetermined for human quiddity. Aristotle and his followers among Islamic scholars, in defining human happiness, pose the main function of human beings in distinction from animals and plants. Based on the main function of human quiddity, they put human happiness in rationality, reason, science, knowledge, and theoretical virtues, on the one hand, and in the acquisition of moral virtues, on the other hand. Some philosophers regard the enjoyment of bodily pleasures and external goods as a necessary part of human happiness due to his existential composition of soul and body (see Aristotle, 2010, 30-37; Ibn Miskaviyh, 157-163). Aristotle says:

We want to ... find out exactly what happiness is. To achieve this, it may be necessary to find out what the main function and duty of a man is. As in the case of a sculptor or artist, and anyone who performs an action, the main role and

special duty are to do his work "well" and rightly, the same is true of man if he has a special duty. He must be honest (Aristotle, 2010, 30).

In ethics based on the primacy of quiddity, moral obligations, virtues, and vices are the same for children, adolescents, youths, middle-age, and old people because of their commonality in human quiddity. Ethics of the primacy of quiddity imposes the same obligations and regards the same attributes as virtue or vice on both a child who can recently distinguish between good and bad and a middle-aged perfect man. Generosity is a virtue for both children and adults. Sometimes a child or an adolescent is expected to be brave and fearless like an adult or women are expected not to be jealous or do not talk so much as men are expected.

But according to an ethical theory based on existential primacy, the story is different. Ethical principles and moral obligations are determined by the grade of people's existence. Since the grades of human existence are different, their moral requirements can also be different. If we believe in gradation in the grades of existence and consider that human beings differ in their grades of existence, as the grade of human existence is higher than animals and plants, then the important ethical result that we could conclude from Mullā Sadrā's ontological idea of gradation in existence is moral gradation. The function of the moral gradation idea is to determine moral principles, obligations, virtues, and vices according to the existential grade of every single human being. As the philosophers of ethics have pointed out, "ought to imply can". If someone does not have the ability to do something, it would be wrong to obligate him to do that. Accordingly, since the abilities of human beings can be different due to their differences in grades of existence, consequently, their moral oughts must be different.

If we regard quiddity and accidents as the limits and aspects of existence, the difference among human beings in gender and age will return to the difference in their grades of existence. Existential limitations will lead to moral limitations. Therefore, men and women must not be equally obligated to moral obligations such as courage, militancy, and being good politicians, economists, and managers due to their differences in grades of existence. Children and adults must not be equally obligated to obtain knowledge and wisdom, courage, politeness, eloquence and sociability, foresight, and other moral virtues. Perhaps the courage of a thirty-year old man should not be expected from a ten-year old child. The virtue that is expected from a child of this age is honesty and truthfulness. Expecting justice from him in his behavior with peers could be an unreasonable expectation and out of his ability. Because he does not have the intellectual, scientific, and experimental facilities necessary to do justice to others. But expecting to give a portion of his food to a friend when finding him hungry is an appropriate virtue for this age and grade of existence. Therefore, the participation of individuals in moral obligations is according to their participation in grades and the possibilities of existence.

According to Mullā Sadrā's theory of substantial motion, the essence of man is in motion and transcendence from the material substance to the vegetative substance, then the animal and human grades. Since moral oughts are determined according to each grade of human existence, then moral obligations will be fluid, moving, and gradational in direction of promoting human grades to the higher grade. In other words, the intensification and vastness of human existence will intensify and develop his moral obligations. On the other hand, doing moral obligation and obtaining moral virtues develop and intensify human existence and transfers him to a higher existential grade. This is substantial motion and perfection. The intensity and weakness of existence lead to the intensity and weakness of morality. The moral obligations and virtues of man in the rational grade are different from a man in the animal grade. In this view, the origin of ethics' normativity will be promoting human existence to the higher grade of existence in the course of substantial evolution. To reach the grade of immaterial and super-abstraction, the man in the grade of the rational soul must observe more constructive and strict moral principles, while a man in the lower grade is not obligated to do so.

The idea of moral gradation based on existential gradation could be seen in the words of some Islamic moralists. Ghazālī restricts the morality of human beings into four genera: the morality of cattle, the morality of rapacious, the morality of devils, and the morality of angels (Ghazālī, 1940, 22). Explaining these stages, he says that the first morality that human beings are created on from childhood is cattle morality because the baby has been looking for food since birth, and all his efforts are eating and sleeping, like cattle. By passing time and growing up into childhood (for example, 3 years and older when the child understands the concept of ownership and protection of his toys from peers), the rapacious morality is created in him and his anger faculty begins to work against the aggressor, and aggressive reactions are shown by him. In the third stage, the devil morality is created. At this stage, the faculty of trick and deception begins to work in man and the cattle and rapacious morals force him to use his intelligence and talent in deception and making solutions to provide the means of lust or malignancy. Ghazālī's explanation of devil morality shows that this morality is not due to an independent power, but it is because of the dominance of the two faculties of appetite and anger and the lack of faculty of reason and distinction between the right and wrong. In the fourth stage, divine morality is created in man, and the intellect from which the light of faith shines is created. The intellect is a divine faculty and one of the armies of angels (Ghazālī, 2013, 184-185). Intellect is the faculty that gives honors to human beings and makes them like angels. The power of the intellect is found in man from puberty, but the earlier stages before puberty invade the human's heart. In Ghazālī's speech, the moral movement is observed due to the growth and substantial motion of human beings from birth to the age of perfection and intellectual growth.

However, according to the prevailing opinion of moral scholars, morality begins with reason, and the man without reason, whether infant or insane, is not subject to moral judgments. But from the ontological point of view, Ghazālī's view could be extended to all stages of human life and evolution in a way that moral stages can be considered to be more than four. It can even include the stages after death according to the view of the human soul living after the death of the body.

3-3. Ontological Explanation of Different Moral Grades

In mysticism and sometimes in religious literature, it is very famous that "what is regarded as a good act for ordinary people is regarded as a sin for people who are close to God". It means that what is morally called good for someone, might be a sin for another one who is morally in the higher grade. For example, helping others with the intention of helping them is a good moral act in terms of current ethics, but it is a sin for mystics and divine seekers. Because a mystic, who is the servant of God, does everything with the intention of getting close to God. Praying from time to time is a good act for ordinary believers, but it is an obligatory act for mystics of all time, and leaving it for a time is a sin.

This issue, which could be called different moral grades among human beings, seems to be inexplicable according to the ethics based on the primacy of quiddity. Because in this kind of ethics, all human beings belong to a single quiddity and their moral judgments are the same and common. In other words, moral judgments are determined based on human quiddity. But explaining these different moral grades in the ethics based on the primacy of existence is very simple and reasonable. People are different in grades of existence. Each grade has its quiddity and therefore, has its moral obligations. In the theory of existential primacy, due to existential gradation, there is a moral gradation. As a result, every individual can have his/her own oughts and ought nots. As mystics and seekers of the divine path have a higher grade of existence than other human beings, they also have higher moral obligations, and what is not obligatory for ordinary people might be obligatory for them.

3-4. Moral Training

If we consider morality as an existential aspect of human existence, not additional attributes to his quiddity, the scope of moral training will extend from the teaching of attributes, actions, and reactions to the essential evolution and transformation of human existence. For moral training of humans, training of the oughts and ought nots of behavior is not enough, but what must be done is raising the substance, essence, and existential grade of the human being. According to Mullā Sadrā's philosophy, the essence of human is rational faculty. Therefore, intellectual training and raising human intellect faculty in the light of teaching knowledge play an important role in human moral training. By training intellect and its rule in controlling other faculties (appetite and anger), human behaviors will also be moral. If we are looking for stable moral behavior, we must first train the faculty of the human intellect and move it from the grade of potential intellect to the grades of

actual and acquired intellect. A man who has reached perfect intellect grade will naturally and essentially be moral because the main commander and regulator of human behaviors is intellect. If this power is weakened and not raised, it will lose its role in guiding the other two faculties and will cause the man to degrade from human grade to animal grade. In that case, what will be issued from him will be animal behaviors that are appropriate to animal nature.

Conclusion

This paper made an effort to explain the implications Mullā Sadrā's primacy of existence in the realm of ethics and pose a new idea, i.e. the ethics based on the primacy of existence. In this article, the difference between two models of ethics, ethics based on the primary of existence and quiddity, was explained. Since human quiddity is fixed and there is no gradation in quiddity, the ethics based on the primacy of quiddity will be fixed and the same for all people forever. Every individual human being, including children, adolescents, youths, and middle-age and old people, has the same and common moral obligations. But according to the ethics based on the primacy of existence, due to principality of existence and regarding quiddity limitations of existence, and since the existence has gradation and different grades, human beings will have different existential grades. Since moral oughts and ought nots are determined according to human existential grades, then human individuals can have different moral obligations. In conclusion, we will have dynamic and fluid ethics. This new idea needs to be more discussed by moralists and philosophers for discovering its different implications.

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