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# Mulla Sadra Philosophy: An Alternative Paradigm on Issues of Science and Nature

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**Abstract:** Islamic philosophy as has been understood has introduced a theory of how knowledge works within the framework of divinity. It is not surprising that Islamic philosophy has religious nuances in the frame of *tawhīd*. Even so, it does not mean that Islamic philosophy only dwells in the theoretical-metaphysical realm. But also has a relationship with natural and social science theory both theoretically and practically. This is explained in the Mulla Sadra philosophy. Through the argument of substantial motion and soul, Sadra explains comprehensively that Islamic philosophy can become part of science as a whole as a new paradigm. This also does not mean looking for excuses and apologies that Islamic philosophy has never spoken about science explicitly. With this concept Sadra shows that nature is moving in every moment there is always a change in both accident and substance. Humans who consist of body and soul also experience changes at all times. These two things show the existence of impermanence in nature both materially and immaterially. In this case, Sadra includes a mystical vision that nature as a large series (macrocosm) and humans as a small series (microcosm) always undergo substantial changes towards perfection. The perfection of nature is manifested in the form of a state that is always updated. Human perfection is manifested in how humans become fully human. At least from Sadra thinking, it can be a meeting point in the context of integrating empirical-positivist science with metaphysical ratios, as well as becoming a new paradigm in initiating holistic scholarship. This research is a qualitative research based on library research using descriptive-analytical and exploratory methods. Then use a holistic approach to see a new, broader paradigm. In the end, the idea of Sadra can be used as an alternative paradigm in solving complex modern human crises.

**Keywords:** Mulla Sadra, Substantial Motion, Soul, Paradigm, Science

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## 1. Introduction

The study of thought on the philosophy of Mulla Sadra has been widely carried out, both in ontological and epistemological studies. Even so, studies or discourses that see Sadra philosophy as a new paradigm in the building of science have not been widely carried out. Presumably, this can be justified because Islamic philosophy only dwells in the metaphysical realm without seeing the concrete reality of life. Even more so in the reality of science that puts forward scientific methodologies with definite numbers. This causes Islamic philosophy, especially classical and medieval Islamic philosophy, to have no reinterpretation in the contemporary modern world [1]. Even its relation to the contemporary world seems to have no relation at all.

To refute this, further research as an alternative way can be

seen from another aspect of Sadra philosophy. Through the argument of substantial motion, Sadra explains how the relation of Islamic philosophy wrapped in religion-mysticism with natural science [2]. Although his philosophy when he wrote it did not explicitly mention this connection, further research and from several recent scholarly works show that there are implications for this [3]. As a reformative root, it can also be traced how Sadra linked his philosophy with psychology which can be an answer to the crisis of human spiritual life.

Several studies that also pay attention to Sadra philosophy are as written by Ahmad Mansouri Matak and colleagues entitled Critical Study of the Results of Hawking's Theory of Unity in Physics Based on Mulla Sadra's Graded Unity. In this study, the authors answered Stephen William Hawking's question about how God existed in the creation of this universe. How is God's relationship with nature so that nature is well

organized. Also in this study, the authors show that Sadra's philosophy regarding the existence and substantial motion becomes the method and analysis of the physics concept initiated by Hawking [4]. Then the research conducted by Nafise Mostafavi and Zahra Arefinia entitled Substantial Motion: from Mulla Sadra's Philosophy to Physics. In this study, the author explains how the theory of motion is substantial evidence and reinforcement for the physical theory of motion. Motion that occurs in nature occurs constantly because there is a moving accident. Motion occurs requires changes in various dimensions. So that the laws of motion that occur in nature do not only occur in an accident but also occur in substance [5].

Further research on the idea of creating the Sadra universe was also carried out by Reza Akbarian entitled Temporal Origination of the Material world and Mulla Sadra's Trans-substantial Motion. In this study, the author shows that nature is created because of motion. Temporal motion causes continuous changes in nature. This is supporting evidence for natural science that nature will always experience constant and temporal changes [6]. Also, research on the soul by Sadra was carried out by Hossain Kalbasi Ashtari entitled Spiritual Paradigm as Origin of the Life's Capacity in the Sadraian philosophy. In this study, the author explains how the relationship between the soul and the reality of life. The human soul also experiences development along with changes in the human body. The development of the soul occurs temporally to reach perfection [7].

Observing existing research shows that studies on Sadra's thinking as an alternative paradigm to build scientific integration have not been widely carried out. This seems to need to be enlivened so that a scientific discipline is not only seen in one perspective. But from various relevant scientific points of view. Approaches within a scientific discipline must be carried out in various creative and innovative ways as well as through integration-interconnection [8]. The study of Sadra thought also led to the existence of a parallel relationship between Islamic philosophy and contemporary natural science. So this research will bridge this, to see it from a wider context.

## 2. Research Methods

This research is qualitatively based on a literature study. A search for the main reference sources in the work of Mulla Sadra himself and other relevant researchers. Associated with the science that is the basis of integration and interconnection comes from the modern scientific theory that is currently developing. The methods used in this research are descriptive-analytical and exploratory. Then by using a holistic thinking paradigm to see the relationship of the object of study as a whole in the joints of life. In the end, conclusions are drawn by paying attention to interrelated discussions.

## 3. Mulla Sadra Philosophy: Metaphysical Overview and Modern Studies

The discussion of Mulla Sadra's philosophy cannot be

separated from the synthesis carried out by Sadra on various schools of thought that existed in previous Islam. Seyyed Hossein Nasr stated that the synthesis carried out by Sadra was a grand synthesis that had never been carried out by Islamic thinkers before [9]. Because Sadra has combined various epistemologies of thought such as *bayānī* (theology, kalam science), *burhānī* (peripatetic philosophy), *'irfānī* (Sufism), *isyrāqī* (illumination), and added with a strong foundation in the Qur'an-hadith, and the words of Imam Shi'ah, has made Islamic philosophy still exist today. The major synthesis carried out is not limited to madhhab syncretism and integration, but also answers complex problems in the previous history of Islamic philosophy.

Sadra philosophy which is based on the fundamentals of being (*ashālat al-wujūd*) is the key in understanding other Sadra philosophies. Because the fundamentality or principality of being is the first and foremost thing in the discourse of Sadra philosophy. Being is something that exists and cannot be defined [10]. Being is something whose existence is primordial and necessary. This necessity comes from the One, namely Allah (The One; The God). He is the basis and beginning of all forms that exist in nature, so he is called *al-Wājib al-Wujūd* [11]. Its existence forms the basis for the existence of other entities in nature.

One of the embodiments of the philosophy of being is the concept of substantial motion (*al-harakah al-jawhariyah*). Sadra has another argument that motion that occurs in nature does not just happen by accident as is believed in Aristotle's thinking on the four elements, namely quantity (*kamm*), quality (*kayf*), position (*wad'*), and place (*'ayn*) [12]. Rather, motion occurs in its substance [13]. The form that must exist in the external world undergoes a gradation from the highest hierarchy of being, namely *al-Wājib al-Wujūd* to the lowest hierarchy in the material world. This manifestation occurs through what is called the motion of the substance. Substance motion requires motion that occurs continuously and gradually.

The mystical vision as peculiar to Sadra's philosophy is involved in how Sadra explains his argument with the cosmology of the world. That the existence of nature occurs with a gradation of existence that extends from *al-Wājib al-Wujūd* to the final hierarchy of material nature. Every being is a being in its being. Every being has the power (*quwwah*) and potential to move towards perfection. Sadra believes that every entity has a power called longing (*'isyq*) for the Creator [14]. This longing is the power as well as the potential for each entity to experience substance motion. In this way, motion does not only occur in the form of an accident but occurs substantially.

## 4. Al-Harakah Al-Jawhariyah in Cosmos Relations

The concept of substantial motion Sadra is the concept of motion that occurs in every entity of existence in nature. The motion that occurs does not only occur in accidents that are commonly known to humans, such as displacement, changes in shape, and the growth and development of things. Rather it

occurs in the substance gradually in both the material and immaterial realms [15]. It must be admitted that such a statement is difficult to accept as an apology in the empirical-positivistic academic world. Because in such an academic world, the empirical-positivistic scientific method becomes an extraordinary hegemony in the world.

As an effort to prove this, the argument used by Sadra is with the reality of life in the world. As well as the presence of a human being on earth through a long process. It starts with a sperm and an ovum that meet to form an embryo, then develops into a fetus, then becomes a clot of blood, then becomes flesh, then becomes bone wrapped in flesh, then becomes human form. After the perfect shape, the baby is born into the world. This development is scientifically mentioned in the Qur'an, surah al-Mu'minun verses 12 to 14. This shows that motion does not only occur in an accident but substance. Because in this case there is potential and power that causes change.

Another form that shows substantial motion is a change in the shape, color, and taste of the fruit. Apples that were once small grow into large ones, the color changes from green to reddish-orange, and the mass increases. This shows that substantial motion occurs slowly and surely towards perfection. Through the potential and power that exists in every natural entity, it shows that the motion that occurs in nature occurs gradually and demands change. The motion identifies as the motion to perfection.

## 5. Soul and Spirituality

Concerning the soul, Sadra's philosophy of motion contributes to harmonizing the perfect human soul. The human soul experiences motion in a substance. That the soul develops from one state to the next has been explained in Islamic philosophy. The development of the soul starts from the soul to grow (*al-nafs al-nabā'iyah*), the soul for general needs such as eating, drinking, and sexuality (*al-nafs al-hayawāniyah*), to the thinking soul (*al-nafs al-insāniyah*) is a development from the lowest reality to the highest reality in the soul. The human soul, which consists of various faculties, is perfected.

In the history of classical Islamic philosophy, it is stated that the soul is something eternal. As long as it is not interpreted the same as God because the soul is an element that comes from God. It is God Himself who breathes the soul (*rūh*) into the human body which comes from Him (see Qur'an surah al-Sajdah verse 9). Therefore it cannot be said that the soul is separate from the divine reality [16]. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā with the philosophy of emanation explain how the human soul must return to God in a pure state [17]. It is impossible for the soul that comes from the Most Holy God to return to a tainted and dirty state. That is why in Islam it is known as the existence of life after death. For humans who return to a holy state, then they will get happiness. As for humans who return to a dirty state, then they will get suffering.

Sadra with his philosophy provides a breakthrough as a humanistic-transcendental paradigm. That humans basically must be able to grasp the meaning of the outer and inner self of the creation of human beings. Humans who Sadra suggested

doing philosophy as a way to perfect themselves. Because with philosophy, humans will know their God as far as the limits of humanity and existing probabilities [18]. Humans will never be able to become God because of various weaknesses, limitations, and powerlessness. But humans can imitate the divine attributes that exist to the extent of their ability.

The transcendental humanistic values in Sadra philosophy are perfecting human beings. Humans are not just creatures that have a body, but also creatures that have a soul. Humans who have divine nature in themselves will reflect themselves as whole humans. Concerning other humans, the human will humanize humans. Humans who make up group life, communities, and countries cannot possibly unite unless they have the highest goal. Such a goal is happiness. Every human being must be able to achieve the highest happiness which in Immanuel Kant's language is called deontology. The highest happiness is when humans feel all the goodness they feel comes from the transcendental realm [19]. Understanding this transcendental happiness can only be done by perfecting yourself with the best divine nature.

## 6. Human Crisis

The contemporary human crisis is a major crisis as a legacy of the development of the modern world. The development of the modern world began with the spread of rationality brought by Rene Descartes and Sir Isaac Newton's mechanics. Both as stated by Husain Heriyanto are the people responsible for the modern-contemporary human crisis [20]. This can be seen in the view of life that the world and its contents are only recognized on the side of rationality which is empirical-positivistic and mechanical. This also causes other sides of dogmatic normality (religion) to be excluded from the world's ideological stage. It seems that this can be justified because the crisis experienced by contemporary humans is spiritual. Humans who are present in the world are only mechanical humans with all the knowledge and technology that are believed to be able to bring major changes to civilization. Instead of mentioning this, modern-contemporary humans are more than just a lump of material without a spiritual aspect.

The determinant-mechanistic paradigm as the current of modern Cartesian-Newtonian thought makes metaphysical things abandoned. Science is rational and can be expressed in the form of symbols, numbers, and formulas that deny the metaphysical realm. At this time, science is also required to be applied in applied technology that is useful in life. Admittedly, this technology brings major changes with various conveniences that are felt by many people. However, this technology also leads to damage to the environment, nature, and the world's ecosystems. Biodiversity damage occurs everywhere and catastrophic natural disasters also worsen human life.

Referring to the Qur'an surah al-Rūm verse 41 that damage in nature occurs because of the actions of human hands. There is some truth in going back to using the paradigm of Sadra philosophy, which is to become a perfect human being. A perfect human is a human who can humanize humans as well as possible. Good humans are humans who present divine

values in every behavior of life. Good humans must and can use science and technology that is beneficial to humans and nature itself. The use of any sophisticated technology must prioritize the beauty of nature and prevent even the slightest damage to nature. With this Sadra paradigm, humans with the probabilities that exist in themselves try their best to become a substitute for God in nature both as himself and nature itself.

## 7. Conclusion

As explained above, Mulla Sadra's philosophy can be used as an alternative paradigm in solving various life problems. Concerning science and science, it can be used as material for review in interpreting science that is more holistic and integral. Science is not only a set of scientifically measured knowledge and methods but also a human tool to get to know God. With the idea of Sadra, humans must be able to become complete human beings by paying attention to themselves and nature to make themselves as God commands.

The substance motion initiated by Sadra provides a new paradigm and alternative in a wider worldview. Science, which is now dominated by exact sciences, must open itself to be studied philosophically-holistically. Likewise, philosophical-metaphysical-transcendental science must open itself to dialogue with the natural sciences and humanities. Science whose study is empirical-positivistic can become a broad study if it can provide space for philosophical-metaphysical interpretation. If not, science will only be accepted by the scientific community, it will even become a human spiritual crisis. The Sadra paradigm which is a new alternative opens the way that empirical-positivistic science can be integrated-interconnected with philosophical-metaphysical-transcendental science. In this way, discoveries in the world, both natural sciences and humanities, will not leave elements of spirituality behind and instead support studies in a wider realm. As has been explained in the explanation above, it is through the argument of substantial motion that the motion that occurs in nature is both material and immaterial. Substantial movements become the basis for the integration of modern science, both natural and humanities.

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