

The Concept of Time in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy

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Abstract: This article explores the concept of time within the philosophical framework of Mulla Sadra, a prominent figure in Islamic philosophy, who introduced a groundbreaking understanding of time through his theory of *Harakat al-Jawhariyyah* (Substantial Motion). Contrary to the views of earlier philosophers such as Aristotle and Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra's approach to time is predicated on its conception as an inherent facet of physical existence, rather than as a discrete entity or a figment of the mind's fabrication. In Sadra's philosophy, time is inextricably linked to *Amr al-Wujud* (the Act of Existence), signifying an inseparable existential unity between time, motion, and physical objects. He conceptualises time as the fourth dimension of existence: fluid, dynamic, and continuously evolving in alignment with substantial motion. Mulla Sadra's philosophical system also incorporates the concept of Eternal Creation, which posits the continuous transformation of all physical entities. This theological concept is in alignment with the Islamic understanding of divine creation as a constant process. From this perspective, time is interpreted as the ongoing renewal of existence, thereby rejecting the notion of a static or fixed reality. This study underscores the significance of Mulla Sadra's innovative approach to time as an existential reality, contributing substantially to the philosophical discourse within Islam and expanding the metaphysical discourse on time and motion. His transcendental framework offers a deeper understanding of the interrelations between existence, motion, and temporality.

keywords: *Ashalat al-Wujud*, *Harakat al-Jawhariyyah*; Mulla Sadra; Time; *Tasykik al-Wujud*.

A. Introduction

Human life is always within the scope of time; all activities are carried out in a vortex of time, and it is impossible to get out of it. From the moment of self-consciousness, which emerges in humans, awareness of time also arises, encompassing each stage of life.

Time also gives rise to derivative concepts related to it, including fast-slow, second, minute, hour, day, week, month, year, period, era, age, past, present, and future. Even communally, time determines the process of human motion from one location to another. Public transportation, whether it is buses, trains, or airplanes, takes place in the scope of time, not just concerning departure times and travel duration, but also related to the safety and comfort of passengers.

Therefore, time has a significant impact on human lives. Physicists continue to discuss about time and strive to uncover the mysteries associated with it,¹ Likewise, philosophers have talked about time since ancient times.

In ancient Greek philosophy, the concept of time has a deep and complex dimension. Great philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Heraclitus have offered different perspectives

¹ James Jespersen and Jane Fitz-Randolph. *From sundials to atomic clocks : understanding time and frequency*. (Washington, D.C. : U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Technology Administration, National Institute of Standards and Technology. 1999), 308

on the nature of time, its relationship to change, and how time is understood in the context of human existence and the universe.

Parmenides, an Elean philosopher (5 BC), argued that change and time were illusions; according to him, true reality is eternal and unchanging, and the human experience of time is merely an appearance that does not reflect the true nature of reality. Parmenides distinguish between the world of experience (which involves time and change) and the real world (which is constant and eternal). For Parmenides, the concept of time is irrelevant when discussing actual existence.²

In contrast to Parmenides, Heraclitus (6 BC) is known for its doctrine of “*panta rhei*” which means “everything flows”. According to him, time is inseparable from change. He believed that everything in the universe is constantly changing, including humans and our experiences of time. In his view, time is a continuous force where every moment is transient and cannot be repeated. One of his famous sayings is, “You cannot step in the same river twice”, illustrating that the world and time are dynamic processes in constant motion. Time, in Heraclitus' view, is an inexorable motion of change.³

Plato (427–347 BC) in his work *Timaeus*,⁴ stated that time is “the moving image of eternity.” He argued that the world of ideas (the perfect and eternal realm) exists beyond time, while the physical world we inhabit is within time. According to Plato, time is part of the physical universe and serves as a way for humans to comprehend changes in the material world.⁵

Plato distinguished between “time” and “eternity.” Eternity is a property of the world of Ideas, which always exists and does not undergo change, whereas time coexists with the physical universe and progresses with the motion of objects within it.

Aristotle (384–322 BC), a student of Plato, developed his views on time in his work, *Physica*. According to him, time is the measure of motion in relation to “before” and “after” In this sense, time is inseparable from motion. He asserted that time does not exist without a change or motion. It only exists when there is something that changes or moves, and humans measure it based on the differences between the moments in that change.⁶

Aristotle also argues that time is continuous and cannot be divided into discrete units without losing meaning. He emphasised that time is an abstraction that we use to understand the sequence of changes.

Zeno of Elea, a student of Parmenides, is known for his paradoxes that challenge the conventional understandings of time and motion. The most famous paradox is the “Paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise”, in which he argues that Achilles, who is much faster, would never be able to catch up with the tortoise if it were given a head start. This paradox highlights the difficulty of understanding time and motion as entities that are infinitely divisible and continuously ongoing.

² Jonathan Barnes, *Parmenides, Fragmen, in Early Greek Philosophy*. (Penguin, 1987), 10

³ Kirk, Raven, dan Schofield, *Heraclitus, Fragmen, Presocratic Philosophers* oleh (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 30

⁴ *Timaeus* ([/taɪˈmiːəs/](#); Greek: [Τίμαιος](#), translit. *Tímaios*, pronounced [[tíːmaios](#)]) is one of Plato's dialogues, mostly in the form of long monologues given by Critias and Timaeus, written c. 360 BC. The work puts forward reasoning on the possible nature of the physical world and human beings and is followed by the dialogue *Critias*.

⁵ Plato, *Timaeus*, translate by Donald J. Zeyl (Hackett Publishing, 2000),13

⁶ Aristoteles, *Physica*, translate by R. Hardie dan R.K. Gaye, in Internet Classics Archive, IIX

Zeno attempted to show that the common views on time and motion contains contradictions, which relates back to Parmenides' teaching that time and change are illusions.⁷

Ancient Greek philosophers offered a range of perspectives on time, from Heraclitus, who viewed time as a process of continuous change, to Parmenides, who viewed it as an illusion. Plato and Aristotle provided more developed concepts, with Plato relating time to the changing physical world, whereas Aristotle saw time as a measure of change itself. Greek thought on time continues to influence the development of philosophy and science to this day, especially in efforts to understand the universe and human existence

Modern Western philosophers also consider the discussion of time a significant area of study, considering that the study of time forms the basis for subsequent developments in physics. Western philosophers who have discussed time include the following.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) introduced the idea that time (and space) are forms of human intuition, meaning that time is the framework by which we understand and experience reality. According to Kant, time does not exist outside the human mind; rather, it is a category used by the mind to organise sensory experiences.⁸

Henri Bergson (1859-1941) distinguished between objective time and lived time. Objective time is the time measured by clocks and used in science, while lived time is “*durée*” (duration), which is the flow of subjective experience that we continuously experience. Bergson emphasized that the experience of time is more complex than just a linear chronological marker.⁹

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) associated the concept of time with human existence (*Dasein*). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains that time is not merely a sequence of events but an integral part of human existence. Humans live in “time projected into the future”, that is, living with an awareness of death, which creates urgency and meaning in life.¹⁰

J.M.E. McTaggart (1866-1925) is known for his theory of the A-series and B-series of time. According to McTaggart, the A-series refers to time as past, present, and future, while the B-series views time as a relationship before and after. McTaggart argued that the A-series, which we experience as the flow of time, is an illusion, and therefore, time itself is not real.¹¹

Philosophical discourse on time has been extensively explored by ancient and modern philosophers, ranging from Heraclitus' notion of time as a continuous change to McTaggart's argument that time itself is an illusion. Philosophers such as Aristotle and Kant have also provided foundational perspectives on time as a measure of motion and mental framework, respectively. While these perspectives offer diverse interpretations of time's nature—be it objective, subjective, or metaphysical—they often fail to integrate the existential and transcendental aspects of time into a unified framework. This research aims to address this gap by exploring Sadra's unique philosophical perspective, which conceptualises time as an existential reality rather than a mere abstraction or sensory perception. Contrary to earlier philosophers who constrained time to motion or mental constructs, Sadra introduces *Harakat al-Jawhariyyah* (Substantial Motion), conceptualising time as an intrinsic dimension of physical existence, inseparable from the essence of being. This perspective challenges the traditional dichotomy of time as objective or subjective, offering a novel, transcendental understanding. While modern philosophers like Heidegger have connected time to human

⁷ Zeno from Elea, *Paradoxes of Zeno* by Wesley C. Salmon (Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 150

⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Transcendental Aesthetic), Independently Published

⁹ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*. (New York: Literary Collections, General), 73

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Blackwell Publisher Ltd, UK, 16

¹¹ McTaggart, *The Unreality of Time*. November 24, 2015, by The Perfect Library, 27

existence (Dasein), few have systematically addressed time's metaphysical unity with motion and existence, as Mulla Sadra does. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how his framework redefines time as a continuous renewal of existence, bridging classical metaphysics with transcendental thought.

B. Methode

This research employs a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the concept of time in Sadra's philosophy. This method aims to elaborate on Sadra's main ideas, such as *Ashalat al-Wujud* (Primacy of Being), *Tasykik al-Wujud* (Gradation of Being), and *Harakat al-Jawhariyyah* (Substantial Motion), to understand time as an essential dimension of physical existence. The research

commences with a comprehensive review of the extant literature, focusing on Mulla Sadra's seminal work *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfār al-Arba'ah*.

This is then complemented by a secondary review of the related literature aimed at enriching the context of Sadrian thought. A comparative analysis was then conducted using the ideas of other philosophers, including Aristotle, Ibn Sina, and Heidegger. This analysis identifies the conceptual innovations offered by Sadra in explaining time as an integral aspect of existence through the theory of substantial motion. A philosophical-metaphysical approach was used to explore the relationship between time, motion, and existence. This approach emphasises time as a metaphysical rather than a physical concept. The rational analysis employed in this study diverges from the empirical approach utilised by preceding philosophers as it seeks to comprehend time as a dynamic and ever-evolving entity. This methodological shift is expected to contribute meaningfully to the broader understanding of time within the framework of Sadra's transcendental theory, thereby answering fundamental questions about the existence of time from a metaphysical and ontological perspective.

C. Result and Discussion

Mulla Sadra and Time

The philosophical system developed by Sadra is based on the Fundamentals of Existence (*Ashalat al-Wujud*). To understand the concept of time developed by Sadra, it is necessary to first trace it from the system of existence that he developed.

The ideas developed by Sadra differ from Ibn Sina's ideas about time. Like Aristotle, Ibn-Sina asserted that time is a measure of motion and described it as a natural concept in physics.¹² Ibn-Sina believed that time is an important concept in Aristotle's categories and is imposed on objects through motion. Mulla Sadra based his views on time through the theory of *Harakat al-Jawhariyyah* (Trans-substantial motion)

Mulla Sadra did not disregard Aristotle's ideas about natural time, nor did he believe that the idea was original. He believed that natural time is a peripheral aspect of existential time which he described as a metaphysical issue in his ontology. For Sadra, being qua being is certainly independent of the concept of time, but the bestowal of existence when actualising the existence of *al-mumkin* (the possible) involves a process of motion in it, and time encompasses this process. In this theory, time is not a container for physical objects but is considered an attribute of them. Attribute. Based on this, Sadra claims that time is the truth

¹² Ibn Sinī, *al-Shifā', al-Tabiyyāt, al-Sam' al-ṭabī'ī*, ed. Ibrahim Madkur, Ayatullāh Mar'āshī Najafī, (Qum, 1405 A.H.), 148-166.

of the overflowing existence, and the temporality of physical objects signifies the continuity of the existence of *al-Mumkin*. The dimension that encompasses physical objects signifies the existence of time. The existence of a change in *al-Mumkinat* from prior to posterior in the existence of *al-mumkin* is a specific pattern in time that we do not find in his predecessors, even in Greek philosophical systems.

Mulla Sadra's effort to define time contradicts the views of those who believe that time is not real and is only a product of the mind. In this respect, he was a realist philosopher who acknowledged the reality of time. In his view, the distinctions between the past, the present, and the future are real.

Mulla Sadra uses Aristotle's interpretation of time as a starting point for his discussion. Aristotle stated that time is closely related to motion; therefore, one cannot ignore the other. He argued that time is a measure of motion in relation to preceding and succeeding entities.¹³ He has also attempted to define time based on natural philosophy and relate it to motion; however, Sadra proposed the need for an existential perspective to understand the reality of time.

In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, *Harakah al-Jawhariyyah* (Substantial motion) is *al-Amr al-Wujudi* (Existential Category) which is different from Aristotle's natural motion. For Sadra, motion originates and ends in the unmoved (Absolute Being). That Absolute Being does not move because it is Pure Actuality while for Mulla Sadra, motion is interpreted as "Gradual transition from Potentiality to Actuality",¹⁴ which does not occur at the Level of Absolute Being; rather, Absolute Being through His Grace bestows existence so that motion occurs at the level of possible being (*al-Mumkin*). Absolute Being itself does not create motion; it only presents eternal loci that are gradual (*al-tasykiki*). This idea is not in accordance with Aristotle's, either in content or in the relationship between the four causes. All motions that Aristotle observed within and from nature.¹⁵

According to Ali Akabriyan, the fundamental difference between Mulla Sadra's and Aristotle's theories of motion lies in: "Aristotle presented his theory of motion in the domain of Physics and in this way, moved towards the metaphysical distinction between real and unreal existence; whereas Mulla Sadra argued that motion is related to metaphysics and presents it under one of his philosophical sections titled permanent and changing existence. What he means here is the reality of existence (*wujud*), not the concept of existence."¹⁶

For Mulla Sadra, existence and quiddity are two different things: existence or *al-Wujud* as the real entity, whereas quiddity is merely relative. Based on this argument, Sadra discusses the transformation from the essence of existence to its conceptualisation. In this manner, he shifts from the general conceptual problems of past philosophy to an existential discussion, constantly emphasising the need to distinguish between the two meanings of existence, namely, the existent which is the second philosophical knowledge and the external objective reality of existence which can be perceived by direct knowledge through presence. Instead of distinguishing between moving and immovable objects, both of which can be described by the word existence, he proposed a distinction between analogical gradations of the reality of existence. He achieves this through the transition from what exists to the existence itself. Mulla

¹³ Aristotle, *Physic*, W.D. Ross, Oxford, 1961, 220b, 16-17.

²⁰ Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirazi, *al-Asfar al-arba'ah*, Vol. 1, 4th edition, (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya al-Thurat al-'Arabi, 1410 A.H. 1990), 382.

¹⁵ Ibn Sina, *Al-Najah*, (Beirut: Mansyurat Dar al-Ifaq al-Jadidah 1982),148.

¹⁶ Ali Akabriyan, *Time on Trancedent Philosophy*, Siprin, Mulla Sadra's.

Sadra believed that the reality of existence consists of two stages; one is the stage of permanent existence, and the other is fluid existence, and time is the reality of fluid existence and is necessary for its existence.

Akbariyan explains: “The important point that helps us to explicate the issue of time is that the analogical gradations of the reality of *wujūd* are nothing but the manifestations of the reality of *wujūd*, and that all the universe, from the sublime beings to the physical objects, are metaphysically one and the same. Concerning unity and multiplicity, Sadra propounds that the form is one and manifold at the same time and adopts this issue as one of the most important principles in his metaphysical system. He affirms that existence exists through their illumination’s relationship with physical objects. Thus, they should not be conceived of as independent beings which are related to their source.”¹⁷

Sadra rejected the pattern of motion developed by Ibn Sina which limited his views based only on changes that occurred at the accidental level. In contrast, Sadra’s theory of trans-substantial motion goes further and more fundamental, and this became a new idea in Islamic Philosophy. On the one hand, Mulla Sadra agrees with earlier philosophers that time is an unceasing reality imposed on objects through motion. First, he accepts that time has two characteristics: 1) it is a divisible matter that belongs to the quantitative category and 2) it is closely related to motion. However, he eventually refers to something that is the basis for his fundamental difference from his predecessors regarding the reality of time. In his eyes, time, motion, and physical existence are unified. He rejects the duality between motion and time and claims that motion and time are not externally coincident for material beings. Mulla Sadra's clear statement of his ideas in this regard stems from his views on substance and coincidence.¹⁸ His idea of the relationship between substance and coincidence differs from that of Aristotle and Ibn Sina. He states that the attributes of each object emerge from the stages and aspects of the existence of the substance. The general consensus is that objects require their own attributes to distinguish them from one another; however, according to the primacy of existence in transcendental philosophy, these diverse attributes are not the causes of specific qualities but rather signs of difference.¹⁹ All beings are, by their very nature and by their own modes of existence, different from one another, and because the entities differ, they differ in their attributes, but not vice versa. Thus, every being is nothing but an entity that appears in a different form. According to this statement, differences are not imposed from outside but originate from within. Thus, each attribute of each object is like that of the entity. This concept of time should be considered as one of Sadra's innovations. In line with this idea, he saw the source of the primacy or order of objects in the accident itself. There is time and space for every motion, and going out of space or time means going out of one's existence.²⁰ It is impossible for an entity not bound by space to be contained within that space. Moreover, something that is intrinsically permanent and constant cannot be understood as being bound by time. Time signifies something that is bound by time, and its entity has an internal connection to time.²¹

The idea that time and the subject's self are in unity, not as two separate realities as presented by Mulla Sadra, demonstrates that the connection that is involved is existential, and

¹⁷ Ali Akbaryan, Siprin, Mulla Sadra.

¹⁸ Sadruddin Syirazi, *Al-Hikmah al-Muta’aliyah*, V. 3, 101-103

¹⁹ Muhammad Husien Thabatab’I, *Bidayat al-Hikmah*, Muasasah al-Ma’arif al-Islamiyah, Qom, 20

²⁰ Sadruddin al-Syirazi, *Al-Hikmah al-Muta’aliyah*, V. 3, 102

²¹ Sadruddin al-Syirazi, *Al-Hikmah al-Muta’aliyah* V. 4, 134

this is certainly based on his view of the unity of *al-wujud* (existence) and the unity of the subject-object. For Mulla Sadra, not all *Amr al-Wujud* can be viewed as different realities; rather, differences arise only due to the gradational intensity from prior to posterior.

Thus, in Sadrian thought, time is not included in the category of coincidental nature, nor is it a container that is separated from physical objects that are accommodated by matter. Time is an essential aspect of physical substance; therefore, all physical objects and phenomena have their own time because time is one aspect of their existence.

Sadra stated that time is an invisible extension or the fourth dimension of physical existence. He believed that the temporality of objects signifies continuity in their existence. His statements regarding the four dimensions of objects had substantial certainty.²² In his precise analysis, objects had two extensions: temporal and spatial. Spatial expansion gives rise to three geometric dimensions, and temporal expansion arises from the internal flow of physical beings.

The statement quoted most accurately reflects Sadrian's concept of time. In this framework, time is the fourth dimension of matter and has no other entity except that which is external, marking a significant step in discussing the reality of the existence of time. The reason for reiterating this point is its novelty in Transcendental Philosophy. The philosophical expression of the fourth dimension in Mulla Sadra's philosophy must be equated with its physical expression in Einstein's general theory of relativity:²³ The quality of physical objects with four dimensions in Sadrian philosophy is metaphysical and nonempirical. This dimension is not a quantitative dimension but an existential dimension that derives from the mode of existence of physical objects and affects their entities. Time, in fact, is a fluid entity and a renewable and correlated existence, from which the mind can abstract a rational value called time. According to this statement, motion (and, as a result, time) is not a categorical and essential concept but a fluid and correlational existence that is like motion and the possible existence outside. Only through rational analysis can the mind distinguish between the two.

Thus, the answer to the question raised regarding the problem of time is different from those explained in previous philosophical systems. For this reason, we say that it is impossible to provide an absolute definition of the nature of time in Transcendental Philosophy, as such a definition falls under the category of an essential concept. This is also why Mulla Sadra is said to understand time and motion as rational values for physical and fluid existence.

Mulla Sadra and Wisdom Muta'aliyyah.

Mulla Sadra is a popularly known name, while his full name is Muhammad Ibrahim al-Qawami al-Syirazi. He was a Muslim philosopher who succeeded in establishing the third Madrasah (school) in the history of Islamic philosophy after Madrasah al-Masyaiyyah

²² Sadruddin al-Syirazi, *Al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah* V.7 304

²³ Einstein theory of relativity is different from Mulla Sadra's trans-substantial motion. Einstein, who makes the space temporal, does not want to prove that, being of the natural beings are gradational and flowing. He only shows that the geometrical and physical measurements are dependent on the speed of measurement and the speed of object, measured. And since the concept of time is implicit in the concept of speed, so physical measurement cannot be performed free of time. For Einstein, time is introduced in this fashion; and this has nothing to do with Mulla Sadra's philosophical time; just as psychological time, which has nothing to do with philosophical time. Here, time is a real direction, whether it governs a visible object or not. Another difference between Einstein and Mulla Sadra is in this fact that Einstein's theory is a scientific and experienceable one, while Mulla Sadra's is a metaphysical and unexperienceable one, which neither will be verified nor refuted empirically.

(Peripatetic) and al-Isyraqiyyah (Illuminations), and his contributions spanned from 979 H/ 1571 AD to 1050 H/ 1640 AD.²⁴

Muhammad Sadrudin bin Ibrahim Yahya Qawwāmi Syirāzi was commonly known by the name Sadrā, and only later, after becoming a prominent scholar, he was referred to as Mulla.²⁵

Sadrā. In addition, he was also given the title Sadrā al-Muta'allihīn because of his profound knowledge in the field of divinity (some associate this title with his work *al-Hikmah al-Muta'āliyyah*).

In this case, Henry Corbin in the introduction to the book *al-Masya'ir* recounts:

“Mulla Sadrā had an extraordinary experiment in worship and spiritual exercise based on the path taught and guided by his two main teachers (Mirdamad and Shaykh Baha'ī). Although most of it he had practiced before, during this period Mulla Sadrā renewed the spiritual practices taught by his teachers, enhanced by his inner tranquility, sharpness, and high level of knowledge. Mulla Sadrā was able to achieve inspiration, an inner vision, and divine radiance. At the end of his fifteen-years contemplation, Mulla Sadrā received a supernatural whisper to return to teaching and writing philosophical books.”²⁶

The greatness of Mulla Sadrā is revealed through the works he left behind. According to Sayyed Muhammad Khamene'ī, there are 40 books on Mulla Sadrā that are preserved to this day.²⁷

Al-Hikmah al-Muta'āliyyah fi al-Asfār al-Arba'ah (The Peak of Wisdom in Four Stages of the Journey). This work is known as *al-Asfār al-Arba'ah* and Mulla Sadrā's Magnum Opus. In this work, Wisdom, Gnosticism, Ontology, Divinity, Psychology, Eschatology, Teleology, Epistemology and is a summary of various schools of thought, be it Peripatetic, Illumination, Gnostic, Qur'anic verses, Hadith of the Prophet and sayings of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, are all encompassed to establish a new philosophical framework. In its latest editions, this book spans nine volumes.

Even Abu Abdillah Zanjani mentioned that Mulla Sadrā had revived the philosophical thought that had previously been extinguished, both due to al-Ghazali's attacks on philosophy and the destruction of Islamic civilization by the Mongols and Turks. He elaborated:

“Mulla Sadrā revived and started a new life from the buried remains of Ibn Sinā Sina's philosophical school (due to the attacks by al-Ghazali, the As'ari's and Hanbali followers, as well as the Mongol and Turkish invasions that destroyed knowledge and intellectual thought). The effort and spirit were returned to him. (Mulla Sadrā). The glory of philosophy was echoed again with the emergence of the great philosopher after Ibn Sinā whose hopes were on his

²⁴ James Winston Morris, *Kearifan Puncak*, translated Dr. Dimitri Mahayana, (Yogyakarta : Pustaka Pelajar, 2004), 18

²⁵ *Mulla* or *Mawla* which means master or leader and is used as a term of respect for the great Ulama or Urafa in Iran.

²⁶ Henry Corbin, “Muqadimah” on Mulla Sadra, *Al-Masya'ir* (Tehran : Kitob Khoneye Thohur, 1363), 7. Original text as follows: “C'est dans cette solitude de jardins que Molla Sadra consacra plusieurs années de sa jeunesse a atteindre a cette re'Alization sprituelle personnelle pour laquelle la philosophie est l'indispensable point de depart, mais sans laquelle , aux yeux de Sadra et de tous ceux de son ecole, la philosophie ne serait qu'une entreprise sterile et ilusoire. Pour entrer dans cette solitude, et pour en ressortir victorieusement, il fallait avoir deja pratique la haute discipline personnelle qui garantit l'indépendance a l'égard des opinions toutes faites. Opinion recues ou opinions prohibees.”

²⁷ Muhammad Khamne'ī, *Muqaddimah*, 271

shoulders and until now, he is regarded as a great teacher and as the founder of a new school of thought in philosophy".²⁸

Henry Corbin specifically commented on this matter:

"If he is known as a philosopher of the Ibn Sinā school of thought, it must also be noted that he is also an *Isyrāqi* (Illuminationist) philosopher and at the same time represents the thoughts of Ibn 'Arabi. Mulla Sadrā is one of the most significant thinkers from Islamic Iran who follows Plotinus, as well as a Shiite thinker..."²⁹

Understanding the Reality of Time and Its Rational Consideration

This idea of time is best understood if we distinguish between the reality of time's existence and the concept of time. What has been discussed thus far pertains to the reality of the existence of time and not its concept. The real reality of the existence of time is the reality of fluid existence, something that has neither essence nor essence. Thus, one cannot comprehend it except through presence.³⁰

Instead of the sensory perception of time proposed by Aristotle, Sadra offers a direct understanding of the existence of time. According to him, understanding the reality of the existence of time is different from the conceptualisation of time, and the concept of time is different from rational considerations. The concept of time signifies the reality of its existence within the limits of conceptual guidance, such as creating a concept like "I" for ourselves that we understand through presence and use to access this direct reality.

The conceptualisation of time is axiomatic, that is, it is primal and a priori. What our mind understands without the mediation of any inference is the conceptualisation of time; however, the reality of the existence of time is hidden and veiled as the reality of fluid existence. Mulla Sadra emphasizes that the axiomatic nature of the conceptualization of time does not generally imply that the concept is also axiomatic in a metaphysical sense. Therefore, he attempts to explain this concept of time in his philosophy and proposes the necessary principles.

In his rational analysis, Sadra is concerned with the rational consideration of time. Unlike Aristotle, he proves the existence of time outside through rational analysis and not through sensory perception and esoteric experience. He believed that time is a philosophically rational consideration and not an essential concept that can be understood through the senses and that the related discussion should be conducted in the domain of philosophy and metaphysics rather than the realm of natural science and empirical perception. He believed that the concept of time was not formed through abstraction or generalisation of sensory perceptions, but through mental analysis of direct perception, like other metaphysical categories.

Before Mulla Sadra, time was a part of primary intelligence and an essential concept; however, based on the principles of transcendental theory, time does not exist outside existence but is abstracted from the mode of existence of time. Thus, as Sadra believed in the primacy of existence, one cannot accept time and motion as abstracted from the mode of fluid

²⁸ Muhammad Khamne'i, *Muqaddimah*, 272

ملا صدرا در خاکستر مکتب مرده ابن سینا- که بر اثر حملات ناروای غزالی و پیروان اشعری مسلک وحنیلی مآب او و همچنین بدنیهال حملات ویرانگر علم واندیشه ترکان و مغولان بیجان شده بود-روحي تازه دمید وجوانی رابه وی بازکر دانید. شیفتگان فلسفه به این فیلسوف بزرگ و امدارند وحقا یس از ابن سینا تا بامروز معلم بزرگ و بنیانگذار فلسفه وصاحب مکتب بشمار مرود."

²⁹ Muhammad Khamne'i, *Muqaddimah*, 277

³⁰ Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirfzi, *al-Asfār al-arba'ah*, Vol. 3, 133; *ibid*, Vol. 1, 282.

existence as an external accident to moving existence. In general, he introduced quantity and measures as analytical accidents, rather than external accidents.³¹

Although Sadra considered time as an analytical accident to motion and motion as a secondary category to possible existence, he often directly referred to the external unity of time, motion, and the nature of the possible (*mukminat*). In the mental realm, the three are different but external; they exist in one unified existence. Time is what we interpret as the reality of existence and consider a fundamental issue in the discussion of time in the *Hikmat Muta'aliyah* (Transcendental Wisdom).³²

Unlike Mulla Sadra, it does not find it necessary to provide proof of the existence of time, as time can be perceived through sensory identification.

“We perceive time and motion simultaneously. For when something touches our body in the dark, if we sense some kind of motion, we immediately attribute it to time, and whenever we think of time, we realize that time is accompanied by some kind of motion.”³³

Aristotle acknowledged the fundamental role of time in the realm of thought and was aware of the truth of the subjective nature of time. He refers to the close relationship between conscience and time as follows:

“One may wonder whether time can exist without the presence of conscience and soul. For, when one does not count, there are certainly no numbers; for, number refers to that which is being counted or to entities that can be counted. However, given the fact that, apart from the soul and mind, no other entity is capable of counting, time cannot exist without the soul.”³⁴

Trans-substantial Time and Motion

Trans-substantial motion and moment are so closely related that we cannot understand them without considering each other. To prove trans-substantial motion, Mulla Sadra employs a rationale wherein one of the premises is tied to the understanding of the “reality of time.” According to him, time is an analytical accident for both motion and fluid. After demonstrating that priority and effect are rooted in the event itself and that time is not an independent container for physical objects, where priority or effect is an inherent quality of beings, he addressed the question of the type and nature of such a being that is mixed with priority or effect. In answering this question, he concludes that this essence, which is mixed with the moment and manifests it, is accompanied by priority and effect. It is worth mentioning that the priorities and effects that Mulla Sadra encountered at the beginning of his journey were different from those he encountered at the end of his journey. The former is an axiomatic and rational entity, while the latter is an existential priority or effect that cannot be perceived by senses.³⁵

Thus, Sadra provides evidence for the existence of motion in its essence by recognising the reality of time as a fluid and transient dimension among the dimensions of physical beings.

³¹ Sadr al-Din Shirozi, *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah*, Vol. 3, 132-133

³² Aristotle who stipulates the sensibility of time and space, by sense means the common sense. Aristotle, in *De Anima*, has considered the motion and stillness, dimension and shape, number and unit, among such cases. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 418A17, 425A15. Ross has introduced the possibility of adding time to these cases. W.D. Ross, *Aristotle*, U.S.A., 1966.

³³ Aristotle, *Physic*, 219, *the Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 1, 371

³⁴ Aristotle, *Physic*, W.D. Ross, 1961, 220, b, 16-17

³⁵ Sadr al-Din al-Syirazi, *Hikmah Muta'aliyyah*, Vol 4 p 102

He asserts that every physical being is bound by time and has a temporal dimension, and if a being has such an extension in essence, then it will have gradual existence and extensive components in the spread of time. The conclusion is that the existence of a physical substance is a gradual, transient, and renewable existence, the time involved in phenomena bound by time is the time of trans-substantial motion, and the interception of trans-substantial motion refers to the interception of time. This view indicates that matter and substance are subject to fundamental motion, and just as the personal entities of physical essence do not exist without geometric dimensions, they do not exist without temporal dimensions. Thus, one cannot imagine any physical being to be permanent and independent of time, or to always have the same relationship.

In line with this view, the entire universe is a fundamental motion similar to its existence and identity. In fact, the entire universe is a moving entity with a single motion and every being and accident is part of this unified body of motion that develops a new “self” and “identity” every moment. The sign of this eternal motion is time itself which is constantly changing and shows fundamental motion in the universe. This motion never leaves the universe to itself and constantly creates a new world. Thus, the precise meaning of trans-substantial motion is that all particles in the universe are in a state of permanent destruction and contingency. This continuous destruction or contingency encompasses not only all states of objects but also all entities and their existence.

Mulla Sadra extends this view to the realm of human beings. In his view, human reality is a *mukinat* (possible reality) that, after passing through the initial stages of life, will reach the level of abstraction and connection with the Divine Truth.³⁶ The idea that the human soul is a temporal being, and that time is an “existential being” rather than an attribute of gradual stages are lofty concepts in Mulla Sadra's thought. These ideas are very similar to those proposed by Heidegger. In his great work (*Being and Time*),³⁷ by explaining the temporality of human existence, he presents a picture of human development and trans-substantial motion that is quite close to what we have in Sadrian philosophy. However, there are striking differences between the fundamental philosophical ideas.

One of the most important differences is that in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, time, like existence, is closely related to eternal creation. The meaning of eternal creation is a fundamental concept of Islamic thought. Some Muslim scholars interpret this idea differently. Apart from the *Ash'arite* atomism, we also encounter the renewal of mystical ideas well-presented by Ibn 'Arabi. After Ibn 'Arabi and his relationship to mystical thought, one can interpret Sadra's trans-substantial motion as one of the most original philosophical interpretations of eternal creation.

Based on what Sadra has stated in this regard, every physical phenomenon is subject to change in its essence, and its existence at each supposed moment is different from its existence at another moment. Thus, the act of eternal creation by Almighty is carried out continuously.

According to trans-substantial motion, there is no “self” that remains constant in existence and no two similar selves can be found in two successive moments. Even in cases where scientific changes occur, there is a pervasive change in identity concerning trans-substantial motion. Trans-substantial motion implies that all changes that occur in different ways, whether quantitative, qualitative, physical, or chemical, originate from the substance and essence of an object.³⁸

³⁶ Sadruddin al-Syirazi, *AL-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah*, Vol. 7, 323

³⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32

³⁸ Muhammad Husein Thabataba'i, *Bidayah al-Hikmah*, 74

Furthermore, at the point of physical and chemical change, there is trans-substantial motion, and a new “self” is created in the universe. This change involves a continuous and ongoing process that affects every individual in the world. Therefore, every entity develops a new “self” and a new entity at every moment so that no two particles are the same at two different points in time, whether the apparent motion is observable.

Now, we can better understand why one cannot claim that the universe “exists”, and that time passes through it; however, it must be said that the world at the next moment does not exist and must come into being. In fact, the passage of time is the motion of the universe and not the stability of the universe or the time that passes through it. The motion of the universe signifies its gradual origin, which means its emergence at every moment. In this regard, Mulla Sadra uses the expression “renewal of identities”, indicating that the universe consists of a series of identities that are constantly being renewed. In a particular case, Sadra generalised this term to all beings other than God and agreed with the mystics who believed in the renewal of ideas. Consequently, he accepted the idea that God's will implies continuous creation. Continuous creation is not limited to natural and physical essences. In this universe, every being is basically impoverished in terms of existence; that is, everything in this universe is nothing but dependence. Therefore, if it is deprived of emanation from existence, it becomes nothing. This is where the concept of “new creation” or “eternal creation” is realised from the combination of these two elements, namely the existential poverty of all objects and the eternal emanation of Divine Grace from the absolute metaphysical source. No one can deny the dependency of creatures on the Creator or the universe's continuous need for God in an even deeper sense. The momentary character of the universe explains its needy nature and shows that it is in a state of constant change and transformation not only in its appearance and form, but also in its essence and entity. Dependency and need have penetrated their core, encompassing their entirety. What Sadra presents is a form of interpretation of the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

“O mankind, you are in need of Allah; and Allah is the All-Rich, the All-Praiseworthy.” (al-Fathir: 15)

There is nothing more speculative and profound than trans-substantial motion in God's work. This is the same philosophical meaning of “new creation”.

From the *Irfani* perspective, the meaning of new creation encompasses the meaning of time in its general sense. Based on this, they do not see time as something exclusively limited to physical beings and believe that all beings are bound by time in this sense. Another meaning of time is what they interpret as a renewal and eternal creation in the physical world. Sadra places great emphasis on this point and explains it in terms of trans-substantial motion.

D. Conclusion

In Mulla Sadra, a prominent Islamic philosopher, the concept of time is understood in a novel manner through the theoretical framework of *Harakat al-Jawhariyyah* (Substantial Motion). This approach diverges from the perspectives of earlier philosophers, such as Aristotle and Ibn Sina, by recognising time as an inherent component of physical existence rather than as a distinct entity or merely a cognitive concept.

In his philosophy, time is inextricably linked to *Amr al-Wujud* (Act of Existence), signifying that time and motion are inseparable aspects of physical existence. Time is

conceptualised as the fourth dimension of physical reality, characterised by fluidity and perpetual transformation in conjunction with the substantial motion of existence.

Mulla Sadra introduced the concept that the existence of the world and other physical entities is a continuous process of creation, in accordance with the concept of Eternal Creation in Islamic theology. All physical entities undergo essential changes at every moment so that no existence is truly fixed. This concept asserts that time is an existential reality, and not just a perception or mental abstraction. Mulla Sadra's transcendental approach stands as a seminal contribution to Islamic philosophy, significantly expanding the metaphysical understanding of time and motion within the context of existence.

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