

Mulla Sadra on Virtue and Action

Zahra Khazaei ¹

Received: 26-03-2018 / Accepted: 15-05-2018

This paper sheds light on the views of Mulla Sadra about virtue and action. The main question is how he explains the relationship, if any, between virtue and action. Mulla Sadra defines moral virtue as a settled inner disposition by which one acts morally, without need for any reflection or deliberation. This study seeks to explain how, according to Mulla Sadra, a virtue motivates the agent and leads him to do the right action easily. Is virtue the reason for or cause of action? Is there a semantic link between action and virtue? Can we regard an action as right if it is not motivated by a virtue? Another question is about the role of action in the development of moral character. Is virtue acquired through the practice of corresponding actions? If we divide virtues into moral and intellectual, we should ask about the relationship between an epistemic action and intellectual virtues as well. In addition, since Mulla Sadra is a Muslim religious thinker, explaining the role of faith and religious rituals in forming moral character and also the relationship between faith and moral action is important. This paper will show that Mulla Sadra accepts the semantic, metaphysical, and psychological relationships between virtue and action.

Keywords: Mulla Sadra, moral virtue, action, intellectual virtue, semantic relationship, metaphysical relationship, psychological relationship.

1. Professor, University of Qom, Iran (z-khazaei@qom.ac.ir).

Introduction

The relationship between virtue and action can be understood in four ways: semantic, epistemological, metaphysical, and psychological. The semantic connection between moral (or intellectual) virtue and right action holds if one defines virtue in terms of right action or defines right action in terms of virtue. So, what is the right action? Is it an action that does not necessarily come from virtue, or is it one that is performed by the virtuous person regardless of the circumstances?

If we claim that virtue is defined according to right action, not only should action be used as part of the definition of virtue but also virtue becomes a type of action. And if we claim that right action is defined according to virtue, then action is not right or, at least, not valuable without virtue. As a result, right action becomes an action performed out of virtue.

There are versions of virtue ethics that insist on a semantic link between virtue and moral action. Virtue ethicists, who base the definition of moral action on the concept of virtuous person, virtuous motive, or virtue itself, often believe in this kind of link. For example, Hursthouse and Slote have indeed accepted this kind of link. Hursthouse defines right action as “what a virtuous agent would, characteristically, do in the circumstances” (Hursthouse 1999). Michael Slote explains right action according to virtuous motivation (Slote 2001) and believes that an action is right if (and because) it exhibits or expresses a virtuous motive, or at least does not exhibit or express a vicious motive (Van Zyle 2009). Zagzebski, as well, subscribes to this perspective when she states that “the moral exemplar is the basis of ethics” (Zagzebski 2010; 2012) and when she tries to define the other moral concepts including moral action. Since a moral exemplar is a virtuous person,¹ it is true that being virtuous is the basis of ethics. “All

1. Moral exemplar, in fact, is a moral saint (see Khazaei 2005, 144-66).

other basic moral concepts,” she says, “are defined by reference to exemplars—a virtue, a desirable life, a right act, and a good outcome” (Zagzebski 2012, 157). So, virtue, in her view, “is a trait we admire in an admirable person ... that makes the person paradigmatically good in a certain respect” (2010, 54; 2012, 159), and the right act “is what the admirable person would take to be most favored by the balance of reasons in circumstances” (2012, 159).

Virtue epistemologists accept this kind of connection between rational inquiries and intellectual virtues and define knowledge as a true belief that arises out of intellectual virtue (e.g., Zagzebski 1996). The epistemological relationship between virtue and right action is related to the role moral and intellectual virtues play in the recognition of *what one should do*. According to virtue ethics, a practically wise agent has such power.

Sometimes, we ask about the role of virtue in performing moral actions, while other times we ask about the role of action in forming virtue. Here, we discuss the former connection as psychological and the latter as metaphysical. The metaphysical connection between virtue and action asks whether moral action has a role in forming virtues, and generally in the realization of personal identity, or not. Regarding the psychological relationship, we ask whether virtues are able to motivate the agent to do a right action or not? If so, are moral virtues sufficient for motivating the agent, or are they necessary?

Philosophers who seek out reasons for action usually ask about the role of belief in motivating the agent, and whether it is a sufficient or necessary reason. While moral externalists say that “belief is only the necessary condition” and that to desire is sufficient (e.g., Aristotle, Brink, Shafer-Landau), moral internalists believe that “belief only is the sufficient condition for acting” (e.g., Socrates, Kant, Smith, and

Korsgaard). Here, we can raise a question about the role of virtue in performing the right act. However, answering this question somewhat depends on the nature of virtue.

This paper studies the viewpoint of Mulla Sadra in regard to the types of relationship between virtue and action. Mulla Sadra, the Iranian Muslim philosopher, is the founder of Transcendent Philosophy. His viewpoint in the fields of Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, and Ethics are extremely valuable. Arguably, however, his ideas on mind are more important. We can see the consequences of his views on the mind in the philosophy of religion, ethics, and epistemology.

According to Mulla Sadra, although philosophers believe that all human beings have the same nature and define the human being as a rational animal, everybody has an individual identity, which, through actualizing their practical and theoretical potentials, builds them gradually and makes them distinct from others (Mulla Sadra 1382 Sh, 128; 1981, 8:343, 9:85). Dispositions of the soul, knowledge, deeds, and intentions are the main factors that contribute to forming personal identity (Mulla Sadra 1981, vol. 9). Since the constitutive elements are different from one person to another, everyone will have their own special identity. Mulla Sadra calls this identity the second nature, in contrast to the first nature, which refers to tendencies with which we are born (Mulla Sadra 1382 Sh). According to his teleological approach, the mentioned elements help one to achieve felicity. Mulla Sadra explains these ideas on the basis of his philosophical principles like the metaphysical primacy of existence (*asalat- al-wujud*), the substantial motion (*al-harka al-jawhariyya*), as well as the unity of the intellect, intelligent, and intelligible (*ittihad al-'aql wa-l-'aqil wa-l-ma 'qul*).

Considering the relationship between virtue and action in Mulla Sadra's viewpoint, this paper focuses on three types of this relationship

and omits the epistemological one. At the end, it refers to the role of faith. It will conclude that Mulla Sadra accepts all the relationships, while maintaining that the conception of the right action can only depend on the conception of virtue, not vice versa.

1. The Semantic Relation

Mulla Sadra, like other Muslim philosophers, defines moral virtue as a settled disposition of the soul that helps its possessor do the proper action without deliberation and with ease (Mulla Sadra 1981; Naraqı 1373 AH; Kashani 1960; Miskawayh n.d.). This definition shows that virtue is neither a feeling or activity nor a faculty. Instead, a settled, inner state is what enables a person to think correctly, to feel properly, and to perform moral conduct easily (Mulla Sadra 1981, 4). Moral vice, as well, can be defined in this way, with the difference being that a virtuous person easily performs good acts and a vicious person easily does bad acts without deliberation. The difference between virtue and vice is the same as Aristotelians say; that is, virtue is the means and vice is either excess or deficiency. Mulla Sadra sometimes, using Qur'anic terminology, refers to virtue and vice as angel and satan (Mulla Sadra 1360 Sh, 351-54). Angel and satan, here, may refer to a good and bad character that lead the agent to perform right or wrong actions.

By this definition, neither Mulla Sadra nor other philosophers accept a semantic link between virtue and action and they do not consider the concept of virtue to be dependent on that of moral action. However, they assert that virtue is one of the defining elements of the moral act. Accordingly, moral action is what a virtuous person would do in any situation because of his dispositions. For example, a miserly person who gives charity—while his action is not morally wrong and he is not deserving of punishment—is deficient in ethical value and is not worthy of being praised. The most important factor for being ethical is having inner purity and a pure heart. This is what makes one's actions

praiseworthy. Given this premise, what makes an action moral? Clearly, it is not enough for it to solely be intentional and conscious; rather, it depends on the agent's good character or his pure inner-self.

In Mulla Sadra's view, good intention is another criteria for an action to be considered good. Therefore, a moral act is defined in terms of the motives and dispositions of the agent. As a result, every action should be evaluated on the grounds of the goodness of the agent's motives and his virtues.

According to Mulla Sadra (like other philosophers), intention, consciousness, and voluntariness are necessary conditions for right action. This is why a person is blameworthy or praiseworthy for his action. In other words, the agent is morally responsible for the action that has been performed freely, consciously, and intentionally. In addition, the desirability of an act—that is, its being right in itself—is also necessary. This kind of action is one which the good person is permitted to intend and perform. Accordingly, good motives do not belong to bad actions. As a result, the goodness of both the agent and the act are necessary for an action to be good.

Up to now, we have discussed the relationship between moral action and moral virtue, but such a relationship can also be discussed in regard to epistemic action and intellectual virtue. According to Mulla Sadra, an action is right epistemically if it arises out of intellectual virtues. In this way, knowledge would be obtained (Khazaei 2013).

2. The Metaphysical Relationship

The metaphysical relationship explains the role of action or other factors in forming good character. Discussion about this is possible if we believe that virtues are not natural but acquired. As Aristotle mentions, "virtues arise in us neither by nature nor contrary to nature; but by our nature we can receive them and perfect them by habituation" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a).

From the viewpoint of Mulla Sadra, human beings naturally have the potential of being virtuous. These virtues are acquired through struggle and learning—moral virtues are obtained through struggle and epistemic virtues through learning. Consequently, Mulla Sadra refers to virtue as a habit of the soul which “necessarily [affects] the easy procession of an action therefrom, without need of any reflection or deliberation. (Mulla Sadra 1981, 4:114). It is worth noting that Mulla Sadra divides people into two groups. The first group consists of the few who inherently have (or do not have) moral and intellectual virtues, and the second group consists of the others who have the potential for moral and intellectual virtues. The latter group is able to acquire them by struggle and learning. However, the former group, which could include a prophet or an innately foolish man, has (or does not have) intellectual virtues naturally, and thus does not need or is not able to acquire them by learning (Mulla Sadra 1981, 9:87).

Many philosophers accept the idea of acquiring virtues, especially moral virtues. What distinguishes Mulla Sadra from others is his belief that human beings do not have a constant identity; rather, they gradually build it (Mulla Sadra 1382 Sh, 128; 1981, 8:343; Tusi 1373 Sh, 7:181). Through this gradual process, dispositions, which are among the constitutive factors of human identity, are acquired. Therefore, he is responsible not only for his actions and activities but also for his character. Indeed, everyone chooses his personal identity by way of acting and thinking. As such, the agent is responsible for the factors which contribute to the development of his identity (Khazaei 2013, 34).

According to Mulla Sadra, actions, intentions, dispositions and knowledge are the constitutive factors in the formation of human identity. Among these factors, knowledge is the main factor through which human identity will be determined (Mulla Sadra 1981, vol. 9).

However, knowledge is an after-product of action. In other words, action is the first step that shapes a person into a good or bad person. Action builds dispositions, and dispositions prepare the conditions for acquiring true knowledge. First, actions produce inner states, and then inner states gradually change into settled dispositions. In his work, Mulla Sadra maintains that we can acquire good and bad characters, which potentially exist in us, through exercising the related good or bad actions (Mulla Sadra 1360 Sh, 347). In fact, good actions make the heart pure and light, while bad actions make it dark (Mulla Sadra 1360 Sh, 347). Mulla Sadra calls these dispositions the inner face (esoteric) of man or his truth (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 1:297). This truth will appear in the afterlife. Thus, moral virtues are acquired by performing the actions of a virtuous person. The performance value is used to evaluate the agent: the higher the value, the better the agent.

Just as performing moral acts leads to moral virtues, carrying out epistemic actions leads to wisdom. Thus, Mulla Sadra believes that exercising, in addition to learning, is necessary for having intellectual virtues. Carefulness, fairness, patience, and authenticity are some of the acquired intellectual virtues required for acquiring knowledge (Mulla Sadra 1981, 9:91).

Here, I would like to refer to the following supplemental notes:

1. Considering the effect of actions on the realization of virtues, every action is valuable insofar as it brings about a purification of the heart and so long as this effect remains. Because of this, the amount of reward and punishment of actions varies. Therefore, according to Mulla Sadra, actions are not worthy in themselves; rather, they are valuable in so far as they result in virtues and a pure and illuminated heart (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 2:63; 1376 Sh). Mulla Sadra goes on to repeatedly mention that the right action is not itself the true goodness, but it is important

for the heart's purity (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 1:319, 320; 1366 Sh, 2:191-92; 1977, 74).

2. In spite of Mulla Sadra's emphasis on the importance of the purity of heart, he does not consider this purity as the end. Because he believes that humanity depends on theoretical knowledge, and knowledge is the most important constitutive element of human identity, as well as the cause of true happiness or felicity; the worth of everything in comparison to knowledge is secondary. In this way, purity of heart is important, because it gives the person the ability to acquire true knowledge. The more truth one knows, the more pious one becomes, as a result of which, he becomes more felicitous. Accordingly, good action is a means and true knowledge is the final perfection (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 1:319, 320). The objects of true knowledge are religious entities, such as God, prophets, angels, and resurrection. The stronger the existence of the object of knowledge, the more valuable the acquired knowledge and the greater the felicity of the knower.
3. Moral and intellectual actions are not the only factors, but rituals too have an important role in the purification of the heart and the realization of virtues and eradication of vices. In contrast, sins and evil actions result in vices and darkening of the heart. As moral virtues prepare the mind for acquiring knowledge, moral vices result in vices of the mind, like fallacy and fiction. And, in the end, one becomes ignorant of the truth (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 1:386). Although rituals have an important role in moral and intellectual development, they are not the end and their value depends on their effect on the purification of the heart. For this reason, rituals and moral actions are the first step of perfecting practical reason. After that, the person, by refraining from vices, struggles to purify his heart. At the third step, he gains virtues,

but as long as his heart is not purified, it will not be illuminated. Only upon purification is his heart able to gain knowledge. Mulla Sadra mentions (e.g., 1981, 9:139; 1360 Sh, 854-56; 1376 Sh, 74) that the purpose of rituals and moral actions is the purification of the soul and the perfection of practical reason. He further says that this purity is not the final purpose; rather, the light of faith is the final purpose that will be brought about after achieving purity of the heart. This light of faith and the light of knowledge are the same in Sadra's view.

4. Intention is another factor that plays an important role in forming human identity. Action, alongside good intention, gradually changes the nature of the human being and makes him a good or bad person. Good intentions motivate the agent to perform good actions, and good actions make good character. Indeed, intention and character have a mutual, internal relationship. Thus, from one side, intention defines the level of one's moral identity, while, from the other side, moral character leads to good or bad intention.

Mulla Sadra considers good and bad intentions as the spirit of action. In this way, they not only play a role in the rightness of actions but also in forming moral and intellectual virtues; that is, virtues would be built by good action and good intention. The better the intentions, the worthier the actions. Then, peace of mind and heart will be achieved. Good motives, here, enable good actions to result in a purified heart. Mulla Sadra discusses the effect of bad motives on the soul. In his opinion, darkness, one that is the result of self-love and deception of others, does not allow one to be purified from vices. Bad motives result in a veil over the heart which prohibit one from achieving virtues or "brightness" (Mulla Sadra 1367 Sh, 172).

The relationship between intention and moral action can be understood in two ways: (1) good intention is necessary for an action being morally right, and (2) Good intention is not necessary for an action to be morally right, but it does make an action morally worthwhile and valuable. The first relationship may occur if the relationship between intention and action is a semantic or metaphysical one. If this is the case, then it is possible to (a) consider the intention as a constitutive element of the concept of right action, and (b) to believe that the existence of moral action depends on good intention. In both cases, if an action has been done without a good intention or moral spirit, not only is it not valuable but it is not right either. In such a case, the agent may deserve punishment. Accordingly, the existence of moral action is based on good intention; that is to say, there is no moral action without good intention.

If we say that this relationship (intention and right action) is not necessary, we consider good intention as a sufficient condition for an action to be valuable, not as a necessary part of its definition. In this case, even though an action without good intention is not morally valuable, it is nevertheless right.

When Mulla Sadra argues that the worth of an action depends on the level of the heart's purity, he accepts the latter relationship, in which good intention makes an action morally valuable. He believes that gaining proximity to God is the best motive. This does not mean that an action lacking in this kind of motivation is wrong or not valuable, such as performing an act motivated by empathy. He even acknowledges that performing actions with the pure intention of getting closer to God is very difficult and only a few people can achieve such intentions.

5. Faith is the last factor by which a person strengthens the effect of good action on the purification of the heart. Even the lowest level of faith can result in an amount of illumination of the heart. While gaining proximity to God is the main condition for characterizing an action as good, it is also the element that makes an action valuable. In general, faith has an important role in forming identity. Therefore, in Islamic ethics, although achieving virtues is not possible without practice, faith in God plays an important role in shaping moral character. In fact, faith in God promotes one's eagerness to perform good deeds which result in good character.
6. Although building virtues requires practice, Mulla Sadra believes that all virtues, be they moral, intellectual or religious, are due to God's grace. According to Mulla Sadra's interpretation, the word "wisdom," as it appears in Surah al-Baqarah¹ and also in Surah al-Jumu'a,² consists of knowledge as well as moral and intellectual virtues (Mulla Sadra 1367 Sh). He believes that God graces us with all of them, but gaining such divine grace requires struggle. Thus, while God does not force us to do good acts, He does love that we act morally and He does help us in this regard.

3. Psychological Relationship

The main question here is whether virtues lead to action? In other words, do they have a motivational role in the performance of an action? Do they cause action?

Most contemporary philosophers have drawn distinctions between normative, motivating, and explanatory reasons. Normative reasons

1. "He grants wisdom to whom He pleases" (Qur'an 2:269).

2. "It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] an apostle from among themselves, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error." (Qur'an 62:2).

justify or favor an action, while motivating reasons are the reasons that *the agent* takes on in order to favor or justify her action and to guide her in acting (Alvarez 2016). Different still are explanatory reasons, which are the reasons that explain an action. Here, I focus on motivating and explanatory reasons as psychological.

Some Western philosophers, like Zagzebski, believe that virtues, moral or intellectual, essentially have a motivational element (1961). Muslim philosophers, including Mulla Sadra, when defining virtue as a disposition that leads the agent to do right action easily, in fact, have argued for this kind of relationship. Although virtue is not a feeling, the emotional element of moral virtue is what motivates the agent. If belief and desire are two reasons for doing an action, moral virtues could be the source of the said belief and desire. Because of this relationship, Mulla Sadra says that dispositions are incentives of the soul for doing good and bad acts. In Mulla Sadra's work, will, anger, and lust have been called motivational faculties. Nevertheless, he does not accept a causal relation between virtue and action (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 1:546). Despite his belief that our actions indicate our inner states—that is, our dispositions and motives—Mulla Sadra denies that virtues are necessary *and* sufficient conditions for action. He argues that they are necessary but not sufficient. Human will is what leads Mulla Sadra to adopt this idea. Free will lets a person do or not do an action. Knowledge, desire, and intention are three stages through which the person performing an action moves. Every stage produces the next stage and motivates the agent to do the action (Mulla Sadra 1360 Sh, 351-54). Significantly, Mulla Sadra believes that no stage requires the next stage necessarily, and that next stages do not necessarily follow previous ones. Finally, the person would perform what he has chosen by his own will. In Mulla Sadra's view, even after making a decision, the agent may defeat his intention and not do what he should do.

According to Mulla Sadra, only those who have true knowledge can *necessarily* do the right action (Mulla Sadra 1360 Sh, 309-10). He explains that only those who have strong will are able to perform an action as soon as they imagine or conceive of it. It is here that the necessity of the connection between belief and action appears. It seems what makes a person do the right action necessarily is either the strength and weakness of will (or soul) or the possession of moral and intellectual virtues (Mulla Sadra 1981, 9:87). Indeed, the harmony between the reason and emotion of a truly virtuous agent is the cause that necessitates action. This causal relationship also applies to persons who have weak will and lack moral and intellectual virtues; moral and intellectual vices guide vicious people to do bad actions quickly and with ease.

In general, Mulla Sadra cites several causes that make the agent fail to do what he should do:

1. Long-term desires not only prevent a person from thinking of God but also create obstacles that hinder good action.
2. Irrational pleasures, which darken the heart, prevent the agent from deliberating, and stop him from doing the right action (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 1:337-38).
3. Ignorance, sins, and vices of the mind are among the causes of bad dispositions, which in turn result in immoral actions. Mulla Sadra sometimes refers to ignorance as the root of unhappiness, particularly the kind of ignorance that has been ingrained. Mulla Sadra believes that ignorance and infelicity are from Satan, but felicity and knowledge (particularly knowledge that comes with proof) are from an angel (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 1:386). He argues that ignorance and weakness of will are among the causes of fear and immoral behavior (Mulla Sadra 1991, 9:92).
4. Laziness (or laches), as a psychological factor rather than an immoral one, is one of the obstacles that hinder good actions.

Maybe this factor, more than others, is proper for justifying the virtuous person's wrong actions, because a virtuous person does not perform wrong easily. This relates closely to Aristotle's argument. If a person knows which action is the right action and does not have any desire for doing the wrong one and is not forced to perform it, then, if he performed a bad action, it would be for psychological factors, such as laziness, depression, obsession, and desires, as Mele and Davidson have referred to (Mele 2009; Davidson 1980, 21-42).

5. Self-deception is another cause of action, one that the agent imagines to be good but in reality is bad. This kind of deception sometimes occurs in regard to our intentions, such that good intentions seem bad and bad intentions seem good (Mulla Sadra 1360 Sh, 358-59). Self-deception produces ignorance, which in turn results in bad action. Only someone who has gained practical and theoretical perfection can understand this kind of deception.

All of the aforementioned factors would produce a kind of irrationality, one that leads a person to do wrong action, because he practically and epistemically is not *able* to do right action.

4. Faith and Its Connection to Action

Since Mulla Sadra is a Muslim philosopher, we ask about how the role of faith in God may affect this connection: Are they connected to each other semantically? Is faith the necessary condition for the rightness or value of action? Can it motivate the agent to act? Does faith necessarily result in action?

Mulla Sadra defines faith in God as knowledge; it is not itself a kind of action. Nevertheless, he accepts two kinds of relationships between action and faith: On the one hand, he says that faith is the product of good action. Good action, whether moral, epistemic, or

ritual, purifies one's heart, which in turn prepares the person to receive faith from God. Because of this purification process, he believes that when an action is done with good intentions, it will produce faith. Nevertheless, faith is a gift given from God to some of his servants (Mulla Sadra 1366 Sh, 1:310). On the other hand, he argues for the psychological relationship between virtue and action, while still stressing the *motivational* role of faith. Faith motivates the person to do the action. Strong faith will increase the possibility of performing good action. In Sadra's viewpoint, only the faith of a true believer necessitates action. That is, the persons with true knowledge have such a capability. For other people, the commitment to do the right action depends on their faith; with stronger faith, there is a greater possibility of moral commitment.

Mulla Sadra believes that faith has different degrees. The lowest degree is to believe in God and His prophets. After that, at the next degree up, a person will get a heart-felt belief, but his heart is not yet exposed to the light of knowledge. When he reaches the third degree, he will have achieved the insight and vision for religious truths. At the last stage, there is nothing that can be present to him except God, who is the beginning and the end of everything (Mulla Sadra 1363 Sh, 255, 257). Given the degrees of faith, it can be guessed that when faith leads to action, what kind of action is appropriate for each stage, and to what extent the relationship of faith and action can be necessary.

Conclusion

In this article, we discussed the semantic, metaphysical, and psychological relationship between action and virtue in Mulla Sadra's thought. Explaining these relationships, from one side, depends on the definition of virtue and right action, and, from the other side, depends on the factors that contribute to the realization of either action or virtue. In the semantic relationship, we sought to answer whether or not virtue and action are defined in terms of each other. In the metaphysical

relationship, we determined how much moral and epistemic action existentially depends on moral and epistemic virtue.

As we mentioned above, Mulla Sadra accepts the semantic relationship in a unilateral manner; that is, he defines right action on the basis of virtue but not vice versa. He, like Aristotelians and other Muslim philosophers, defines virtue as a disposition of the soul that makes the possessor of it act easily and without deliberation. Therefore, conceptually, right action is defined according to virtue, whether we define it, as Hursthouse does, as “what a virtuous agent would, characteristically do in the circumstances” (Hursthouse 1999) or as Zagzebski says, as something based on moral exemplar. Mulla Sadra believes that right action is what is performed by a good person with good motives. In addition to free will and consciousness, a moral agent should have moral virtues, and an epistemic agent should have epistemic virtues in order to perform moral and epistemic action properly. Indeed, virtuous action makes the agent praiseworthy.

Saying that virtues are not natural implies that they are acquired. Mulla Sadra accepts the metaphysical relationship between virtue and action and believes that not only moral acts, but also rituals, are involved in the creation of virtue. Of course, divine grace, as well, plays an important role in creating virtue.

Relying on a psychological connection, we tried to answer whether virtues motivate the agent to act. If the belief and desire are the reasons for an action, can virtue be considered one of the reasons too? Is virtue a necessary and sufficient condition for doing the right action, or it is only a motivational reason? Mulla Sadra accepts the psychological relationship between virtue and action, where virtue is the reason for right action, as belief and desire are the reasons for action. However, belief and desire are different from virtue in that belief and desire are

stages of performing action, while virtue is not. Instead, virtue is a *condition* for doing the right or admirable action. In fact, virtue enables the agent to recognize the right action and to control his feelings and behaviors. Because of this, we consider virtue to be the basis of moral judgment, good feelings, and proper actions. Virtues are the reasons for action, not the causes. Consequently, virtue is not a sufficient condition for doing the act, but it is necessary to act properly. Virtue is a sufficient condition for only a few people, such as prophets.

According to Mulla Sadra, since moral action builds one's self-esteem for moral virtue, it makes one's self-perfection for the fulfillment of epistemic virtue and knowledge. Therefore, moral virtues cultivate and purify the soul, and, in the final stage, help the agent to obtain true knowledge. Thus, virtue, with its moral and epistemic types, right actions, motives, and knowledge are considered the constructive elements of personal identity. In other words, all of the moral and intellectual factors contribute to forming personal identity. As a result, the stronger these factors are, the more pious the agent will be. In this regard, belief in God is very important. It not only purifies the heart but also motivates the agent to do the right action easily.

References

- Alvarez, M. 2016. "Reasons for Action: Justification, Motivation, Explanation." <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/>.
- Aristotle. 1990. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Mohammad Hasan Lotfi. Tehran: Tarh-e No.
- Davidson, D. 1980. *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hursthouse, R. 1999. *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kashani, Muhsin Fayd. 1960. *Al-Mahajja al-bayda' fi tahdhib al-Ihya'*. Tehran: al-Saduq.
- Khazaei, Z. 2005. "Moral Saints." *Philosophical Theological Research* 6 (4): 144-66.

- . 2013. “Epistemic Virtue from the Viewpoints of Mulla Sadra and Zagzebski.” *Religious Inquiries* 2 (4): 21-39.
- Mele, A. 2009. “Weakness of Will and Akrasia.” *Philosophical Studies*. 150 (3): 391-404.
- Miskawayh, H. n.d. *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq wa tathir al-a‘raq*. Isfahan: Mahdavi.
- Mulla Sadra. 1981. *Al-Hikmat al-muta‘aliyah fi l-asfar al-‘aqliyyah al-arba‘ah*. Edited by Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar. Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi.
- . 1360 Sh. *Mafatih al-ghayb*. Edited by M. Khwajavi. Tehran: Moassese Motaleat va Tahghighate Farhangi.
- . 1366 Sh. *Sharh usul al-Kafi*. Edited by M. Khwajavi. Qom: Intisharat-i Bidar.
- . 1367 Sh. *Tafsir al-Qur‘an al-karim*. Edited by M. Khwajavi. Qom: Intisharat-i Bidar.
- . 1376 Sh. *Risala-yi sih asl*. Edited by S. H. Nasr. Tehran: Tehran University Press.
- . 1382 Sh. *Al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah fi manahij al-sulukiyyah*. Edited by Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani. Mashhad: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi.
- Naraqī, M. 1373 AH. *Jami‘ al-sa‘adat*. Edited by Sayyed Muhammad Kalantar. Beirut: al-A‘lami.
- Slote, M. 2001. *Morals from Motives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tusi, N. 1373 Sh. *Akhlaq Nasiri*. Edited by M. Minavi and A. Heidari. Tehran: Kharazmi.
- Zagzebski, L. 1996. *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2010. “Exemplarist Virtue Theory.” *Metaphilosophy* 41(1/2): 41- 57.
- . 2012. “Virtue Theory and Exemplars.” *Philosophical News* 4: 156–61.