

Constructivist Elements in the Ethical Philosophy of Mulla Sadra

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This text presents the various definitions of moral constructivism given by philosophers like Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and others; then it proceeds analyzing the moral philosophy of Mulla Sadra, that is one that combines features of the Islamic–peripatetic (masha’i) and Islamic mystical (‘irfani) traditions.

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Constructivist Elements in the Ethical Philosophy of Mulla Sadra

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Abstract

Several varieties of moral constructivism are defined. Epistemological moral constructivism is the thesis that moral knowledge or justification is acquired through the use of and reflection on the practical point of view or the procedures designed to elucidate the practical point of view. Semantic moral constructivism is the view that moral truths and meanings are grounded in these conditions or procedures. Finally, metaphysical moral constructivism holds that the natures and existences of moral facts and properties are grounded in features of the practical standpoint or the procedures that manifest that standpoint.

Since the practical point of view is understood differently in different traditions of moral philosophy, one finds Aristotelian, Humean, Kantian, Hegelian, Nietzschean, and other forms of moral constructivism.

The moral philosophy of Mulla Sadra is one that combines features of the Islamic–peripatetic (*masha'i*) and Islamic mystical (*'irfani*) traditions. Both of these traditions contain important constructivist elements: the former with roots in Aristotelian accounts of practical reasoning, and the latter with roots in the ethos of self–cultivation prominent in Islamic sources and further developed by the mystics. Examples of both are presented and discussed in the course of a review of the constructivist elements of Mulla Sadra's essay, *Three Roots*.

1. What is Moral Constructivism?

Moral constructivism is understood both as a position in metaethics and in normative ethics. In normative ethics, constructivists offer a criterion for moral judgments that may be contrasted with the criteria advocated by utilitarian, perfectionists, and intuitionists. Particular moral claims are defended against alternatives by appeal to constructivist criteria, such as procedures designed to elucidate practical reasoning. However, most of the contemporary discussion of moral constructivism has focused on the doctrine as a type of metaethical theory,¹ a type of theory designed to provide solutions to problems pertaining to moral epistemology, the semantics of moral terms, moral metaphysics, and moral psychology.

In what follows, I will describe several versions of moral constructivism, and will give an account of the shared kernel about which the versions orbit. Although I think some versions of moral constructivism are on the right track, I will not defend a particular constructivist theory here or review the debates in the philosophical literature, which such a defense would require. Our aim is expository and analytic.

Moral constructivism may be roughly described as a theory according to which moral norms are grounded in the moral stance or the moral point of view. The name for the position was coined by John Rawls,² who attributed it to Kant, and after him it has been taken up by a variety of writers who often depart considerably from the sort of position Rawls introduced, and who have defended forms of moral constructivism that draw on Aristotle,³ Spinoza,⁴ Hume,⁵ Hegel,⁶ Nietzsche,⁷ or some other philosophical precedent instead of Kant.⁸ With the work of Christine Korsgaard,⁹ a former student of Rawls, moral constructivism became a significant view in metaethics that was often contrasted with moral realism and expressivism.

Moral constructivism provided an alternative to noncognitivist theories while it claimed to require no ontological commitments to the sorts of queer metaphysical entities that J. L. Mackie had argued are presupposed by moral truth claims. Although Korsgaard introduced her constructivism as a Kantian theory, she has sought to reconcile the position with an Aristotelian approach to ethics; and she has argued that despite the disagreements and misunderstandings among Aristotelians and Kantians, many of the leading ideas in these two thinkers' moral philosophies can be placed in a constructivist framework in which they are compatible and mutually enriching.¹⁰

If we then turn to the philosophical tradition in Islam to consider what sort of metaethics fits best with it,

we find that since there is such a strong Aristotelian influence, a form of Aristotelian constructivism is promising. The revealed moral teachings of Islam were understood with the aid of Aristotelian discussions of practical reasoning, which were synthesized with religious interpretations of Platonic doctrines. In later Islamic philosophy, however, the sort of rational mysticism whose strongest proponent was Ibn al-‘Arabi becomes a very strong current. At the same time, the transmission of Stoic moral themes in Islamic literature is well-recognized. Exactly how each strand of ethical thought mixed with others, was transformed, or reasserted itself through the traditions of Islamic moral thought may never be known. What we can observe, however, is that various constructivist themes are prominent throughout and continue to persist.

Constructivists urge that fundamental moral principles derive from or are in some way grounded in the conditions of moral agency. This is vague in order to include a wide variety of constructivist positions. Constructivism, as defined here, does not require that moral obligations must be produced by specific acts of will,¹¹ although there are subjectivist as well as objectivist forms of moral constructivism.

Some constructivists, like Sharon Street,¹² defend a Humean form of constructivism, which focuses on desires and affective states considered essential for moral agency, since such states make motivation possible. Others defend more rationalist versions of constructivism, Kantian, Hegelian, or Aristotelian, which take the norms of practical reasoning to be fundamental to morality. No matter which variety they defend, constructivists hold that moral judgments are a kind of *normative* judgment, that is, that moral judgments appeal to *norms*, or standards of conduct and evaluation, and it is through this kind of appeal to shared standards that moral judgments take on the intersubjective force they display.

While *moral constructivism* is, thus, a family of metaethical views according to which morality emerges from the phenomenon of taking a practical point of view; there is a closely related view of human agency, *constitutivism*, according to which agency is constituted by the norms that govern the practical point of view. Korsgaard’s blend of Aristotelian and Kantian ingredients is used to prepare versions of constitutivism *and* constructivism. I think that similar ingredients appear in the Islamic ethics of Mulla Sadra to indicate both a kind of constitutive view of the agent and a constructivist view of morality/spirituality.

Since moral constructivists hold that moral truths are dependent on the practical point of view, moral constructivists deny those forms of realism that require moral truths to correspond to moral facts that are independent of actual or idealized human attitudes. Since *moral realism* is often defined in a manner that requires mind independence, moral constructivism is sometimes described as a form of moral antirealism; but because moral constructivists do not deny the existence of moral facts and properties altogether, they have been reluctant to describe themselves as antirealists.

We could define *metaphysical moral constructivism* as the position that the natures and existences of moral facts and properties are grounded in features of the practical standpoint or the procedures that manifest that standpoint, either in real life or in some idealized form. This kind of metaphysical moral

constructivism does not deny the existence of all moral facts and properties, but it denies that moral principles, values, obligation, and virtues exist independently of human agency or some idealization of human agency. So, one (Kantian) form metaphysical constructivism would be the view that what makes stealing morally wrong is that stealing undermines one's agency by giving rise to a *practical contradiction*. Although metaphysical issues pertaining to the mind-independent existence of moral facts and properties have attracted much attention (perhaps excessive attention) in contemporary metaethics, constructivists have been much more concerned with epistemological issues.

Epistemological constructivism is not merely the view that some procedures or reflections on the nature of agency and normativity happen to be a useful means of knowing something about morality, as we might use some laboratory method as a means to obtain knowledge about the composition of a chemical substance.¹³ The claim is much stronger than this. It is that our practices of moral deliberation and justification (whether modeled in a procedure or in certain features of the practical standpoint) will enable us to arrive at moral beliefs that are known, justified, or reasonable *because* of fundamental structures and norms to which moral beliefs must conform for the practical standpoint to be taken. It is through practices of moral judgment (moral procedures, the moral standpoint) that moral knowledge (justification, reasonableness) is obtained because these practices are essential to moral knowledge (justification, reasonableness); in short, epistemological success regarding moral issues is essentially grounded in the practical standpoint (again, real or idealized).

Epistemological constructivism is most clearly differentiated from the view taken by non-naturalist realists about moral intuitions. If moral intuitions provide any justification for moral beliefs, constructivists hold, it is because they are indications of the implications (or presuppositions) of taking the practical point of view, and not because the intuitions provide a window into a realm of moral reality that is independent of our agency.¹⁴

A semantic version of moral constructivism would be one according to which the meanings of moral terms or moral truth are grounded in the practical standpoint or in the procedures designed to elucidate this standpoint. Exactly how the grounding relation is to be specified would be filled in by a particular constructivist theory.

Although moral constructivism is primarily a kind of epistemological thesis,¹⁵ it can be reformulated to yield semantic or metaphysical positions in the ways indicated above. Although epistemological, semantic, and metaphysical positions are independent, taken together they make for a coherent and comprehensive form of moral constructivism. The chief advantage of moral constructivism over its major rivals is that avoids the well-known difficulties of noncognitivist theories without raising the epistemological objections that have plagued non-naturalist realists who have claimed that moral intuitions provide for a kind of perception of non-natural moral reality. The alternative offered by constructivism is one in which moral justification arises from reflection on norms grounded in human agency and the practical standpoint. Moral intuitions are not a form of direct perception of moral facts

and properties but are signs that provisionally indicate that the conditions required for justification are fulfilled.

One of the attractions of moral constructivism for philosophers inclined toward naturalism, since the discussions of Rawls, is the promise of moral theory without metaphysical commitments. In this respect, the constructivist themes to be found in Islamic philosophy differ from those present in many contemporary metaethical theories. The Muslim philosophers do not make use of constructivist themes in order to avoid commitments to immaterial entities. This is especially noticeable in Mulla Sadra's writings, to which we turn next.

2. Three Roots of Evil

Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirazi, known as Mulla Sadra, was born in Shiraz during the Safavid period, in 1571–2; and he died in Basra on his return by foot from his seventh *hajj* in 1635–6.^{[16](#)} He was a systematic philosopher, theologian, and mystic (*'arif*).^{[17](#)}

His views on ethics are scattered throughout his works, where they are found in discussions of spiritual wayfaring, commentaries on verses of the Qur'an, philosophical psychology. His ethics is also closely related to his metaphysical views. Sadra considers reality to be a graduated hierarchy whose pinnacle coincides with the pure being that gives all things their actual existence. The human being is considered to be in a dynamic state whereby one's very existence is intensified as one achieves moral perfections by finding release from the domination of material appetites and approaches God.

One of the important sources for the understanding of Mulla Sadra's moral thought is his Persian treatise, *Seh Asl*,^{[18](#)} which means "three principles" or "three roots" in Persian. In this section, I will review some of the major themes of this book and highlight constructivist elements in Mulla Sadra's moral theory. In none of his works did Mulla Sadra explicitly seek to present a metaethical theory; so, attributing a constructivist view to him (or any other metaethical position) can be little more than finding evidence in the texts that fits better with this sort of theory than relevant alternatives. I am not going to evaluate the philosophical defensibility of Mulla Sadra's form of constructivism, for this would require surveying all of his ethical writing and considering it in the light of the literature on constructivism that has accumulated over the past forty years. My aim is, however, to demonstrate that constructivist themes can be found in Mulla Sadra's works, and to suggest that their exploration can assist in the understanding of Sadra's ethics and theology.

The philosophy of a Muslim mystic might seem totally incongruent with moral constructivism because moral constructivism is a theory based on the idea of autonomy. Kant's writings on autonomy were a major part of what Alasdair MacIntyre has called "the Enlightenment project," a failed project of finding a secular replacement for religious morality.^{[19](#)} According to studies of Kant's religious and moral views, however, Kant was not the Deist he is sometimes portrayed to be; and he argued that we should "recognize all our duties as divine commands."^{[20](#)} On the other hand, the idea of finding a basis for

morality in practical reasoning is a hallmark of Aristotle's ethics, and can be found among other ancient Greeks, and in religious writers who drew upon their legacies, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. For Mulla Sadra, no less than for Kant and Hegel, man seeks freedom; and moral progress is made as one advances in this search, for the shackles of sin and worldly attachment would not enchain one whose aim was freedom (*azadi*) in this world and the next.[21](#)

The book, *Three Roots*, is about what Sadra takes to be the three most important roots of evil. The three roots of evil discussed by Mulla Sadra are: (1) ignorance of the self; (2) worldliness; and (3) self-deception. All three vices are foils for the virtues of the gnostic, mystic, or '*arif*': self-knowledge, detachment, and the result of the conquest of the deceiving-self, which is authenticity or purity. It is noteworthy that Sadra's choice of vices is highly rationalistic. There is no place in his discussions for *weakness of the will*, for example, and the three vices Sadra considers to be the roots of all evil are all epistemic vices.

The moral vices are seen as consequences of the epistemic ones. So, for example, worldliness is setting inappropriate aims for oneself and results from the mistaken belief that worldly aims are more valuable than transcendent ones. The work is an extended polemic against those who pretend to uphold religion and piety, but who understand religion in a superficial manner and who condemn philosophers and mystics ('*urafa*'). The three roots of evil are also reflected in the *imaginal world* of the afterlife as three heads of the devils or serpents that torment those whom they dominate.

The *imaginal* world, for Mulla Sadra, is not a merely imaginary world or fantasy.[22](#) In fact, the world constructed by the imagination to supply the conditions in which souls find themselves in the afterlife is more real than the sensory world with which we are familiar; and the purely intellectual world is yet more sublime and more real. When the illusory veils of this sensible world are removed, the inner world becomes evident in the forms familiar from the religious imagery of rewards and punishments. The divine punishments are inescapable because they are, in fact, real aspects of the self, and one cannot escape from oneself.

Mulla Sadra's three roots, ignorance of the self, worldliness, and self-deception are all impediments to successful agency. That impediments to successful agency are the roots of all human evil is a constructivist thesis, as is the idea that human beings are called upon by God to overcome these obstacles and make something of themselves. This is not to say that Mulla Sadra anticipated Korsgaard, nor that he anachronistically held a constructivist metaethical theory. However, there is evidence that Mulla Sadra thought that his three roots were the source of human evil specifically *because* they prevent successful agency, the gradual perfection of which involves the transformation of the self through spiritual wayfaring.

There is clearly an implicit metaphysical constructivist thesis about the nature of moral evil evidenced in his identification of characteristics that undermine agency as the roots of evil; and there is an epistemological constructivism at work in his attempts to show the evil of the vices he discusses by

considering how they prevent successful spiritual development. Spiritual development, for Sadra, plays a role in his moral constructivism, analogous to that played by procedures of rational decision (such as Rawls' original position) for Kantian constructivists. Our understanding of moral virtue and vice is clarified through considering the effects of character traits on spiritual advancement or loss in this life, and how this is reflected in the afterlife. Although it goes without saying for Mulla Sadra that God approves of virtue and punishes viciousness; the understanding of moral attributes is not explained by Mulla Sadra by the standards of a divine command theory, and appeals to scripture are not made in order to discover the moral status of an act or quality, but to illustrate how revelation confirms what the intellect discovers about itself and provides hints toward deeper levels of insight.

The *Three Roots* consists of an introduction followed by fourteen short chapters (the entire work is composed of 182 paragraphs). Here is an outline of the contents:

- Introduction
- Ignorance of the self
- Worldliness
- Deceptions of Satan and the carnal self
- Consequences of ignorance of the self
- Consequences of worldliness
- Consequences of deception
- Happiness and wretchedness
- Finding the way to God
- Condemnation of those who limit religious knowledge to knowledge of the outward aspects of religion
- True faith and pretense
- Five obstacles to the proper functioning of the heart
- Divisions of sciences and knowledge of tawhid
- Imitation and true knowledge
- Recognition of good works and useful knowledge.

A. Self-Knowledge

Self-knowledge (*maʿrifat al-nafs*) is not a kind of propositional or conceptual knowledge of the faculties of the soul or psychology. It is a practical knowledge of one's own personal identity, one's strengths and weaknesses, of where one has been and where one is headed. Of course, knowledge of psychology is needed to fully understand oneself, but the understanding gained is not simply the discovery of facts. It is not knowledge of the head, but "knowledge of the heart" (*maʿrifat-e del*). It is a recognition of who we are and how to navigate ourselves through life. As Sadra puts it, self-knowledge is the reality (*haqiqat*) of being human, which we can understand as one's realization of one's humanity, which is one's voluntary self-construction.

For Mulla Sadra, this is the basis of faith in the afterlife, not a mere intellectual affirmation of doctrine, but an awareness that who we are cannot be reduced to any set of conditions of the sensible world, and that the transcendent aspect of our identity is partially determined by our actions in the sensible world. Hence, Mulla Sadra misleads us when he describes knowledge of the self as knowledge of the soul's Origins and Return, if we take this to mean that self-knowledge is confined to mere doctrinal knowledge about religious teachings.

The call to self-knowledge is part of the philosophical tradition that is mentioned in the frequent Socratic references to the Delphic Oracle's "*Gnothi seauton*".²³ Self-knowledge subsequently became a recurrent theme in Stoic ethics and the attention given in late antiquity to the cultivation or care of the self (*epimeleia heautou*).²⁴ In Mulla Sadra, self-knowledge becomes the mother of all wisdom, the *umm al-hikmat*.²⁵

Sadra begins his discussion of self-knowledge in the *Three Roots* by quoting the famous hadith, "Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord." He then brings the reader's attention to the fact that this is the contrapositive of an *ayah* of Qur'an:

"They forgot God and God made them forget themselves" (59: 19),

he continues, "for if forgetting God causes one to forget oneself, then remembering oneself causes one to remember God, and remembering the Lord is itself conducive to one's remembering the self."²⁶

Mulla Sadra continues with a discussion of divine remembrance (*dhikr Allah*). The remembrance of God is one of the contemplative practices frequently mentioned in Sufi manuals.²⁷ Sadra warns that divine remembrance is not to be understood merely as a verbal practice, and he criticizes some Sufis for making it into an empty ritual. Furthermore, he claims that a clear mark that their *dhikr* is not a true turning of one's attention to God is that they curry favor with the unjust and turn to the doors of the sultans for the sake of personal gains. They seek to construct their palaces in this world instead of constructing their own selves. This means that those who are truly capable of responsible action, those whom Mulla Sadra describes as being truly alive, having a heart, and as having light and vision, are

those who recognize that they are not merely animals, but are destined for an immaterial world. Those who gain self-knowledge will know that they are not merely physical bodies, for they make for themselves a life in the hereafter: “The edifice of belief in the other world is based on knowledge of the self.”²⁸

Mulla Sadra continues with a number of narrations of the Prophet (S) about life after death, and he comments that the Prophet’s knowledge of the immortality of the soul is due to his knowledge of the spirit. He enjoins his readers to find the rational soul within themselves, which he likens, by quoting a few couplets of poetry, to a treasure in the ruins.

Rediscover that self which is called rational (speaking, na^ʿiq)

To make clear the talk of treasure in the ruins.

It is as if our intellect, our heart, and our soul...

This ‘we’ and ‘I’ that said: To me return an answer!

It is an auspicious star, for from it there arises

the human reality by virtue of which it [humanity] is attributed;

That is the kernel of your being, and you are its shell.

Without passing from this shell, how can you see those kernels?

The poet is unnamed, but poetry is scattered profusely throughout the text to drive home important points. One who sees only the surface will not be able to form intentions that are not superficial. One who does not know the immortality of one’s own soul will limit his aims to worldly pleasures. The limitation on what can be intended is a retardation of agency. Morality arises from the steps required to overcome such limitations on one’s own agency or personhood, as one expands the range of one’s intentions beyond physical comforts and pleasures. There is an apparent self-referential air of paradox in moral constructivism, for it answers the question posed by reason, of how to make moral decisions, by pointing to the conditions needed for the proper functioning of the faculties by which moral decisions are made. The “I” or “we” that asks the question is the same rational soul in which the answer is to be found.

If knowledge of the self corresponds to the improvement of agency, then since this improvement is gradual, the knowledge of the self cannot consist merely in the acknowledgement that one has an immortal soul. So, Mulla Sadra ends his initial chapter on self-knowledge by denying that there is a single human essence common to all human beings. Humanity comes in degrees. At its highest, there is the Prophet (s), which is why he could say, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Truth (*al-Haqq*).” While at the lowest, there is the description in the Qur’an of “those whose stage is lower than that of animals: **‘They are like cattle, even worse’ (7: 179)**, and **‘They are those who have lost their selves.’” (7:9)**²⁹

After devoting separate chapters to the vices of worldliness and self-deception, he returns to the theme of self-knowledge in order to consider the effects of knowledge and ignorance of the self with regard to

the afterlife.

B. Detachment

The second chapter is an exhortation against worldliness, against the domination of anger, ambition, and lust. The exhortation is not that these qualities or drives are inherently evil, but that they should not dominate one. The reader is encouraged to overcome the animal drives in order to achieve humanity. This is not gentle encouragement. Those who are unable to make the intellect dominate over the lower desires are condemned as being drunk with desires and ambitions, and as having a mad dog in their hearts. There is no discussion of weakness of the will.

While Mulla Sadra focuses on the negative, on worldliness, the virtue to which it is opposed is the virtue most commonly associated with the Stoics, detachment. As many have pointed out, detachment has a bad reputation in modern culture as being cold-hearted or uncaring. The sorts of condemnations of worldliness one finds in Mulla Sadra might also be misinterpreted as prudery. Mulla Sadra, however, is not recommending a lack of engagement, care, or even a lack of enjoyment of worldly pleasures. What he is warning against is domination by worldly aims in such a manner as to impede or restrict our personhood as responsible agents capable of building for ourselves that which goes beyond the sensible realm.

Those whose aims are limited to the satisfaction of animal desires make themselves into animals, and at the resurrection this will become apparent to them as they take the forms of beasts.

Just as it is possible for man to ascend from the degree of ignobility to highest of heights and the most noble stages and the positions of the closest angels [to God] by means of progressing in knowledge (‘ilm) and practice (amal) and annihilation (fana’) and subsistence (baqa’), so too it is possible for him to descend from his present stage to that of the most base of depths and to the stage of animals and insects, and he will be gathered on the last day with the devils and beasts and the wild things because of following the self and desire, and because of his propensity to their natures and materials. [30](#)

By gaining knowledge and taking the practical steps necessary on the spiritual path, one may seek to free (*khalas*) oneself from the “dark prisons” of our bestial desires. This is a theme to which Sadra repeatedly returns:

*Like a garden is the free person’s soul
The bad person’s soul is a narrow hole.* [31](#)

C. Authenticity

In Islamic traditions, and on the basis of terminology found in the Qur’an, the soul is said to have different levels. Often each level is called a soul, so that a person may be said to have several souls. In the Peripatetic tradition, man is said to have vegetable, animal, and rational souls. The base soul called

the *nafs al-ammara* (lit. *the commanding self*, also translated as *the carnal soul*) on the basis of these words of an *ayah* in which the Prophet Joseph (‘a) says:

“for the soul indeed prompts [commends, incites] to evil, except in as much as my Lord has mercy”. (12:53)

According to Mulla Sadra, the soul begins in a corporeal state, as the first entelechy, or life-form of the body, but through a process of *substantial motion* or change, the soul transforms itself and reaches higher levels of realization, such as the eternal rational soul. This is not explained in the *Three Roots*, but is elaborated in detail in Sadra’s magnum opus, *The Four Journeys (al-Asfar Al-Arba’a)*.³² Virtue is acquired, according to Mulla Sadra, when one wrests control of oneself from the commanding soul by developing higher levels of the soul.

In the *Three Roots*, Sadra tells us that the work of the commanding soul, like that of Satan, is to mislead us through illusion and deceit. Yet these temptations are of a nature that only the imbeciles and the infantile should be deceived by them; and falling for them results in the loss of this world and the next. Sadra compares one who is dominated by the commanding self to those who engage in controversy to satisfy their ambitions rather than to find the truth. They deceive themselves when they think they have succeeded by winning arguments. Another instance of self-deception is found in those who imagine themselves to be spiritually advanced merely because of their performance of acts of worship: “You will not become the master of your nature with prayers and fasts, because as you continue to do this you will grow every day darker by these two.”³³ Spiritual advancement is achieved through self-mastery, not by asceticism and superficial piety.

Sadra illustrates the deceit of hypocrisy with reference to words attributed to Jesus (‘a) in Islamic traditions:

And it has been narrated from Jesus, Peace be with him, that he said, “How can one be knowledgeable when his way is toward the other world while he is facing this world, and how can one be knowledgeable who seeks words only to relate to others without putting them into practice himself.”³⁴

D. Happiness

In the Islamic ethical tradition, **سعادة** is transformed to *sa’adat*.

Both the Greek and the Arabic words are translated as “happiness”, but the concepts differ. The transformation parallels that in the Christian tradition, for which the term “felicity” was often used. In both religious traditions, the effect of moving **سعادة** to the next life was to remove the contingencies that, according to Aristotle, could destroy chances for a good life, such as misfortunes of birth, physical defects, and catastrophes. Any of these contingencies might make one miserable in this life, but this would be irrelevant to one’s situation in the afterlife. Hence, felicity became a more purely moral goal than Aristotelian **εὐδαιμονία**. For Kant, however, happiness is a distraction that can detract from the

purity of the good will. If I act only to get some sort of reward in this life or the next, my willing is not autonomous. I am acting for the sake of some sort of pleasure and not on the basis of the good will.³⁵ Christine Korsgaard has gone to some lengths to reconcile Aristotle and Kant on this issue. Kant misunderstands *sympathy* when he thinks of it as a feeling.

For Aristotle it is the active life of virtue. Once this is cleared up, the conflict between Aristotle and Kant can be resolved. Aristotle, no less than Kant, thinks that performing an action that is decided upon because of its nobility is superior to performing an action that is chosen as a means to satisfy some selfish interest. Assuming that Korsgaard is able to reconcile Kant and Aristotle in such a manner that the pursuit of happiness does not contravene human autonomy, the question remains whether the pursuit of felicity or *sa'adat* can be reconciled with moral constructivism.

A problem arises because the concept of the next life externalizes the idea of happiness. It is no longer just the active life of virtue; and the pursuit of external ends seems to be inconsistent with doing something for its own sake, or for the goodness inherent in the action. More specifically, otherworldly ends might be seen as incompatible with moral constructivism since such ends are sufficient to determine what is right and wrong without any considerations of the practical point of view or the nature of human agency. Mulla Sadra's interpretation of *sa'adat* as the imaginal reflection of the active life of spiritual wayfaring allows for the elaboration of an otherworldly ethics that remains grounded in the conditions of human agency.

Of course, the compatibility of moral autonomy with the belief that moral judgments can be described in terms of divine commands, rewards and punishments has been defended in other ways by many writers, including F. W. J. Schelling,³⁶ R. M. Adams,³⁷ and J. E. Hare.³⁸ With Mulla Sadra, however, we find a particular way of squaring a very strong view of autonomy with a morality of obedience to God in hopes of divine reward, which becomes evident in his discussions of *sa'adat*.

First, true *sa'adat* is nearness to God. We could say that this is the intellectual level of *sa'adat*. At the imaginal level, there are the divine rewards and punishments, which are realities that transcend man's physical nature and the sensible world, but which are, nevertheless, products of one's eternal immaterial imaginative faculty. There is also corporeal happiness, which is the sole aim of beasts, and of human beings who are like beasts.

Second, in order to achieve *sa'adat*, divine aid is needed; but our own efforts are needed, as well. At a very fundamental level, we need to seek to realize our freedom, to find a way to free ourselves from ignorance, worldliness and deception. So, Mulla Sadra advises us to plummet the depths of our souls to discern whether we are afflicted with these maladies. When we find that our souls are diseased, we must open ourselves to the therapies of those who have successfully traversed the spiritual path. If we do not find any illness within ourselves, we should be cautious that we are not deceiving ourselves, perhaps by confusing superficial religious knowledge with spiritual health.

In this regard, Mulla Sadra says that it has been said that Jesus (‘a) said: I am not unable to cure those blind from birth or the leprous, but I am unable to cure compound ignorance [not to know and not to know that one does not know], because this is one of the illnesses of the soul. All the illnesses of the soul are such that when they are implanted they cause eternal loss, and it is impossible to uproot it.” In order to free ourselves of self-deception, we must recognize that the knowledge we require is not the sciences we have learned or anything else stored in our brains:

The light of reason is hidden by the least obstacle because it is so dim. The light of reason will then be extinguished by the arrogance in your brain.

The candle of their hearts is constantly put out by the wind of their brains. [39](#)

Third, God provides aid to people so that they may attain happiness. What distinguishes the human soul from the souls of the lower animals is that a human being’s spiritual soul is capable of receiving the grace of the holy spirit (*rūḥ-e qudsi*).[40](#) With this grace, which is described as the *light of tawhid* (divine unity) and a taste for the immaterial, one gets into the habit of keeping company with and conversing with God. This light that is granted by God is the meaning of true *faith (iman)*: “true faith is a light which shines from Lord of the world upon the heart of His servant.”[41](#) Then God opens the way so that one becomes intimate with the special friends (*awliya*) of God. Becoming intimate in our lives with the *awliya* is not a matter of taking orders from saintly figures. It is a kind of self-development training in which one brings oneself imaginatively into conversation with these figures in hope that by the grace of God one may develop virtue.

This requires what Korsgaard calls a *reflective endorsement* of what we find in the actions and attitudes of those who serve as our exemplars,[42](#) which is a major theme in the recent work of Linda Zagzebski, who argues that autonomy requires *conscientious self-reflection*.[43](#) On the other hand, wretchedness comes about through intimacy with the hard-hearted. Mulla Sadra explains that for the ‘*arif* (the mystic) every stone or piece of iron shines with the glorification and sanctity of God, while for the wretched, their own hearts have become stones or pieces of iron because of their conceit and ingratitude, until they are unable to recognize what is self-evident and are unable to govern themselves.[44](#)

E. Purification of the Heart

In the Kantian constructivism advocated by Rawls, a procedure is given in order to make clear the dictates of practical reason. Because of this, ensuing discussions of constructivism often identified it with a procedural account of morality, although Rawls only formulated the procedure (deliberation in an *original position* understood to be *behind a veil of ignorance*) as an aid to examining the demands of practical reason to determine principles of justice. The manner in which Mulla Sadra discusses the purification of the heart can also be seen as the outline of a procedure used to determine the requirements of reason for the proper recognition of moral norms and other spiritual truths.

God does not merely tell his servants what to do in an arbitrary fashion; He guides them to the light

whereby they can see for themselves. So, Mulla Sadra opens his chapter on the purification of the heart with the following *ayah*:

“Allah is the wali [Master, guide, protector] of those who have faith. He brings them out of darkness into light.”(2:257)

The heart by nature is like a mirror that is able to reflect this divine light. In some people, this nature is enhanced through good works and proper beliefs, while in others the potential remains undeveloped, and in yet others it is destroyed by evil deeds and ignoble beliefs.

Five kinds of obstacles can prevent a mirror from reflecting properly: (1) essential defects, such as a stone in the glass prior to construction, (2) taint, dirt and filth which exist in it after construction, (3) the mirror may be pointed in the wrong direction, (4) there may be something between the mirror and what it is to reflect, (5) the object to be reflected may not be in a position facing the mirror. The same is true of the mirror of the heart, which is capable of manifesting the reality of God and the reality of all things as they are, as the Prophet, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his progeny, has requested of God, for himself and those especially close to him, "O Lord! Show us the things as they are!" And the heart is only without knowledge because of one of these five obstacles. [45](#)

For the essential defects, God sends messengers who use various techniques that enable the emergence of the rational soul (*nafs-e natiqeh*) (which is the substance of the heart) from the defects that conceal it.

*God's sending of His messengers among His servants
is like the churning of butter in a vat,
So by various methods and techniques,
I may discover what I was there hidden, I.* [46](#)

The salvation given through the prophets is not by means of some knowledge of an external spiritual reality or moral facts and properties, but by instruction how to find out who we are. The method or procedure here is that of the discipline of the spiritual path toward self- understanding. What we are presented with is not a decision procedure that yields specific principles for the distribution of goods and services, but a process of formation leading to the ability to make wise judgments.

The second obstacle is darkness and rust that can reach to such an extent that it destroys the potential for self-knowledge.

The third obstacle is the misdirection of the mirror of one's heart, as when one's resolution is focused exclusively on the external aspects of worship and one does not attend to the interior. Of course, the situation is much worse if one's aims are entirely worldly and one neglects the cultivation of one's spirit.

The fourth type of obstacle is something that gets in the way of the mirror and what it is supposed to

reflect. The example Mulla Sadra gives is fanaticism. The fanatic is one who clings fast to some truth and makes that clinging an obstacle to reaching any further or more profound truth. This kind of obstacle is found among those whose religion is merely a matter of imitation, which is compared to shackles and chains that bind the heart preventing it from achieving freedom.⁴⁷

The fifth obstacle is compared to a mirror that is not in the proper position to face the object it would reflect. This is the situation of one who does not know where to turn; how to make one's way toward the successive levels of the path toward God. To address this problem, Mulla Sadra complicates the analogy, and says that it is as if one needs to survey the area behind him, for which purpose multiple mirrors are needed. Through this process of complex reflection, one arrives at what is compared to a minor premise; and by use of the minor premise, eventually a major premise is comprehended, and from these a conclusion is drawn. In the course of this complex reflection, the soul is finally united and the object of its intellection reflected in various ways is also united.

But this is not the end, for one may continue to consider a conclusion whose form is the opposite of that of the form of the conclusion one has reached. Here the path proceeds dialectically, through the use of a further complex set of mirrors. It is only as a result of this dialectical reflection that one is finally able to dispense with reflection (mirrors) and enter into direct concourse with the heavenly domain. All of this has been the course of travelling toward Allah. After this comes the journeying in Allah, from Allah, and by Allah, the four of which allude to the journeys of his book, the *Asfar* and the wisdom whose acquisition is described there. He explains what it means to travel *by* Allah with an *ayah* of the Qur'an and a poetic couplet about Jesus ('a).

"Among those We have created are an ummah [community, nation] which guides by the Truth (bil-Haqq)." (7:181)

*Jesus is I and my miracle is this breath;
Every heart that hears this breath is brought to life.*⁴⁸

The spiritual path, according to Mulla Sadra (and in this he endorses a view common among the 'urafa), culminates in a kind of divine incarnation; although he understands this in a manner consistent with Islamic doctrine, it is one of the points that has given rise to charges of heresy against the 'urafa on the part of the superficial Islamic scholars he condemns repeatedly in the course of his *Three Roots*.

The reference to Jesus ('a), and more specifically to his breath, is a trope that Sadra borrows from the Sufi poets, such as Attar, Mawlavi Jalal al-Din Rumi, and Hafez, among others, who make reference to the breath of Jesus as a breath that gives life.⁴⁹ In the Qur'an, Jesus is to have said:

"I will create for you out of clay the form of a bird; then I will breathe into it, and it will become a bird by Allah's leave. And I heal the blind and the leper and I revive the dead by Allah's leave."
(3:49)

So, the breath of Jesus was taken to indicate the divine breath of one who had become a *perfected human being* (*insan-e kamil*). The life-giving powers of such a divine breath are what enable one to be reborn with a second nature, that is, with a virtuous nature, after the voluntary death of one's sinful nature.⁵⁰

3. Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Constructivism

3. Mulla Sadra's Transcendent⁵¹ Constructivism

The obedience required by Islam together with its emphasis on otherworldly rewards and punishments might lead one to think that an Islamic ethics would surely be classified by Kant as heteronomous. The sort of Islamic ethics we find in the writings of Mulla Sadra, however places a strong emphasis on what we would call moral autonomy, even if the concept was not part of the moral vocabulary of the intellectual circles in Safavid Persia. Mulla Sadra did have a term that corresponds in important respects to Kantian heteronomy: *taqlid* (imitation); and he condemns mere imitation in religion repeatedly (e.g. as giving rise to "stupid prejudices"⁵²), although he allows for certain conditions in which it may be appropriate, in cases of those who lack the ability to make independent use of their own reason⁵³ and in cases in which imitation can serve as an educational aid.⁵⁴ Success in the religious life, however, requires one to attain autonomy.

According to Aristotle, good and evil are accompanied by certain sorts of pleasure and pain, which motivate animals and humans.⁵⁵ This poses a problem for Korsgaard's attempts to reconcile Aristotle's ethics with a constructivism according to which agents are motivated to act in certain ways because of what they voluntarily count as reasons for acting in one way or another. Pleasure and pain, however, do not seem to be the sorts of things that one can whose psychological motivational force is entirely a matter of volition.

Korsgaard's response is that how we respond to foreseen pleasures and pains is indeed a matter of volition and often involves conscious deliberation in view of the fact that pleasures and pains may be taken as signs for that which agents value positively and negatively, respectively. Pleasures and pains, according to Korsgaard, are not just feelings; they are also indications of reasons: "we do not in general take our pains and pleasures to be meaningless. We take them, as Aristotle thought, to be indications of what is good or bad, and what we have reason to do."⁵⁶ Korsgaard ends her discussion of Aristotle and Kant in this essay as follows:

Although there is a difference in the way these two philosophers propose to solve the problem of receptivity, the problem of receptivity arises for both of them because of the deep similarity in their general conception of what ethics is all about. Human action is not like anything else: as human beings we choose our actions, and, because of that, it is possible for us to transcend mere reactivity in our relationship to the world. The most general and substantive question of ethics is what we should do with this power, which actions we should choose. The more specific question of virtue, the question to which

Aristotle gave most of his attention, is the question how the receptive part of our nature needs to be configured if this kind of transcendent choice and action is to be possible. It is the question, that is, of what we have to be like, in order to choose autonomously, and for the sake of the noble.[57](#)

Of course, Aristotle's views of the relationship between goods and pleasures is no crass hedonism, and his discussions of temperance involve questions of the evaluation of various kinds of pleasures and pains. This is what Korsgaard takes as an opening for reconciling Aristotle and Kant. Kant misunderstood Aristotle because he took *eudaimonia* to be a life of pleasure and pleasure to be nothing more than a kind of feeling, while Aristotle took *eudaimonia* to be an active life of virtue and pleasure to be a sign of something that we value. The distinction between different levels of pleasure and pain was also incorporated into the Islamic peripatetic tradition and is a topic to which the Sufis often turn. Nevertheless, if we deliberate about what actions to perform on the basis of their resultant pleasures and pains in the next world, there would seem to be little room left for autonomy.

Mulla Sadra's ethical/spiritual project is in large part designed in such a manner as to answer exactly this kind of objection. Mulla Sadra complains that the idea that the rewards of the next world will be just like the rewards given by kings here is childish and is a result of a failure to understand the nature of the self.[58](#) It is a failure to achieve an intellectual appreciation of religious doctrine. The afterlife and its rewards and punishments are not factors for a heteronomous undermining of agency; rather, they are imaginal reflections of the reality we make of ourselves as expressed in the deeds we perform and the traits we acquire in this world.

The rewards and punishments are not mere supernatural facts to be taken in passively by learning doctrine; they are products of the active imagination. Sadra's constructivism may be considered spiritual no less than moral; although it retains its moral character because the worthiness of one's actions is not derived from their outward form or even by their conformity to the divine law, but from the intentions that are, in part, constitutive of human actions, and are formed in the light of divine grace.[59](#) As a philosopher who draws upon the peripatetic tradition, though critically, Sadra is primarily focused not on particular actions but on virtue and vice; and the spiritual path he describes is one of character formation.

According to Mulla Sadra, we choose our actions and the direction our lives should take; and, as with Aristotle, it is the range of volition that defines the scope of practical reason. Practical reason is not merely a tool of deliberation about particular actions; it also involves the knowledge of how to navigate through life in such a manner as to free oneself from vice, which is the main theme of the *Three Roots*, and to achieve virtue and *ma'rifat* (gnosis). The direction we give to our lives is more important than particular actions. It is because we can direct ourselves through life that we are able to set out on the spiritual path, and in so doing, to transcend mere receptivity in our relationship to the world. It is the emphasis on the actively creative aspects of the soul in finding spiritual direction and advancing on the path toward God that are the keys to what we may describe as Mulla Sadra's *transcendent moral constructivism*.

It is *transcendent* because it requires one to overcome the limitations of the sensible world and the passivity of the embodied self. It is constructivist on a metaphysical level because the realities of rewards and punishments are formed by the active imagination as a result of what we make of ourselves through our actions. It is epistemologically constructivist because it is through reflection on the conditions needed for freedom and perfected human agency that one is able to discern the steps needed to be taken through one's course in life. It is semantically constructivist because Sadra holds that the true meanings of religious doctrines, such as the teachings about our origin and ultimate return in the general resurrection, can only be fully understood in view of the constructive metaphysical and epistemological dimensions of the journey of the soul toward God.

The journey of the soul toward God, however, is not aimed directly at the divine throne; it occurs through many intermediate stages whose aims are the conditions of ever more complete freedom and more perfect human agency. While Sadra refers explicitly to freedom on several occasions, more often this theme is discussed in terms of purification. Although the analogy of the soul to a mirror is taken by Sadra from the Sufis, for Sadra the mirror of the soul is not a passive instrument for the reflection of the divine light, for it is through the activity of the soul that it achieves unity with what it reflects.

The norms that govern the practical point of view, according to Sadra, are not fixed, but evolve with the development of the soul. Furthermore, it is through regard to these norms that the soul is able to evolve from a lower to a higher level. Sadra describes this development as *substantial motion* (*harakat al-jawhariyah*), which begins at a stage in which the soul is merely the corporeal form of the living body, as in Aristotle, but continues through the immaterial stages of the substantial intellect; so that the soul is said to be "corporeal in origin, but spiritual in its persistence."⁶⁰ Since it is through the norms governing each of its levels that the soul is able to reconstitute itself at a higher level through substantial motion, Sadra's position can also be described as a *transcendent constitutivism*, according to which any given stage of the soul, including its agency, is constituted by the norms governing the practical/spiritual point of view that Sadra describes as the spiritual journey.

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1. For an overview, see (Bagnoli, 2011) (Bagnoli, 2011; Bagnoli, 2011); (Street, What Is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics? 2010); and the Introduction to (Lenman & Shemmer, 2012).

2. Rawls started to use the term “Kantian constructivism” in his lectures on moral philosophy in the 1970's, and it was the focus of his 1980 Dewey Lectures at Columbia University. (Rawls, Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy, 2000), xii–xiv; (Rawls, Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory, 1980).

3. (Korsgaard C. M., 1996), ch. 8; (Korsgaard C. , The Constitution of Agency, 2008), part 2; (LeBar, 2008).

4. (Jarrett, 2014); (Zuk, 2015).

5. (Street, Coming to Terms with Contingency: Humean Constructivism about Practical Reason, 2012).

6. (Laitinen, forthcoming), available at:

https://www.academia.edu/8263284/Hegelian_constructivism_in_ethical_theory [11].

7. (Katsafanas, 2013).

8. In addition to the cited works of Rawls and Korsgaard, we should also mention (O'Neill, 1989).

9. (Korsgaard & et al, Sources of Normativity, 1996); (Korsgaard C. M., 1996).

10. (Korsgaard C. , The Constitution of Agency, 2008), 174–206; (Korsgaard & et al, Sources of Normativity, 1996), 147–156.

11. Wood rejects the attribution of moral constructivism to Kant because he interprets it in this way. See (Wood, Kantian Ethics, 2008), 107.

12. (Street, Coming to Terms with Contingency: Humean Constructivism about Practical Reason, 2012).

13. (Enoch, 2011), 322, correctly rejects the idea that constructivism is an epistemological theory if it is taken to mean this: “We can all agree – constructivists and non-constructivists alike – that we employ epistemic procedures in trying to find out what, say, the moral facts are, and that these procedures (perhaps partly) determine what we are justified in believing. This commonplace does not entail constructivism.”

14. A form of rational intuitionism was defended by Richard Price (1723–1791) in (Price, 1769). Robert Audi has provided an influential defense of moral intuitionism over the course of his career, and in his recent book (Audi, 2013).

15. See the contributions of Lenman and Tiberius in (Lenman & Shemmer, 2012).

16. See Rizvi, Sajjad, "Mulla Sadra", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/mulla-sadra/> [12].

17. The term ‘arif (pl. ‘urafa) derives from ‘arafa, to know in the sense of being familiar with, and by the time of Mulla Sadra, it was used for famous Sufis, like Attar and Qawnavi, as well as those who followed an Islamic spiritual path seeking knowledge (ma‘rifat, also derived from ‘arafa) of God or union with God or annihilation in God. From the same root, we also have ‘irfan, which is the study of the path, and is sometimes divided into theoretical and practical pursuits. Although ‘irfan and ‘arif have been translated by some as gnosis and gnostic, this is misleading if one associates the terms with Greek and early Christian forms of Gnosticism. Another translation is mysticism and mystic; but this is misleading because of associations with secrets that are hidden from the intellect and with the specifically Christian figures known as mystics and their doctrines, which is by no means to deny important similarities that can be found between the views of some Christian mystics and Muslim ‘urafa. For more on ‘irfan in the Shi‘i tradition, see (Legenhausen, The ‘Irfan of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali, 2014).

18. (Shirazi S. a.–d., 1376/1997). References to this work will be by paragraph, as used in this edition, “n/m”, where n is the

chapter number and m is the number of the paragraph in the chapter. The work is in Persian. All translations are my own. In what follows, I will refer to the book as *Three Roots*. There is also an earlier edition of the Persian text that was edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and published in Tehran in 1961. An English translation by Colin Turner is scheduled to be published by Routledge later this year (2016).

[19.](#) (MacIntyre, 2007), 117.

[20.](#) For a discussion of the relation between morality and divine commands in Kant, see (Kain, 2005). An especially important defense of Kant's theology is to be found in the works of Stephen Palmquist. See (Palmquist S. , 2016); (Palmquist S. R., 2000). In (Stern, 2012), Part I, Stern between moral realism and moral constructivism. Stern and (Wood, Kantian Ethics, 2008), 283, both deny that Kant was a moral constructivist, but they interpret moral constructivism in a restrictive manner that requires the content of morality to result from acts of the will. I suggest a broader view of constructivism that rejects this implausible requirement in favor of the idea that morality is grounded in the practical standpoint and the nature of human agency, as outlined in section I.

[21.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 7/2.

[22.](#) The term, imaginal world, is from *mundus imaginalis* introduced by Henry Corbin in his discussions of Sohrawardi (Corbin, 1977), 76–77. Sohrawardi's idea of the imaginal world was considerably revised by Mulla Sadra. For more discussion of this see (Legenhausen, Mulla Sadra's View of God's Relations to the Sensible and Imaginal Worlds: Imagination and the Variable Intensity of Being, 2015).

[23.](#) "Know thyself" at Charmides (164D), Protagoras (343B), Phaedrus (229E), Philebus (48C), Laws (II.923A), Alcibiades I (124A, 129A, 132C).

[24.](#) For a discussion of themes of care of the self in the Qur'an, see (Neuwirth, 2014), xxii, 72, 262.

[25.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-D., 2003), xxi–xxiii; 91 n. 16.

[26.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 1/1.

[27.](#) For a discussion of the forms of the practice and a quotation from a manual, see (Ernst, 1997), 92–98. For an insightful discussion of the remembrance of God, see (Chittick, 2008), 63–73.

[28.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 1/14.

[29.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 1/24.

[30.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 8/5; there are similar but more detailed remarks to this effect at 5/1; also see: 5/9; 8/5; 11/3.

[31.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 4/6.

[32.](#) See (Shirazi, 2008); I have briefly summarized Sadra's doctrine of the soul in (Legenhausen, A Muslim's Spirit, 2010); and I have discussed his philosophical psychology of the imagination in (Legenhausen, Mulla Sadra's View of God's Relations to the Sensible and Imaginal Worlds: Imagination and the Variable Intensity of Being, 2015).

[33.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 3/5.

[34.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 14/2.

[35.](#) For an examination of the issue see (Wood, Kant versus Eudaimonism, 2000).

[36.](#) (Fytche, 2012), 102; (Wood, Kantian Ethics, 2008), 107.

[37.](#) (Adams, 1999), 270–276. Adams distinguishes senses of autonomy that he considers to be compatible and incompatible with the kind of divine command theory of moral obligation he defends.

[38.](#) (Hare, 2007), 266–269.

[39.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 7/6.

[40.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 8/1.

[41.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 10/1.

[42.](#) (Korsgaard & et al, Sources of Normativity, 1996), 165.

[43.](#) (Zagzebski, 2012), Ch. 11, 229–254, for autonomy and conscientious self-reflection; an exemplarist moral theory is the topic of Zagzebski's recent Gifford Lectures: <http://www.giffordlectures.org/lectures/exemplarist-virtue-theory> [13].

[44.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 10/7–10/8.

[45.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 11/4.

[46.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 11/5.

- [47.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 11/9.
- [48.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 11/17.
- [49.](#) (Javandel, forthcoming).
- [50.](#) Cf. (Shirazi S. a.-D., 2003), 84, §107; 85, §111.
- [51.](#) The term “transcendent” is used here to translate “muta‘aliyah”, which is the adjective Sadra uses to describe his own transcendent philosophy (or transcendent wisdom): *ʿikmat al-muta‘aliyah*. Some translators use transcendental. It is not necessary to remind the reader that there is no point to the Kantian distinction in Mulla Sadra’s thought.
- [52.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 3/2.
- [53.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 1/14.
- [54.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 6/8.
- [55.](#) (Aristotle, 2014), 1152b–1154b.
- [56.](#) (Korsgaard C. , The Constitution of Agency, 2008), 205.
- [57.](#) (Korsgaard C. , The Constitution of Agency, 2008), 205–206.
- [58.](#) (Shirazi S. a.-d., 1376/1997), 13/7.
- [59.](#) For more on this see (Legenhausen, Intention, Faith, and Virtue in Shi’i Moral Philosophy, 2016).
- [60.](#) The slogan from Mulla Sadra is explained in (Legenhausen, A Muslim's Spirit, 2010).

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