



## The Perfect Human being in Mulla Sadra's Thought

Fatemeh Ahmadi Kazazi<sup>1</sup>

Isa Mousazadeh<sup>2</sup>

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### Abstract

The concept of human perfection is a universal concern that has occupied thinkers from various schools of thought, including Mulla Sadra. This study employs a descriptive-analytical and library-based methodology to examine Mulla Sadra's perspective on the perfect human being. The analysis reveals that humans are inherently driven towards perfection, and Mulla Sadra's philosophy emphasizes instructing how individuals can progress toward this ultimate state. From Mulla Sadra's perspective, human being is the pinnacle of existence, possessing inherent dignity. However, to realize this, humans must embark on a path of perfection. This perfection lies in the development of their rational faculty, which sets them apart from other beings. Human intellect has two aspects: theoretical and practical. The complete development of both these facets is essential for human perfection.

### Keywords

Human, perfection, theoretical reason, practical reason, perfect human, Mulla Sadra.

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1. Master in Philosophy, University of Qom, Qom, Iran (Corresponding Author).

Email: fatemeh1984ahmadi@gmail.com

2. Official Researcher, Research Institute of Islamic Culture and Sciences, Qom, Iran.

Email: mousazadeh@isca.ac.ir

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## Introduction

The question of The Perfect Human being is a pivotal philosophical, religious, and ethical concern. It delves into the ultimate purpose and goal of human existence and the means to achieve it. Throughout the history of human thought, this issue has captivated philosophers, thinkers, and theologians, giving rise to diverse interpretations and expressions across various cultures. Perfection, in a philosophical context, means reaching a state of completeness and flawlessness. It's an ideal state that humans strive for. This concept varies greatly depending on culture, religion, and philosophical viewpoints, but it generally has three main aspects:

**Spiritual Perfection:** Many religious schools of thought believe that human perfection lies in drawing closer to God and embodying spiritual and ethical values.

**Intellectual Perfection:** In philosophy, intellectual perfection refers to the development of an individual's scientific and rational capabilities. From the perspective of great philosophers like Aristotle and Hegel, the growth of intellect and thought is considered a cornerstone of human perfection.

**Ethical Perfection:** Based on many religious and philosophical teachings, ethical perfection is linked to virtuous conduct and performing praiseworthy actions. This dimension of human perfection involves cultivating qualities like honesty, forgiveness, and fairness, which are attained by individuals striving to approach moral ideals.

The evolution of the human soul is a central issue in Mulla Sadra's philosophy. This is because he considers the ultimate goal of his philosophy to be teaching how humans can progress from imperfection to perfection, a point he frequently emphasizes in his writings. Since human perfection is a crucial topic, forming, in

essence, the very foundation of human being, understanding the factors that lead to it is of significant importance to people.

The author's aim in conducting this research, which employs a descriptive-analytical and library-based methodology, is to provide a definition of human perfection and also the factors leading to its attainment from Mulla Sadra's perspective.

## 1. Perfection

The term "perfection" in philosophy is used with two different meanings. From Mulla Sadra's perspective, perfection is that by which a thing becomes an actual existent, and it is of two kinds: 1) First perfection; 2) Second perfection. "First perfection" is that which constitutes the entirety of a thing.

He (Mulla Sadra) believes that the perfection of every existent is in its actuality, and the manner of existence of every existent is in the perfection by which a thing becomes that thing. The form and natural limit of every thing is the perfection of that thing. He says: "The vegetative soul, which is the form of a plant, is the first perfection of the plant. And the animal soul, which is the form of an animal, is the first perfection of the animal. In reality, what relates to the fundamental existence of things are their first perfections, while other matters that come in a subsequent stage are their secondary perfections. "The final stage of human perfection and the progress of the soul is reaching the rank of the acquired intellect (aql al-mustafad), which is the stage of perfecting its theoretical and practical faculties" (Sajjadi, 1386, pp. 422-423). From his perspective, second perfection refers to the effects that emerge from a given type after the attainment of first perfection (Mosleh, 1352, Vol. 1, p. 9). According to Mulla Sadra's statements, first perfection refers to the specific form (or "essential form") of a kind, by the realization of which a thing falls under a

particular species. Without this specific form, the existence of that particular species would be negated. More precisely, a thing's first perfection is its specific form, without which the thing would be non-existent and possess no perfection whatsoever. However, the perfections acquired by a type after its constitution, such as the influences it exerts on other things (actions) and the influences it receives from other things (affections), are all considered its second perfection. The constitution of its type-ness is not dependent on these. It's worth noting that first perfection is by no means acquisitive for any existent, whether that existent has free will or not. However, secondary perfections can be acquired.

Mulla Sadra considers perfection to be among the relative and additional matters (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1410 AH, Vol. 1, p. 1). This is because existents, at a certain level, possess an actuality that makes them complete in relation to an existent at a lower level lacking that actuality, yet they are incomplete in relation to an existent at a higher level that possesses that actuality. Therefore, what constitutes the higher rank is its first perfection, and that same thing is the second perfection for the lower ranks. Thus, it's possible for the second perfection of one existent to be the first perfection for another. For example, the soul is the first perfection for plants, animals, and humans, while for the body, in terms of its corporeality, it is a second perfection. Mulla Sadra states: "a thing being the first perfection for one thing does not contradict it being the second perfection for another" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1410 AH, Vol. 8, pp. 14-15). On the other hand, the secondary perfections of every existent are proportionate to its nature and first perfection. Therefore, when we compare a particular quality across various things, we find that the same quality is a perfection for one existent but a cause of deficiency in the existential rank for another. Similarly, some existents do not possess the capacity to

acquire certain perfections. Mulla Sadra states: "Existents differ and excel in their existences and their perfections, for often an existence and an existential perfection for one thing is a deficiency and a flaw for another" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1383 AH, Vol. 4, p. 252). The essence of the matter is that "every existent possesses a specific essential limit and boundary, exceeding which it transforms into another kind that is essentially distinct from it" (Misbah Yazdi & Sobhani, 1380, p. 35). Therefore, the secondary perfections of every existent are proportionate to its nature and its first perfection. From the general explanations given about first and second perfection, the first and second perfection of humans also become clear. Based on the famous definition of humans as "rational animals," the first perfection of a human is the rational soul, which constitutes human nature and upon which a human's human being depends. The secondary perfections of a human are all matters that accrue to them after the realization of their human being. Mulla Sadra states: "First perfection [...] is like the form for a sword and the rational soul for a human, and second perfection [...] is like sharpness for a sword and knowledge and power for a human" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, undated, p. 178).

Based on these discussions, we conclude that perfection in this research refers to the secondary perfection of a human being. When a human comes into existence, they possess inherent potentialities within their essence. If favorable conditions and circumstances are met, these potentialities find the opportunity to manifest and actualize, allowing the individual to attain things they did not possess before.

## 2. Human Perfection

Mulla Sadra, like earlier philosophers, defines humans as "rational animals." If he considers "rationality", which is our logical differentia,

to mean the perception of universals, this points to a fundamental truth. That truth is the human's true differentia: their rational soul (*nafs-i nāṭiqā*). The ability to perceive universals is unique to humans. This is because knowledge and perception are characteristics of abstract beings, and a material being lacks any knowledge, even self-knowledge. This is because knowledge is the presence of an abstract entity to an abstract being, and presence has no meaning in material beings. However, in the realm of creation, a human is not solely a rational soul; rather, they are a composite of soul and body. Since Mulla Sadra considers the relationship between the soul and body to be one of union (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1362, p. 293), Their composition isn't like the combination of two separate parts. In other words, although the soul and body differ in their rank, they are essentially a single reality that, despite its unity and simplicity, possesses different degrees. In reality, a human is a single personality and identity that progresses in its very essence, and its personal unity is preserved at all levels, merely becoming more complete at each stage (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1410 AH, Vol. 9, pp. 86-87). It's worth noting that Mulla Sadra believes humans possess various stations and degrees, each corresponding to the different realms that exist in the universal order.

According to him, there are three fundamental realms of existence: 1) The realm of sensibles and material things, which are transient and perishable. 2) The realm of imaginal forms, which is the world of archetypes. 3) The realm of intellectual forms and separate intellects. Human being is also a reality that is potentially comprehensive of these three realms. Just as there is a vertical existential hierarchy among these three realms—meaning some realms are at a higher level and some at a lower level—the same applies to the levels of human existence. In this hierarchical structure, the lowest existential level is that of sensation, which pertains to the realm of sensibles. As long as a



human remains at this level, they do not ascend beyond the degree of sensation and perceive only sensible things. Following this is the level of imagination, which possesses a stronger existence compared to the sense level. While a human is at this stage, they perceive only imaginary forms and, like other animals, lack intellectual perception. After traversing these stages, one then reaches the intellectual level, which is existentially positioned at the highest point in this vertical hierarchy and represents the most complete existential stage. At this level, a human perceives all that cannot be contained by sensation and imagination, which are the intellectual and universal forms existing in the realm of intellect. By perceiving these forms and acquiring perfections in accordance with substantial motion (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1410 AH, Vol. 2, p. 230), a human can reach a state of union with the active intellect, effectively becoming the active intellect itself, and thereby attain the highest degree of human being (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1388 AH, pp. 405-406). Therefore, these realms are all stages that a human must traverse to ascend from the lowest depths to the pinnacle of perfection. Based on Transcendent Philosophy (Hikmat-i Muta'aliyyah), God created humans from a world similar to the divine realm, "bringing forth a comprehensive mode of existence that gathers within it all that exists in other existential realms. Indeed, He created an essence described by all that His unique Essence is described and defined by, from attributes of beauty and majesty, and effects and actions, and realms, all the way to paradise and hell, and so on" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1362 AH, pp. 89-90). Therefore, based on the principles of Transcendent Philosophy, the reality of a human being encompasses all categories of existents. Indeed, it represents a vast breadth of being and a wide spectrum of existential levels. For this reason, such a human is the essence of existence and can attain the station of Divine Vicegerent. From the perspective that everything found in the universe is gathered

within him, human being is that very universe. And from the perspective that his form is small yet all the forces of the universe are collected within him, he is like a summary of a book or a short piece of writing (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1377, p. 52). Therefore, Mulla Sadra considers human being to be a microcosm (*ālam-i ṣaghīr*), in whom all beings actualized in the macrocosm (*ālam-i kabīr*) exist in an summarized form.

Some great figures in philosophy and mysticism, inspired by Quranic themes, consider the human's evolutionary path to be their very soul (*nafs*). In other words, a human's journey toward their ultimate goal is their soul (Va'ezī, 1377, p. 151). God states in the Quran: «يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ إِذَا أَهْتَدَيْتُمْ؛ "you who have believed, take care of yourselves. If you are guided, he who errs will not harm you" (Al-Ma'idah, 105). Allameh Tabataba'i, in his interpretation of this verse, states that if a person intends to reach their ultimate perfection, they should not overstep the bounds of their own soul. In traversing the path of perfection and achieving human ends, a person performs duties and actions; however, the outcome they gain on this path does not extend beyond the realm of their being and their soul. Whatever we do, think, or intend, we have not gone outside of our own self (Tabataba'i, 1394 AH, Vol. 6, pp. 177-180). Therefore, human perfection means the growth and actualization of one's own soul.

All matters that, in some way, lead to the perfection of the human soul are categorized into two aspects: theoretical and practical. This is because the soul possesses both theoretical and practical dimensions: one for truth and falsehood in universals, and the other for good and evil in particulars. A human reaches their perfection when both of these dimensions are fully realized. Therefore, we must consider human perfection to lie in their intellectual development. This is because the intellectual dimension is what distinguishes



humans from other animals. Consequently, the unique perfection of a human is the perfection that they achieve through their intellectual capacity.

Building on our previous discussion about first and second perfection and the multi-layered nature of the human soul, we can now clarify the roles of theoretical intellect (al-‘aql al-naẓarī) and practical intellect (al-‘aql al-‘amalī). The human soul strives for perfection through these two distinct yet interconnected dimensions, each with its own function and stages of development.

## **2-1 The Two Faces of Intellect: Theoretical and Practical**

### **A) Theoretical Intellect**

Mulla Sadra believes that the theoretical intellect apprehends absolute universals. This includes universals related to contemplation and extra-mental realities, such as God and the divine essential attributes, as well as universals pertaining to human voluntary acts and actions, like the goodness of justice and the badness of injustice (Misbah Yazdi, 1381, p. 96). Therefore, in practical matters, it is the theoretical intellect's duty to grasp universals. However, the specific judgment that brings that universal understanding to the stage of action is the work of the practical intellect. It's important to note that the way universal understanding is achieved is when the soul, after reaching the stage of the acquired intellect, connects with the active intellect (which is the treasury of intelligibles) and receives these intelligibles. Therefore, to perceive universals, the soul turns towards the higher realm, specifically the world of separate intellects. It establishes a connection with this realm of separate entities, and through this connection, it can gain access to universal knowledge. In order for the theoretical intellect to fulfill its function, it initially requires the body and its organs, as well as the practical intellect. This is because, for the

preliminary stages of its work and to arrive at a universal concept, it needs the senses and the body. Furthermore, to draw conclusions from its universal judgments and to put them into action, it needs the particular judgment of the practical intellect. However, once the theoretical intellect reaches its appropriate perfection, even in this world, it no longer needs these stages. Through its own essence, it can then perform its specific actions and operations (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1388 AH, p. 292).

### B) Practical Intellect

The practical intellect is another facet of the rational faculty, specifically dedicated to contemplating particular matters—that is, what ought to be done or ought to be avoided. This faculty deals with "oughts" and "ought-nots," enabling humans to discern the benefit and harm, beauty and ugliness, and good and evil of actions (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1384 AH, p. 516). Mulla Sadra views the role of the **practical intellect** as serving the **theoretical intellect**. This is likely because a universal judgment can only manifest as an action when combined with a particular judgment issued by the practical intellect (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1388 AH, p. 292). For instance, the universal judgment about the inherent goodness of justice (from the theoretical intellect) cannot by itself compel a person to be just in practice. It's only when the particular benefits and beauties of justice, recognized by the practical intellect, are added that a person can be motivated to act justly. In essence, the practical intellect chooses what is good, or what it perceives to be good, by contemplating actions. This choice of good then creates the necessary conditions for that action to be performed. Specifically, after grasping a particular judgment, the practical intellect employs the power of yearning (*quwwat-i shawqiyya*) to generate a desire within the human, which in turn leads to the

emergence of will. This will then actualizes that particular judgment externally. Thus, it becomes clear that by possessing the practical intellect, humans turn towards the lower realm of possibility below them. The practical intellect is responsible for leading and directing other human faculties (such as anger/aggression and desire/appetite) along the path to human happiness, though always under the supervision of the theoretical intellect.

We can now conclude that Mulla Sadra categorizes the intellect into theoretical and practical because this faculty, on the one hand, receives knowledge from its origin and from the intellects, which is referred to as the passive aspect of the rational faculty. On the other hand, it influences and acts upon the body, which is called its active (or practical) aspect. In essence, Mulla Sadra considers the division of the intellect into theoretical and practical to be based on the soul's engagement with universal and particular matters (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1380 AH, p. 368). Ultimately, Mulla Sadra does not accept a separation of the theoretical and practical faculties, viewing them as interconnected (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1410 AH, Vol. 3, p. 48).

## 2-2. Stages of Theoretical and Practical Intellect

As previously discussed, the theoretical intellect apprehends concepts and judgments, discerning truth from falsehood in what it intellected and perceived. This faculty has four stages, and these stages should be understood in accordance with substantial motion and the gradual levels of existence (tashkīkī). This is because passing through each stage signifies the intensification and subsequent perfection of human existence, and a distancing from animalistic souls. In essence, the stages of the theoretical intellect are vertical levels, meaning each subsequent stage is a perfected form of the preceding one. In essence, these stages are the levels of evolution of

the rational soul and the degrees of its existential progress. In the theoretical dimension, the human soul, in its ascending journey, traverses these scientific stages one after another, finally reaching its ultimate destination and peak—which is the final level of its scientific aspect, namely the acquired intellect (al-‘aql al-mustafād).

### **1) Material Intellect (al-‘aql al-hayūlānī)**

Every human being, at the beginning of their human nature, possesses the material intellect. This means they only have the potential and capacity to perceive intelligibles, but they haven't yet actually intellected anything; in other words, it is empty of all intelligibles. Mulla Sadra initially considered the material intellect to be on the level of accidents due to its existential weakness. However, he later regarded it as even weaker than accidents. This is because accidents are actual in their very essence, while the material intellect is purely potential (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1388 AH, p. 294).

### **2) Intellect in Possession (al-‘aql bi al-malaka)**

At this stage, the soul moves beyond a state of mere potentiality and begins to apprehend matters that are common to all individuals. These are given to humans by the Active Intellect, based on their sense and imaginative capacities. These matters do not require acquisition or proof and are known as "first principles" or "self-evident truths" (awwalīyyāt or badīhiyyāt). At this stage, by possessing these self-evident truths, the soul becomes ready to accept theoretical matters.

### **3) Actual Intellect (al-‘aql bi al-fi‘l)**

After the previous stage, the soul's journey toward perfection continues. At this level, it acquires theoretical intelligibles with the

help of the primary and self-evident intelligibles it already possesses. The soul reaches the stage of the actual intellect through two main avenues: Voluntary Actions and the Acquisition of Middle Terms: This involves using the self-evident intelligibles gained at the "Intellect in Possession" stage to construct syllogisms, particularly certain demonstrations and logical definitions. This process is within human will and choice. Effusion of Intellectual Light from the Higher Realm: This occurs through the emanation of intellectual light and radiance from the higher world. This effusion leads to conviction and assurance regarding those demonstrations and definitions, a process that is not within human will and choice.

Following this, the soul's journey of perfection continues. At this stage, it acquires theoretical intelligibles by utilizing the primary and self-evident intelligibles it already possesses. The soul reaches the degree of Actual Intellect through two main pathways: Voluntary Actions and the Acquisition of Middle Terms: This involves constructing syllogisms, especially certain demonstrations and logical definitions, using the self-evident intelligibles gained at the "Intellect in Possession" stage. This process is within human will and choice. Effusion of Intellectual Light from the Higher Realm: This occurs through the emanation of intellectual light and radiance from the higher world. This effusion results in conviction and assurance regarding those demonstrations and definitions, a process that is not within human will and choice. At this stage, the soul is termed the "Actual Intellect" because it can access theoretical intelligibles within itself whenever it wishes, without needing to acquire them again. It has gained this faculty as a result of repeated study, continuous reference to the overflowing Origin (Mabda' Fayyadh), and connection with the divine presence. According to Mulla Sadra, the actual human life, which is independent of any physical matter, belongs to this intellect.

#### 4) Acquired Intellect (al-‘aql al-mustafād)

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, the pinnacle of intellectual perfection is reached when, after acquiring primary intelligibles and theoretical knowledge, the intellect attains a stage where it can directly observe all intelligibles without any material hindrance. At this level, a human being perceives all things and sees all forms within the overflowing origin, which is the Active Intellect itself. Mulla Sadra states that whenever the soul is considered in such a way that it observes intelligibles and is connected to the overflowing origin, it is called the "Acquired Intellect." This is because the soul has received these intelligibles from the Active Intellect. Therefore, in general, the Acquired Intellect can be understood as the observer of all intelligibles within the very essence of the Active Intellect. Mulla Sadra considers reaching the stage of the Acquired Intellect to be the very purpose of human creation, stating: "The main purpose of the creation of this world is the creation of humankind, and the purpose of the creation of humankind is to attain the rank of the Acquired Intellect, which is equivalent to the knowledge of God and annihilation in the Truth" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1388 AH, p. 277).

Just like the theoretical intellect, the practical intellect also possesses degrees and stages as it moves from a lower state to a higher, more perfected one. The practical intellect also has four stages.

1) Tajalliya (Purification/Illumination of the Outward): This first stage involves the purification and refinement of the outward aspect of a person. It's achieved by diligently applying divine laws and adhering to prophetic ordinances, such as prayer (salat), fasting (sawm), khums, zakat, pilgrimage (hajj), and so on. In essence, at this level, the practical intellect, by perceiving particulars, initially dictates the need for outward refinement, observing divine commands, and following the example of the Imams and perfected individuals.



2) Takhliya (Purification/Emptying of the Inward): This stage follows Tajalliya and is achieved by purifying the heart from moral vices and blameworthy qualities. Therefore, a person who adheres to the Sharia, refines their soul from undesirable attributes and blameworthy characteristics, and thereby prepares and readies it to receive divine inspirations, has reached this level.

3) Tahliya (Adornment/Beautification of the Inward): For the human soul to reach perfection, simply emptying it of moral vices isn't enough. Rather, the heart must be adorned with praiseworthy and virtuous qualities. Therefore, the stage of Tahliya is achieved by beautifying the inner self with scientific forms and intellectual insights in the theoretical dimension, and similarly, by acquiring good habits and qualities pleasing to the Almighty Truth in the practical dimension.

4) Fana (Annihilation/Extinction): This is the ultimate stage of the practical intellect. It is achieved through the soul's annihilation of its own essence, its subsistence through divine subsistence, its turning towards the Lord, and the shortening of its gaze from everything except the contemplation of the Lord and His supreme grandeur (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1380 AH, pp. 383-384). At this stage, the soul perceives all things as emanating from the Truth (God) and returning to Him.

Mulla Sadra believes that traversing these stages depends on Divine guidance and grace. However, this divine favor and attention is not bestowed upon all humans; it is reserved only for those whom God wills and intends.

It's important to note that for the perfect human being (insān-i kāmīl), after their spiritual journey, traversing stages and stations, and journeying to the abode of proximity and union with the Divine Truth, there are still other journeys to undertake.

### 2-3. The Perfection of Theoretical and Practical Intellect

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, perfection is that by which a thing becomes actualized, meaning it moves from potentiality to actuality. This actualization can be either in terms of its essence and fundamental reality, which he calls first perfection, or in terms of its attribute, which he terms second perfection (Ashtiani, 1379 AH, p. 84). Based on the definition provided, we can understand that every existent possesses its own unique perfection based on its essence. For a being like a human, composed of numerous and diverse aspects—given the multiplicity of faculties and the presence of various principles of actualizations and affections that are the source of many effects—there are two types of perfections: the perfection of animalistic faculties and the perfection of human faculties. The perfection of animalistic faculties lies in fulfilling the specific demands of these powers. However, the perfection of faculties specific to humans, qua human, is examined from two dimensions: theoretical and practical. As previously discussed, Mulla Sadra posits that human intellect possesses both theoretical and practical dimensions. Therefore, he explicitly states that human perfection occurs in these two dimensions, envisioning two distinct types of perfection for an individual: perfection of the theoretical intellect and perfection of the practical intellect. In essence, a human being cannot attain their deserved perfection unless they achieve development in both theoretical and practical aspects. In summary, the specific perfection for a human is the comprehension of all knowables and the attainment of a state of complete abstraction and transcendence from material things (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1410 AH, Vol. 1, p. 22).

The perfection of human theoretical intellect lies in the engraving of all intelligible forms—the entire form of the universe—within it, so that the human soul becomes an intellectual world, just

like the external world itself. In this way, a mental replica of the external world is realized within it, and the soul becomes a complete mirror reflecting the real world (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1410 AH, Vol. 1, p. 20).

The perfection of human practical intellect involves purifying the soul from the shortcomings and ugliness of bodily matters, achieving transcendence from them, and adorning oneself with virtuous and praiseworthy qualities (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1383 AH, Vol. 1, p. 316).

Mulla Sadra considers the perfection of the theoretical intellect to be more significant than the perfection of the practical intellect. He underscores this by citing the Prophet's saying: "One hour of contemplation is better than seventy years of worship," thus attributing a special status to thought and reflection. He explains the superiority of thought over worship with two reasons: Thought leads human being to God, whereas worship only leads to reward. Thought is the work of the inner heart (qalb), while worship is the action of the outer limbs and organs. Since the heart is nobler than all other organs, its action is superior to the actions of the other limbs (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1384 AH, p. 309).

### 3. Characteristics of the Perfect human being

The human soul (nafs) is what sustains and preserves the individual, and God is the efficient cause of this soul. Therefore, self-knowledge (ma'rifat al-nafs) is the ladder to attaining all knowledge, and through it, one can reach the Essence, Attributes, and Acts of God. This is in accordance with a hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him) who said: «من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه» Our knowledge of our soul (nafs) will be identical to our knowledge of the origin of our soul. Therefore, self-knowledge (ma'rifat al-nafs) leads us to the knowledge of God. God created the soul in such a way that it is worthy of the station of Divine Vicegerency (khilāfat ilāhī). This is why God commanded the angels

to prostrate before Adam. It is through this very soul that the Divine Names and Attributes manifest in the created world. Thus, the soul is the divine dimension in the realm of creation, and by virtue of this nobility, it ultimately leads back to God. The embodiment of this divine dimension in the created world is the perfect human being (*insān-i kāmīl*).

For a long time, humans have been searching for the Perfect human being—an individual who embodies all human perfections and has reached the highest stage of human being. The perfect human being possesses every virtue, perfection, and praiseworthy human quality, excels in all attributes of perfection, and acts as a guide and pioneer for humankind.

The desire for perfection is inherent in human nature. This aversion to weakness and imperfection has driven human being to seek out a role model—an exemplar for their behavior, actions, and even their thoughts.

While the explicit term "Perfect human being (*Insān-i Kāmīl*)" isn't found in the Quran, its fundamental roots and underlying concepts are deeply embedded within its verses. Some key examples include: «نفخت فيه من روحي» ("When I have proportioned him and breathed into him My Spirit" (Al-Hijr, 29). «انا عرضنا الامانة على السموات و الارض و الجبال فابينيحملها فاشقق منها و حملها الانسان انه كان ظلوماً جهولاً؛ Here's the English translation of the Quranic verse you provided, along with the parenthetical explanations: "Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains (of the universe, and the high and low faculties of contingent beings). But they refused to bear it and feared it. And human being (the weak one) accepted it" (Al-Ahzab, 72). «انى جاعلٌ فى الارض خليفه؛ "Indeed, I will place a vicegerent on Earth" (Al-Baqarah, 30). These verses speak of the Divine archetype of human

being, whose existence spans from the Divine Throne ('Arsh) to the Earth (Farsh).

Allameh Motahhari, in his book "The Perfect human being" (Insān-i Kāmil), believes that the term "Perfect human being" did not exist in Islamic literature until the seventh century. He states that the first person to introduce the term "Perfect human being" was Muhyi al-Din ibn Arabi al-Andalusi al-Ta'i (Motahhari, 1381 AH, p. 20). Ibn Arabi introduced this term in his books, including *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* (The Meccan Illuminations) and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom). Subsequently, Aziz al-Din Nasafi wrote *Al-Insan al-Kamil* (The Perfect human being) in Persian, and Abd al-Karim al-Jili authored a work with the same title in Arabic (Kabiri, 1384 AH, p. 2).

However, some believe that even before Ibn Arabi, Hallaj discussed a human who had traversed all stages of perfection and become a complete manifestation of Divine attributes. Following him, Bayazid Bastami used the term "al-Kāmil al-Tamm" (The Perfect and Complete) for his exemplar human being (Lahiji, 1371 AH, p. 61).

From Ibn Arabi's perspective, the perfect human being is the complete image of the Divine Truth (God) and a comprehensive mirror reflecting all Divine attributes. They are the mediator between God and creation. Because of their existence, divine grace and assistance, which are the cause of the world's persistence, reach the universe. The primary intention of God in creating the world is the perfect human being themselves (Yousefpour, 1380 AH, p. 212). In essence, the perfect human being possesses a station that no other existent being in the realm of possibility can equal, and no other cosmic phenomenon can stand alongside them.

Based on Mulla Sadra's perspective, a preliminary definition of the Perfect human being is an individual who has actualized all

aspects of their being and attained the highest degrees of human perfection. This exalted status is achieved through the complete realization of the two facets of human intellect: the theoretical intellect and the practical intellect. This occurs such that, with the perfection of the theoretical intellect, a human reaches the stage of the acquired intellect (al-<sup>ʿ</sup>aql al-mustafād), becoming abstracted from matter and material things. They attain a degree where they can acquire knowledge and understanding of all the realities of the universe as they truly are, observe them, and connect with the Highest Concourse (al-malāʾ al-aʿlā). And by completing the practical intellect, they achieve the station of annihilation (fanāʾ), meaning they reach a stage where they find no personal existential awareness, annihilating themselves in the Truth (God), and perceiving only the Almighty Truth. This station is, of course, contingent upon the attainment of prior stages. The first of these stages is will. Here, their will is effaced within God's Will, leaving them no will or choice apart from God's choice. Following this, the stage of contentment (riḍā) is reached. In this state, they negate their own power, see all things within God's power, and are content with all matters. After this, the seeker surrenders all tasks and matters to the Truth (God) and reaches the station of trust in God (Tawakkul). Following this, they attain the station of submission (Taslīm), where they negate their own knowledge, seeing their knowledge obliterated within the knowledge of God. Now, if someone possesses such characteristics, they become the repository of knowledge and the complete and perfect manifestation of "And He taught Adam all the names" (Al-Baqarah, 31). They then achieve the sublime station of Divine Vicegerency (Khalīfat Allāh) (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1383 AH, p. 316). In essence, it can be concisely stated that the very vicegerency (khilāfat) and superiority of the perfect human being over the entire universe can be attributed



precisely to the actualization and manifestation of intellect within them.

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, the Perfect human being is the comprehensive embodiment of all existential levels. This is because, as previously stated, humans possess the stations and degrees of sense (*ḥiss*), imagination (*khayāl*), and intellect (*‘aql*). Each of these corresponds to one of the three realms of the universal order of existence. Furthermore, within human existence, there are faculties proportionate to these levels through which one perceives realities from the world. Since these perceptions are a mode of existence, they unite with human existence. Therefore, if a human reaches perfection in all of these levels... ..meaning they actualize from potentiality in all three of these stages, they will gain such existential breadth that, according to the principle of "The Simple Reality is all things" (*Basīt al-Ḥaqīqah kull al-ashyāʾ*), all beings of the higher and lower worlds, and all universal and particular intellects and souls, will be gathered and contained within them. Consequently, they become composed of all the perfections of the beings in the universe. For this very reason, his power encompasses all of creation and its beings, gaining mastery over them all. Such an individual is the Perfect Human. Consequently, no truth can be found in existence unless it is present in the perfect man in its highest, noblest, most complete, and perfect form (*Sadr al-Mutaʿallihin*, 1388 AH, p. 408). Furthermore, since each of the countless beings in the universe is a manifestation of a specific Divine Name (*Sadr al-Mutaʿallihin*, 1362 AH, p. 77), and given that these Names are present in the perfect human being in their most complete form, the perfect human being can be considered the comprehensive and perfect manifestation of all Divine Names and Attributes. In fact, Mulla Sadra identifies the perfect human being as the most just witness to Divine Lordship and Divine mysteries, and the strongest proof of the Lord's

attributes. He states, "He is the manifest proof of the Truth and in the image of the All-Merciful" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1419 AH, p. 90). This means that God created the Perfect human being in His own image so that they could act as His deputy in managing the affairs of the world. With these descriptions and characteristics, the perfect human being is therefore God's vicegerent in the world. However, from the perspective of some great thinkers, all humans have a share of this vicegerency in a specific sense. Each individual, to the extent of their existential capacity, is a manifestation of God's attributes, as indicated by the verse: «وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ؛ ...and He it is Who has made you successors (khalā'if) on the earth..." (Al-An'am, 165) points to this very idea. In essence, by stating this, they attribute greater responsibility to humans regarding the world. This perspective clearly illuminates the philosophy behind the presence of countless ordinary humans scattered across the earth, believing that every individual can embark on their own journey of perfection, actualizing their higher aspects to reach their deserved completeness. However, the supreme vicegerency (khilāfat 'uzmā) belongs solely to the Perfect Human. Therefore, by virtue of possessing such a station, the perfect human being has the freedom and agency to act upon and influence both the physical (mulk) and spiritual (malakūt) realms. They can do whatever they will. Thus, they can become an exemplar of God in attributes and actions, creating just as God creates. However, from Ibn Arabi's perspective, the only difference between the perfect human being and God is the Perfect Human's inherent neediness and ontological poverty. That is to say, God is the Necessary Existent by His very essence. ...but the perfect human being is the Necessary Existent by virtue of another. If God wills to remove poverty from them in all respects, they too become adorned with Divine attributes and names. In this case, if they say "Be!" it immediately "becomes" (Ibn Arabi, 1405

AH, pp. 58-59). Given these explanations, the only way to know the Almighty Lord is through knowing the Perfect Human. This is because, in Mulla Sadra's view, the perfect human being is the Divine Gateway and the firm, strong rope through which one can find a path to the higher and superior world (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1362 AH, p. 90).

Mulla Sadra, in his works, identifies several characteristics for the Perfect Human, the most important of which are as follows:

- 1) His Intimacy with God (Uns bi Allah) :This is the most crucial characteristic of the Perfect Human. He is deeply devoted to communing with God and keeping vigil at night. In his worship, his entire being is immersed in the Divine Essence, and no pleasure rivals the joy he finds in devotion. He remembers God at all times, whether hidden or in plain sight.
- 2) Commitment to both Obligatory Acts (Fara'id) and Supererogatory Acts (Nawafil): He is committed to what God loves to be done, considers it obligatory upon himself, and seeks God in all his movements and stillness. Through this, he attains union with the Truth (God), and because he seeks union with the Beloved and the encounter with the Truth, he has a great inner yearning for worship and the performance of obligatory acts.
- 3) Loving God and loving nothing but Him: For him, everything other than God is nothingness and void. If he loves the prophets, it is only because they are the messengers of his Beloved and his Cherished One..
- 4) Lover of Death:The perfect human being considers death to be the path to encountering the Divine Truth. Since they believe that observing and meeting their Beloved is only

possible by journeying to the eternal abode, a profound desire for death emerges within them, and they yearn for this encounter. Signs of this love for death in an individual include: Detachment from worldly affairs, Turning away from over-familiarity with people, Aversion to desires (shahawat), Keeping distance from those who pursue pleasure and worldly attachments, This is because associating with such individuals can make the world seem appealing, fostering a resentment towards death. The Perfect Human, however, is indifferent to all these obstacles, as they consider death the very means of union with their Beloved and Adored.

- 5) Lover of Knowledge and Scholars: The Perfect Human, among all branches of knowledge, pays particular attention to Divine knowledge (ma'rifat-i Rabb)—which is the ultimate goal of all sciences—as well as to celestial sciences and the science of self-knowledge, including the path from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high. If a person does not attain these sciences, which guide them toward the Truth, they cannot gain knowledge of God, and without this knowledge, love for God cannot be achieved.
- 6) Kind and Well-Behaved Towards Creation: The perfect human being is a friend to God's friends and an enemy to God's enemies. This is because when one loves someone, they love all of their deeds. Therefore, if one loves God, they must love everything, as everything is His creation. Love for the cause is inseparable from its effects; indeed, loving the effects is the same as loving the One who caused them.

- 7) Distinguishing Between "Divine Inspirations" (Khawāṭir Raḥmānī) and "Satanic Whispers" (Wasāwis Shayṭānī): Discerning these matters is both crucial and difficult, a task only possible for those who possess spiritual guardianship (wilāya) and wisdom (ḥikma). This is because they recognize the enemy and are aware of its cunning tricks and schemes. Mulla Sadra categorizes khawāṭir (inner thoughts or inspirations) into five types: a) Divine Inspiration (Khāṭir al-Ḥaqq): This arises in the heart of the gnostic without any prior thought or cause. b) Heartfelt Inspiration (Khāṭir al-Qalb): This manifests within a person when the heart is freed from the domination of devils and carnal desires, and thereby attains the observation of the spiritual realm (malakūt). c) Angelic Inspiration (Khāṭir Malakī): This is accompanied by a sense of tranquility in the heart of the believer. d) Satanic Suggestion (Khāṭir Shayṭānī): This leads a person towards misguidance. e) Egoic Suggestion (Khāṭir Nafs): This is worse than Satanic suggestion, as controlling the commanding ego (nafs al-ammāra) is an extremely difficult task.
- 8) Eager for Solitude and Seclusion.
- 9) The perfect manifestation and emergence of the virtues of courage, patience, gratitude, generosity, and forbearance are evident in his states and actions (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1381, pp. 103-122).
- 10) Knowledge of Divine Realities with certainty and demonstration (proof), in all states.
- 11) Moderation in his temperament and states, and the unity

of his outward and inward aspects (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1383, Vol. 1, p. 397).

- 12) Possessing divine unveilings (*mukāshafāt rabbānī*) and knowledge of this world and the hereafter, of heaven and hell, of angels and jinn, of the states of ascension (*mi'rāj*), and of God Almighty's accompaniment with all beings, as well as the journey of ascension and traversing the heavens and similar matters (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1383, Vol. 1, p. 420).
- 13) A Single Reality Possessing Ranks and Degrees: The Perfect Human exists at different levels: at one level, they are nature (*ṭabʿ*); at another level, soul (*nafs*); at the third level, heart (*qalb*); at the fourth level, spirit (*rūḥ*); at the fifth level, secret (*sirr*); at the sixth level, hidden (*khafī*); and the final level is the most hidden (*akhfā*). Mulla Sadra calls these seven levels the inner ranks or the seven stages of the heart (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1384, p. 39).

The Perfect Human, after reaching the stage of **annihilation** (*fanāʾ*) and **effacement** (*maḥw*)<sup>1</sup>, returns to the stage of **subsistence** (*baqāʾ*) and **sobriety** (*ṣaḥw*)<sup>2</sup>. After the stage of **unity** (*jamʿ*)<sup>3</sup>, they return to the stage of **differentiation** (*tafṣīl*)<sup>4</sup>. Their breast expands to

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1. Annihilation (*Fanāʾ*): The effacement of the spiritual wayfarer's actions in the actions of the Almighty Truth.
  2. Sobriety (*Ṣaḥw*): Manifestation.
  3. Unity (*Jamʿ*): A stage where the wayfarer sees neither themselves nor anything other than God; they behold only the Truth and nothing else.
  4. Differentiation (*Tafṣīl*): The wayfarer's return to multiplicities. However, in this stage, the wayfarer views multiplicities with the eye of unity, meaning they see and hear everything through the Truth, but not in a way that implies multiplicity or corporeality for the exalted God.



embrace both the Truth (God) and creation, and they return to creation to guide the imperfect and the misguided (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1383 AH, Vol. 1, pp. 575-576). In essence, the perfect human being has two movements. One is an **ascendant movement towards the Truth**, aimed at perfecting their own essence. The other is a **transformative movement for the perfection of the souls of creation**. In the first movement, the ultimate goal for the spiritual wayfarer is the stage of *fanā* and *maḥw*. It's possible they may not return to *baqā* and *ṣaḥw*, remaining immersed in *jam'* and veiled from creation. However, in the second movement, after effacement, they return to themselves, viewing differentiation (*tafṣīl*) through the lens of unity (*jam'*), and their breast encompasses both creation and the Truth (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1380 AH, pp. 278-279).

## Conclusion

Mulla Sadra views human being as a unified identity that fundamentally progresses in its essence, becoming more complete at each stage. He categorizes perfection into two types: First perfection: This refers to the completeness of a thing's essence. For humans, this is the rational soul (*nafs nāṭiqā*). Second perfection: These are the effects or qualities that arise after the first perfection is achieved. For humans, these are the attributes that appear once their human being is realized. Ultimately, human perfection lies in the development of the intellectual dimension, as this is what distinguishes humans from other animals. Mulla Sadra posits that human intellect has two facets: the theoretical intellect and the practical intellect. A human being cannot reach their deserved perfection unless they develop in both theoretical and practical dimensions. The perfect human being is someone who has actualized all aspects of their being and attained the highest degrees of human perfection. This exalted station is achieved by bringing both

the theoretical and practical intellects to full realization. The theoretical intellect reaches its perfection by attaining the acquired intellect (al-<sup>ʿ</sup>aql al-mustafād), while the practical intellect is perfected by reaching the station of annihilation (fanāʾ).

In summary, from Mulla Sadra's perspective, the perfect human being is the complete and perfect manifestation of Divine Names and Attributes. By understanding them, one can achieve knowledge of the Almighty Lord. The most important characteristics of the perfect human being include: Intimacy with God: A deep connection and communion with the Divine. Adherence to obligations and supererogatory acts: Commitment to both required religious duties and voluntary acts of worship. Love for God and detachment from all else: Profound affection for the Divine, without attachment to anything other than Him. Loving death as a means to encounter the Truth: Viewing death as the path to meeting the Beloved. Love for knowledge and scholars: A strong inclination towards acquiring knowledge and respecting those who possess it. Eagerness for solitude and seclusion: A preference for being alone to focus on spiritual matters. Manifestation of firm virtues: Exhibiting ingrained virtues in all their states and actions. Knowledge of Divine realities and Lordly sciences with certainty and proof: Possessing absolute and reasoned understanding of spiritual truths. Moderation in temperament and states: Maintaining balance in their inner dispositions. Benefiting from Divine unveilings: Receiving spiritual insights and revelations.

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