

Gendering the Human's Soul in Islamic Philosophy An Analytical Reading on Mulla Sadra

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Abstract: Issues on differences between men and women have always been a source for dispute and different approaches in the available literature on women. Some have seen these differences resulting from the dissimilar socialization of men and women in family and society. While some put more emphasis on the physiological differences and rely on theological interpretations, some others consider them as essential differences caused by gender distinctions; the latter thinkers interpret the lawmaking system based on the essential differences between men and women. But those who believe in socialization of differences will not stand any discrimination in lawmaking. Those who believe in essential differences between men and women might be more successful if the differences are confirmed in the system of Islamic philosophy and in the realm of human soul. As a Muslim philosopher, Mulla Sadra (known as "the foremost amongst the theosophists") believes in the substantial motion of the soul toward immateriality. The result of the substantial motion is corporeal origination of the body (haduth) and the spiritual permanence of the soul. This idea, which is peculiar to Mulla Sadra, makes the scene to talk about the gender of the soul. Within the philosophical system of Mulla Sadra's thoughts and with regards to the principles of corporeal origination and spiritual permanence of the soul, one can start to discuss the gender of the soul, despite the disagreements among the thinkers.

Keywords: gender, soul, immateriality of soul, origination of soul, substantial motion.

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Introduction

An introduction to any discussion on gender/sex has to start with genetics. Our sex, and to a great extent, our biological genus are defined by genes, which in turn have been resulted from the formation of a new cell out of a sperm and an ovum. All the genetic features are decided in 23 pairs of chromosomes within that new cell.

The 23rd pair, called the sex chromosome, is indicated with XX for women and XY for men. The mother's cell division (mitosis) during pregnancy results in the formation of new similar cells and finally the human embryo; however, the embryo possesses biological systems and sexual glands to form male testicles or female ovaries. It is worth noting that Physical differences peak at puberty. An adult man typically develops at least 10% more muscle tissue in comparison with an adult woman; this is to do with their physical endurance (Giddens, 2001, p.193).

Women and men differ in types and amounts of hormones present in their bodies. The exact functions of them are not quite clear, yet their role in physical and emotional growth has been granted for sure. Both sexes enjoy both male and female hormones at the same time; however, men enjoy more male hormones and women more female hormones. Researchers have reported not only the probable impacts of the hormonal differences on men and women behaviors, though with different extent and type, but differences that could be traced for one single person through a span of time (Robertson, 1995, p.277).

Reproduction, as a biological action, starts and ends with the release of sperms for men, whereas it continues during pregnancy, delivery, and breastfeeding for women. Therefore, individual, social and economic activities of women are being limited periodically (Ibid).

Many believe that there are fundamental behavioral distinctions between men and women, the manifestations of which are present in all cultures; some bio-sociological findings also confirm those differences. For instance, they refer to the fact that men- and not women- were considered as hunters and warriors in almost every culture. Therefore, men are attributed with the biological tendency for aggression while women are not (Giddens, 2001, p.193).

There is no doubt in the physical and particularly sexual differences

between men and women. But there is an ongoing discussion over their spiritual differences; do these differences stem from their different nature/ essence? Is there any social justification for that? Do the differences have to do anything with the soul? Does the mental and conceptual origin of the differences go back to the time before the body's possession by soul? Does the soul or the body originate the mental and physical differences or is the soul by itself independent of any difference?

It is obvious that there is no entry for sex/gender in Islamic philosophy like other branches of human sciences, such as psychology, sociology, law, and even contemporary western philosophy; however, there are interpretations based on the sayings of many famous philosophers, signifying the typical differences between men and women. On the other hand, one can study those differences in the system of Islamic philosophy to find the probable compatibility of this system in interpreting the differences.

Definition of the Soul

Mulla Sadra has adopted Avicenna's definition of the soul in his *Evidences of the Divinities*. He defines the soul as "the first stage of ideal form for an organic natural body with potential existence" (Sadr-al-Din Shirazi, 2003, p.240).

Like the preceding philosophers, Mulla Sadra (also known as "the foremost amongst the theosophist") does not confine soul to human soul. He attributes soul to all living beings, and defines it as the initial stage of a natural organic body. Different species are classified according to their soul as plants, animals and human beings; therefore, plants species will not survive without their vegetative souls, animals without animal soul and human without that of human rational soul. But the qualities gained after the survival of the species are considered as second quality like the impacts they have on their surrounding or vice versa. (Mesbah Yazdi, 1996, pp.73-75).

Emphasis on "natural body" implies the exclusion of artificial body. Unlike the natural body, the artificial body has been realized by intervention of an external factor and does not enjoy the internal unity. Natural entities such as plants, animals and human being maintain typical real nature. Therefore, the form of a chair, although at its initial stage of being ideal, is not considered as its soul (Mesbah Yazdi, 1996, pp.78-80).

The attribute "organic" suggests that the mentioned natural body should apply mechanisms and potentialities under the control of ideal forms while doing different actions. In other words, the mentioned body should act in way that secondary ideals are the consequences of the mechanism. To add the adjective "organic" is to exclude the objects (such as fire and earth) that show immediate secondary ideal forms (Sadr-al-Din Shirazi, 1379 AH,p. 16)."Possessing potential existence" is to emphasize the unnecessary presence of actual signs of existence in the soul but only their potential presence will suffice. In other words, the actions signifying the liveliness could sometimes be potential and sometimes actual (Hassan Zadeh Amoli, 1983, p.316).

Gender

Nowadays, many western scholars distinguish between the concepts of sex and gender. Feminists define gender as a collection of culturally constructed behaviors and features attributed to women or men. In other words, gender is a collection of female or male social characteristics. This idea has to do with the biological origin of sex and social construction of gender.

Kate Millett and Shulamith Firestone made a radical turn regarding the interpretation of modern thought on gender. In her groundbreaking book, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, Firestone states that gender distinctions give society a definite framework through which all aspects of life are constructed and men and women are being defined. She believes that gender difference is the result of the domination of a complicated patriarchal system. Therefore, the function of feminism is to analyze this system theoretically and put an end to it politically (Humm, 2003, p.181).

To find out the conceptual distinction between sex and gender, and to eliminate the social expectations based on the sexual roles, which are not typically biological, have been among the main undertakings of contemporary feminists since Kate Millett. The sexual differences could be "natural", but gender differences should only be tracked in society and not in nature.

"Gender" is a social concept that distinguishes between male and female, unlike "sex" that underlines biological deterministic differences of anatomy and genital organs. As a social concept, gender has been and still is subject to changes among different cultures during a long span of time.

"Gender" was born in the late 1960s and early 1970s (with the second wave of feminism) as an analytical and critical method in humanity and social sciences. Before that time, the term "sex roles" was used for the concept related to the desired constructions of masculinity and femininity. "Gender" was introduced by feminist thinkers as a counter-discourse to the imposed discourse of "sex roles" in the patriarchal societies of that time.

As stated earlier, according to the feminists, the natural differences between man and woman, which result in mental, behavioral and cognitive differences, all have roots in the domination of patriarchal culture. Consequently, family finds the most significant role in reproducing, reinforcing gender discriminations and perpetuating patriarchy (Mikula, 2008, p.77).

The Origin of Man/Woman Differences

Man/woman differences are interpreted in many ways nowadays; some of the related theories will follow:

1. The approaches that concentrate on the psychological differences

Psychological Theory

Sigmund Freud was the pioneer in developing the psychological theory. The main tenant of his theory is the role of unconsciousness. He defines character as a product of growth and development. The psychological stages of developments are oral, anal and phallic, according to him. To depict the development and different change of the sexual identity of men and woman, Freud assumed that men and women pass the two first stages of psychosexual development equally but they become distinct during the third (phallic) stage. As the name of the stage suggests, women face some difficulty while experiencing it.

Boys and girls experiencing Oedipus complex and Electra complex, respectively, result in the formation of the superego. Superego is a part of personality that encompasses the ideals and conscience. According to Freud, there are three feminine characteristics that have been formed during this stage: sexual passivity, penis envy and narcissism.

In sum, Freud assumes a general model for men in the formation of masculine identity, along with a parallel model for women. As a result of the Oedipus complex

and attachment to their mothers, boys begin to identify with their fathers and acquire the according gender identity. But the Electra complex could never be resolved for girls and therefore, they enjoy lower level of satisfactory moral development.

Freud believes that girls and boys do not have a sexual identity despite their physical differences. Alternatively, they have inherited characteristics of each sex with different proportions. Meanwhile, they acquire gender distinctions based on the presence or absence of the penis envy, and their sexual identity forms accordingly (Bostan, 1383).

Nancy Chodorow has adopted a combination of psychological, social and feministic approaches in *The Reproduction of Mothering*. She discusses several critical issues to interpret the psychological differences between men and women and to modify Freudian psychoanalytical theory. First, she states that penis envy is not the result of the girl's perception of the penis as the inherently superior one (as is discussed by Freud), but it is rather the product of the representation of the penis as a power symbol in society. Second, she is not happy with the interpretation of the family dynamics as the source of the whole situation. She suggests some guidelines with the perspective of social reforms and the removal of inequalities for women (Hyde, 2005, pp.50-55).

Sociobiology

This theory studies the function of Darwinian evolution in explaining social behavior of animals and human beings. The main tenant of this theory is the fact that while social behavior has resulted from genetic factors, animal should behave in a way to optimize their abilities and power.

Sociobiologists state that aggression as a human's gender distinction with other species has resulted from sexual selection through evolution. Sexual selection is a process through which males compete with each other over mating with females who choose only those who are securing privileged mates (winners) for mating.

Briefly stated regarding motherhood they believe that women take care of the children for two main reasons. First, a woman has invested a bigger parental share on childbirth; therefore, she is more proper for childcare. Second, being a mother is always certain while it is not the case with being father. In other words,

the mother could be referred to for more certainty than the father. Parental investment refers to the behaviors that increase the chance of the survival of the baby child (Hyde, 2005, pp.65-70).

2. The approaches that concentrate on the social grounds of the differences

Functionalism

Functionalists begin with the assumption that all societies encourage the gender differences because they are said to have functions for the whole society. They believe that playing different roles bring men and women different functions, at least in traditional and preindustrial societies. Man is inevitably the dominant member in men/women relation because of his physical superiority and woman's dependence on his support. As a result of his dominance, man's activities and personality patterns seem to be more valuable and privileged. These relations turn into social structures over the passage of time. Men consider their status to be "natural" and women accept and give up to the sexual inequalities. Thereafter, the social origins of different sexual functions are forgotten and women/men roles are granted as biology-based factors (Robertson, 1995).

Social Learning Theory

"Conditioning" is the common description for gender differences. In other words, girls and boys act according to their gender because they have been encouraged to do certain things and have been punished for doing other things. They believe that conditioning decides about learning gender roles.

Social learning theory briefly presumes that there are three important mechanisms involved in the development of gender differences: differential reinforcement, beliefs, and modeling. The role of differential reinforcement and modeling on children behavior has been confirmed through different experiments (Hyde, 2005, pp.73-77).

Feminist Theories

Feminists consider gender as a variable such as class in a society. They compare inequality between men and women with inequalities of different classes (working, middle and upper) in a given society. Having reviewed various

studies on people's counteractions in small social groups, two sociologists concluded that the best explanation is offered by feminists who depict gender hypothesis as variable deciding the status of women.

Feminist theorists suggest some key concepts while depicting gender discriminations: the unequal power of men and women, suppression of the sexual desires of women, socialization of women and culture-oriented sexual roles; however, not all feminists share the same idea in depicting gender discriminations. There are different feminist schools of thought, such as liberal, radical, Marxist and socialist feminists. Yet, generally speaking, feminist theorists believe in the significance of the social construction of gender; they do not postulate a biological origin for gender differences.

Therefore, like social structuralism, Feminists believe that the process of formation of gender discrimination takes place in at least three realms: 1. the people who are engaged in social constructions (they interact with each other as presumably men and women). 2. The society or culture which produces many social constructions for gender (are there only two genders or more?) 3. Gender is constructed socially like the research constructions invented by scientists (Hyde, 2005, pp.97-102).

Men/Women Differences According to Islam

A speculation on Quranic verses and hadiths will lead us to the fact that men and women are equal in the nature of their identities, human values and required human characteristics¹; however, there are biological, psychological and emotional differences.

Muslim scholars perceive man/woman differences as "natural" phenomena. As a Muslim thinker, Morteza Motahari believes that the equality of men and women as human beings has never been questioned in Islam. They are both human and should enjoy equal human rights; however, they are not similar in all aspects of life. Experiencing the world as two entities, men and women do not enjoy the same nature (Motahari, 2005, p.136).

According to Islam, human beings are divided into two groups of males and females by God the Almighty to survive the human race. Therefore, having

1. Al-Hujurat (The Apartments): verse 13, Al-Muddaththir (The One Wrapping Himself Up): verse 38, Al-'Imran (The Family of Amran): verse 195, An-Nisa' (The Women): 124, Ha Mim (Ha Mim): verse 40 Al-Ahzab (The Allies): verse 35.

different characters is the prerequisite of such a division (Mehrizi, 2007, p.68). According to the Quran, undoubtedly, there is a difference in their creation. God has reminded us that "While He has created you in (different) stages" (Nuh: 14) the creation and thus the nature of a man and a woman are not meant to be the same. According to various Quranic verses, there are physical and mental differences between the two, but this difference "is meant to maintain the balance and is not considered as one's deficit and the other's privilege." Now the question is whether these differences have anything to do with the human self or not?

The Reality of the Soul

Soul is an extra concept in the Peripatetic school of thought. Indeed, there are two substances: truth of the soul as a rational substance, and body as a material substance. Thus, the existence of the soul is extra and out of the body prudence. The example Avicenna provided for the sake of clarification is the relationship between a building and the building maker. He believes that the essence of the building and the building maker is substantial, but their relationship is an accidental relationship. Mulla Sadra sees no distinction between the existence of the soul and the essence of the soul.

Islamic philosophers believe that we have defined the soul regarding its relational dependence on the body when we define soul as perfection. It is like the relation between the building and the building maker; when we use the building to define the building maker, it has nothing to do with him as being a human. To clarify the case with the soul, we possess a physical substance (body) on one hand and a rational substance on the other. Meanwhile, there is an extra between the two. Therefore, the extra essence of the soul (rational substance) is not essential but accidental to the body (Avicenna, 1395AH, p.9) (Sadr-al-Din Shirazi, 1379AH, pp.8-17).

Mulla Sadra's distinct contribution comes from his belief in substantial motion, through which vegetative soul is transformed to animal soul and animal soul into human soul. His special theoretical contribution is the idea that the soul does not include two beings or existence but only one. Therefore, the existence of the soul is the same as its essence and the truth of the soul is nothing but prudence and superintendence (Sadr-al-Din Shirazi, 1379AH,

pp.8-11). According to him, the soul does not enjoy two aspects either .There is only one unit from which the concept of extra is abstracted but it is not predicatory to be accidental. The existence of the soul is thoroughly engaged with dependence and extra, extra is not also predicatory to be associated with accident. Apart from this, aspect does have a dependent existence, unlike a building that enjoys a dependent essence which in turn the result of a special extra as an accident. Soul will be a material form which is far or close to rational origin depends on strength or weakness of its existence until it finds physical existence in the form of actuality of separate intellect (Sadr-al-Din Shirazi, 2004, Vol: 8, pp.8-11).

Man/Woman Differences According to Islamic Philosophers

Avicenna has not discussed the difference as a dependent issue, but he considers man/woman differences classified as accidents out of human difference under the category of group characteristics in *The Book of Healing*. He defines femininity and masculinity as group-maker accidents and not as different species-makers

Suhrawardi (also known as "Master of Illumination") defines human species as the combination of man/woman and excess/age (Sadeqi, 2012, p.33).

Mulla Sadra considers femininity and masculinity as characteristics of animal rank. It is the distinction of the first rank of the animals from plants. Therefore, gender cannot be endowed with the quality of species-making (Ibid: 34).

Corporeal Origination and Pre-eternality of the Soul

Pre-eternality of the soul refers to the ever-existence of the soul and its independence from alteration and transubstantiation. In this case, the qualities and perfection have pre-existed in the soul. That is to say the soul has not been developing through times by resolving the shortcomings and deficiencies and gaining new qualities. In other words, the essential perfection of the soul's substance is the prerequisite of its pre-eternality. But to discuss these ideas briefly, we will come to the conclusion that it is not true about the soul. As have been proved with the potentialities, the soul requires mechanisms and potentialities to acquire perception and dynamics which it lacks from

the beginning and to accomplish perfection by that means. Therefore, dependence of rational soul on dynamic and conceptual potentialities and mechanisms, which are either of vegetative or of animal types, depicts its existential deficiency and thus, rejects the pre-eternality of the soul as a substance (Mesbah Yazdi, 1996, p.220).

Plato with some other classical philosophers postulate the soul as a truth separate from matter. They believe the soul to be immaterial and prior to the body. Stating that soul has pre-existed the body - just to join it when the body is ready and to enjoy the company until death, when all the life powers fade away and the soul returns, he introduces body as subject to soul. Consequently, although being pre-eternal, the soul is not dependent on the body and is not the director of the body either. Soul is essentially rational and immortal, and body is just a temporary prison. The soul has been living with God in the World of Ideas, but it has descended and imprisoned in a material body because of inclination to the world of sensation.

Pre-existing in the World of Ideas, the soul has been observing and acknowledging the truths of all matters; however, after stepping on earth and joining the body and matter, the soul has forgotten all those data and knowledge. The existence of soul in the World of Ideas is confirmed through the truth that soul has already been preoccupied with related principles that are the results of sensual experience. These principles could only be explained as recollections from soul's previous life in which the sensual experience has been gained. Like a curtain hung on a mirror, the body acts as a barrier to the light and reflection of forms. This curtain could only be drawn by the combination of ration, sensation and spiritual austerities. Human being's undertaking is to remember and recollect and not to learn and acquire.

According to Plato, the creator of the soul has created it in a way to be prior to the body regarding both the time of emergence and perfection. The soul enjoys a kind of respect similar to the respect the elders enjoy when facing the youths because it is supposed to be the master and leader of the body (Plato, 1988 Vol:3, p.1834). Soul has existed in the World of Ideas before joining the body. Therefore, having observed and perceived the truth and essence of the objects, the soul has been descended to the world of temporariness to forget all the learning. Hence, what human learns in this

world is not in fact a new knowledge but only a remembrance of the forgotten knowledge (Plato, 1995, p.381).

Critique of the Pre-eternality of the Soul

Pre-eternality of the soul has been rejected because of various reasons, some of which are presented below. If the souls preexist in the eternity, there should be one or many souls. Provided that there is only one soul, it should be divided between different bodies or remained as one.

Mesbah Yazdi believes that if the soul is pre-eternal, it should also be unique to each individual. On the one hand, pre-eternality of the soul necessitates its abstraction or separate existence from matter, which again requires its complete abstraction. On the other hand, any complete abstraction is unique based on a philosophical rule. Since the individuals' diversity of species is always subject to the matter, there would be no diversity when there is no matter (Mesbah Yazdi, 1998, p.221). The diversity of the souls is evident; therefore, all the souls are of one single species and one matter but divided between the diversity of individuals. This fact is in conflict with the soul as being a complete abstraction because it requires denying the objectivity of the soul's diversity among one species. Thus, the pre-eternality of the soul can be rejected as shown above. Islamic philosophers such as Avicenna, Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra believe in the origination (emergence) of the soul, yet there are disagreements among them in the spiritual or corporeal nature of the origination. First, we start by describing the spiritual origination of the soul, followed by Mulla Sadra's critique on this idea. Finally, we will discuss the corporeal origination from Mulla Sadra's viewpoint.

Spiritual Origination of the Soul

Peripatetic thinkers reject the pre-eternality of human soul. They believe in the simultaneous origination of the body and soul. Soul is not originated from matter, it is an abstracted entity that is created and united with the body after the origination of the body under the Lord's command. Avicenna has stated on the issue:

When a body which is qualified to receive the soul is originated, it will be united with a sublime, abstracted, integrated and

adequate soul which will endure even after the destruction of the body (Avicenna, *The Book of Salvation*, 184).

In fact, the Peripatetic thinkers believe that with finishing the creation of the body, God simultaneously creates the abstracted soul and unites them with each other.

There are various criticisms on Avicenna's point of view; however, discussing such criticisms is beyond the scope of this article. Getting back to the topic of discussion, the concept of gender for soul is rejected based on Avicenna and other Peripatetic thinkers who believe in spiritual origination and endurance of the soul.

Corporeal Origination of the Soul

Mulla Sadra has maintained that "the soul is of corporeal origination and spiritual permanence." According to his theory, first of all the soul is not pre-eternal but rather originated and produced. Moreover, its origination is physical and not spiritual. This is where Mulla Sadra's disagreement with Peripatetic thinkers begins. Finally, the soul enjoys a spiritual permanence.

Corporeality of origination and spirituality of permanence are based on doctrines of principality, analogy of existence, and substantial motion. Mulla Sadra believes that all physical entities including the embryo in the womb evolve through substantial motion and ascend toward the stage of spirituality.

Mulla Sadra defines the soul as an existence whose emergence (origination) depends on the existence of the body, but this dependence vanishes in the state of permanence. Substantial motion is essential to actualize the potentiality of bidding farewell to the material corporeality and greeting the spiritual permanence (immortality).

In the beginning, the soul is just considered as a "potentiality" which could be actualized by the help of substantial motion. But the soul starts to evolve and develop in its own special way (different from physical development) after it comes to be. From another point of view, the human body could experience two types of developments during and through substantial motion: first, physical development of the body, which ends in aging and finally death. Second, an immaterial development occurring within and along the body, which ends in the growth of the soul or human's self (Khamenei, 2008, pp. 201-202).

The [Substantial] Motion of the Soul from Matter toward Abstraction

Unlike Plato, Mulla Sadra defines soul as a material truth that develops into a divine one, and not vice versa. Otherwise stating, when a creature has passed all of the complementary stages of elemental, solid, vegetative, and animal evolutions, it has achieved a divine and spiritual perfection, called rational soul. Therefore, Mulla Sadra sees the soul as a physical form or potentiality originated in the body at its very emergence. It is the lowest stage of existential grading and it is also potential in every human being. After this stage, substantial motion will increase the existential intensification of the soul and lead it beyond the world of materiality to the world of metaphysics, to the purgatorial abstraction, then to the rational abstraction, and finally to the over abstraction.

In other words, it is not the soul to descend into the body, but it is the body to ascend the soul. The ascension toward the soul does not mean that the soul is waiting to possess the body as a predetermined form, but it rather signifies the ever development of the body through substantial motion from eternal evanescence to emergence, to reach the stage of spiritual perfection and not physical perfection.

That is how the world of matter and the world of ideas precede each other as natural sequences. The last stage of development of the former coincides with the first stage of the latter's perfection. As a result of its substantial motion, its constant emergence, and the consistent actualization of its potentialities, a material entity will find a new existence and identity that is spiritual, although as a rational and necessary sequence of a material evolution. Physic is like a ladder to ascend the metaphysic according to the principle of substantial motion. The matter will go up to the stage it deserves for the accompaniment of an immaterial existence. Therefore, soul is the same as human form, emerging out of matter and accompanying along with it through all the stages of development.

For instance, the soul of the human embryo is a vegetative soul in a natural form at the beginning. The embryo's matter directs the initial vegetative soul toward the next stage of development, which is animal soul by formation of a complete fetus and performing with animal functions. The substantial motion

is to continue by more completion of the fetus and intensification of the animal soul toward rational human soul. This soul performs with vegetative and animal functions along with human functions.

Soul/Body Relationship

The relationship between soul and body is of inherence type according to Mulla Sadra. This inherence is neither the accompaniment of two additional phenomena, nor the accompaniment of two effects of the same cause without any dependence, but it is rather the accompaniment of two inherent objects like matter and form; they are not inseparable without being circular. Thus, on the one hand, the body requires all and not part of the soul; and on the other hand, the soul's dependence on the body is not because of rational absolute truth, but out of its determining and separate existence and also its identity. Therefore, the human soul is not initially abstracted and singular with regards to its essence. Two material abstracted objects could not be united according to Mulla Sadra. Hence, the soul is not a rational (immaterial) form at the beginning of its union with the material body; it is rather of a sensual-imaginary nature.

Again, according to Mulla Sadra, the soul is dependent until its existence is completed and transformed into separated intelligence. After that stage, it is not associated with the material body. He has stated that with respect to origination, material possession and permanence, the human soul is spiritual. While it enjoys the material possession of the object, discernment between its own soul and the created one is spiritual (Sadr-al-Din Shirazi, 2003, pp.428-433).

Conclusion

As stated by Mulla Sadra, existence is composed of an interrelated hierarchy of the highest to the lowest grades. Every entity enjoys a certain level of existence; matter is classified as the lowest level of existence to be followed by minerals, plants, animals and finally human beings. Regarding the existence, they are diverse externally, and united and interrelated internally. Therefore, according to him, the entire universe enjoys a certain level of existence. The soul exists in the world of intellect and the world of sensation (nature) at the same time.

Soul is an existence initially added to body in an object form from physical world. Thus, being at the body level and having physical potentiality as the most potent power, the soul is considered as a physical existence dependent on matter on its earthly creation. The soul remains dependent on the body as an essential existence as far as it is still a soul. The soul's dependence on the body is on sensual and physical potentialities and it is accomplished through a certain relationship and union. Based on the discussions above and because of the conjoined nature of the relation between soul and body, the soul could also be attributed with gender. The issue of gender has never been the focus of the Muslim philosophers' studies; it only has been reduced to a range of explanations on being male or female. Some of those descriptions were discussed in the present study, but one cannot speak with certainty about the femininity and masculinity of the soul in those studies. However, regarding the philosophical doctrine of corporeality of origination and spirituality of permanence, there is a chance to discuss the issues related to gender within Mulla Sadra's philosophic system. But there is still strong disagreement among the thinkers.

According to Mesbah Yazdi, one cannot easily claim that issues on masculinity and femininity of the soul are irrelevant because of the abstraction of the soul. If masculinity and femininity has led to stronger emotions and sensations in one of the sexes why should we not discuss and study this characteristic in the stage of abstraction? Based on this justification, masculinity and femininity of the soul will be more possible than accepting the dependent creation of each gender and later attribution of male/female character through union with the matter.

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