



Methodology of Mullā Ṣadrā in Formulating the Theory of the Soul's Corporeal Origination and Spiritual Subsistence*



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Abstract

The dilemma of the soul's origination or pre-eternity represents one of the most enduring problems in Islamic philosophy. Each side of this dilemma faces serious difficulties: proponents of the soul's pre-eternity struggle to explain its relation to the body, while advocates of origination confront the problem of the soul's enduring subsistence after bodily death. In addressing this dilemma, Mullā Ṣadrā adopts a distinctive methodological approach. He first reconstructs and critically examines the views of earlier philosophers and theologians, distinguishing defensible insights from elements that generate theoretical difficulties within their own frameworks. He then reinterprets selected elements within a new metaphysical perspective grounded in the principles of the primacy of existence, gradation of existence, and substantial motion. Through this process, he formulates the theory of the soul's "corporeal

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origination and spiritual subsistence.” This study argues that Ṣadrā’s procedure reflects a form of methodological pluralism without eclecticism and shows notable affinity with the integrative model of interdisciplinary inquiry. Using a conceptual-analytical approach, the article offers a systematic reconstruction and critical evaluation of this methodological framework in Ṣadrā’s treatment of the problem of the soul.

Keywords

Mullā Ṣadrā, Methodology, Soul’s Origination Dilemma, Spiritual Subsistence, Integrative Methodology.

Introduction

The soul—its nature, mode of existence, origin, relation to the body, connection with consciousness, and its persistence or annihilation after death—constitutes one of the most challenging topics in philosophy and theology. These issues have been examined from a wide range of perspectives across both religious and non-religious intellectual traditions. The Islamic intellectual tradition is no exception; within it, the question of the soul has been explored from multiple angles. Among the various issues related to the soul, one of the most debated is the question of whether the soul is originated (*Hadith*) or eternal (*Qadim*). Thinkers across nearly all fields of Islamic knowledge—from *ilm al-nafs* (in the sense of ancient psychology) and philosophy to Qur’anic exegesis, theology, and mysticism—have offered theories on this question. The extensive treatment of the topic in the philosophical works of Muslim thinkers itself testifies to its significance within the Islamic philosophical tradition.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that this issue is not unique to Muslim thinkers, and its documented history goes back at least to Plato. Plato’s term for the soul is *psyche*, which earlier in Greek culture referred to the boundary between the animate and the inanimate (Taylor, 2014, p. 107). Plato situates the soul at a level higher than the body and prior to it; this priority is not merely ontological or conceptual but also implies a kind of temporal priority, since he regards the soul as timeless and therefore immortal. The concept of *psyche* also appears in Aristotle’s works as “the first actuality of a natural body” (Aristotle, 1999, pp. 20–21), and this conception attracted the attention of Islamic philosophers. By integrating this Greek heritage within the framework of Islamic beliefs, they identified the “soul” with the concept of “spirit” (*rūḥ*). Initially, this notion was

established as the agent of self-awareness and later, by attributing thought and intellection to it, came to be understood as the immaterial dimension of the human being— a dimension that in Islamic philosophy grounds the belief in the persistence and immortality of the human person.

Yet this synthesis and identification of *psyche* with *rūḥ* under the broader notion of the soul—although initially appearing coherent—gradually generated difficulties within the structure of Islamic thought. These difficulties made it hard to justify the simultaneous acceptance of both the origination of the soul and its survival after death, a view generally upheld by Islamic philosophers. On the one hand, if the soul is a substance independent of the body, how can it come into existence within a particular body? On the other hand, if its coming-to-be depends on the body and on specific bodily conditions, how can it continue to exist after the body's death?

Within the framework of the Muslim Peripatetics, providing a simultaneous account of the origination of soul and their personal and everlasting subsistence has faced a number of theoretical difficulties. Ibn Sīnā's attempt to address this problem—by shifting the model of the soul-body relation from a hylomorphic relation of matter and form to an instrumental and governing relation, together with his acceptance of the soul's "spiritual origination" (*ḥudūth rūḥānī*)—did not prove entirely satisfactory. Explanatory gaps remained in his account, particularly concerning the problem of the individuation of souls after separation from the body and the explanation of why the soul is essentially related to a particular body. These difficulties later became the basis for significant critiques by philosophers after him—especially within the School of Isfahan and subsequently in Transcendent Philosophy (Avicena, 1984, pp. 96–98; 'Ubūdiyyat, 2016, p. 290). Within this intellectual context, Mullā Ṣadrā proposed the theory that

“the soul is corporeal in its origination and spiritual in its subsistence” (*al-nafs jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth wa-rūḥāniyyat al-baqāʾ*) as a philosophical solution to this tension. The primary concern of the present study, however, is not merely this doctrine itself but the method through which Mullā Ṣadrā arrived at it. In other words, the article seeks to clarify how Mullā Ṣadrā engages with earlier views, how he distinguishes among competing positions, and through what intellectual procedure he arrives at a coherent theory. Accordingly, the central question of this research is whether Mullā Ṣadrā’s engagement with earlier doctrines amounts simply to a scattered compilation and synthesis, or whether it exhibits a discernible method, coherence, and research program. On this basis, the present study adopts a conceptual-analytical and argumentative approach and focuses on the process through which Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory of the soul was formed. It argues that his engagement with earlier views presents a historically informed yet critical narrative in which different positions are examined not in a fragmented or unsystematic manner but within a purposeful analytical progression. Thus, by examining Mullā Ṣadrā’s treatment of the views of Plato, the Peripatetics, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, radical advocates of the soul’s eternity, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Shaykh al-Ishrāq (Suhrawardī), and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, the article aims to demonstrate that his path toward the theory of the soul is governed by a distinctive internal coherence and argumentative logic.

Literature Review

Several studies have been devoted to the methodology of Mullā Ṣadrā, though a complete list cannot be provided here. Among the most relevant are works examining his philosophical method in the problem of divine knowledge, including: *The Methodology of Mullā Ṣadrā’s Philosophy in the Question of Divine Knowledge*; “An Examination of Mullā Ṣadrā’s Philosophical Method in the Problem of God’s

Knowledge of Things Prior to Creation”; and “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Methodology in the Question of Divine Knowledge.” Other studies include “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Methodological Model in the Conceptual Analysis of Faith,” “A Methodological Critique of the Role of Mysticism in the Context of Justification in Mullā Ṣadrā’s Philosophy,” and “A Methodological Critique of the Role of Religion in the Context of Justification in Mullā Ṣadrā’s Philosophy.”

The article “The Methodology of Ṣadr al-Muta’alīhīn in the Conceptual–Ontological Analysis of the Human Soul” offers a comprehensive methodological analysis of concepts related to the soul and regards the doctrine of the soul’s corporeal origination and spiritual subsistence as the result of Ṣadrā’s ontological analysis of the soul (Vafā’iyān & Farāmarz Q., 2016). The present study, however, focuses specifically on Ṣadrā’s method and the process by which he formulates his theory of the soul’s origination and subsistence, as well as on his mode of engagement with earlier theories. In addition to analyzing his integrative pluralism in presenting prior views, the study examines distinctive aspects of his position—such as his reconciliation of non-individuation and individuation in the soul—which have not been sufficiently addressed in previous scholarship.

An Introduction to the Method and Process of Arriving at the Principle “The Soul Is Corporeal in Its Origination and Spiritual in Its Subsistence”

Specialized studies in philosophical methodology, recognized as a branch of metaphilosophy, investigate the methods employed in philosophizing and in arriving at foundational doctrines. In contemporary scholarship, this field addresses a wide range of issues under two principal approaches: first, descriptive approaches, which analyze the actual practices philosophers use in the production of

knowledge; and second, normative approaches, which critically assess the adequacy of such methods and, on that basis, evaluate different philosophical schools and traditions (Dever, 2016; *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2022). Although the systematic articulation of this discussion as an independent discipline appears to be a modern development, it would be mistaken to assume that philosophers of earlier traditions were inattentive to the methodological dimensions of their own thought. Here, “method” is understood in its broad sense: a coherent set of intellectual strategies and epistemic procedures adopted in order to achieve a specific theoretical aim and to formulate a philosophical doctrine.

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The dominant historical image of philosophy—especially within the Islamic tradition—has portrayed it as a purely rational and argumentative enterprise, to the extent that philosophy is often regarded as the supreme exemplar of demonstrative knowledge. Yet reflection on the history of philosophy reveals that reducing philosophical activity to rigid rationalism does not correspond to the actual intellectual practices of major philosophers. Numerous thinkers, through critiques of pure reason, expanded the domain of philosophy and opened new horizons toward experience, phenomenology, intuition, and other sources of knowledge. This methodological plurality is traceable not only in post-Renaissance Western philosophy but also in the history of Islamic philosophy. The fundamental distinction between the Peripatetic (*mashshāʿī*) and Illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) traditions, for example, rests precisely on this basis: while the Peripatetics sought a form of pure rationality modeled on Aristotelian logic, the Illuminationists introduced intuition (*shuhūd*) into the philosophical enterprise, thereby inaugurating a new divergence between strict rationalism and intuitionism.

Within this context, Mullā Ṣadrā, through the foundation of

Transcendent Philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-muta'aliyya*), advanced a novel model of thought that cannot be reductively classified under either pole of “rationalism” or “intuitionism.” A defining feature of Ṣadrā’s epistemic practice is his transcendence of the binary “reason or intuition” and his adoption of an integrative and meta-methodological approach. This methodological complexity has given rise to divergent interpretations in attempts to situate his thought genealogically. Some critics have regarded his philosophical system as merely an incoherent and eclectic amalgam of earlier doctrines, denying it independent originality or epistemic determination; by contrast, his interpreters have each attributed distinctive titles and characterizations to this school of thought (see: Faramarz Qarāmalikī, 2009). Focusing on Mullā Ṣadrā’s research program and analyzing the process through which he establishes the doctrine of the soul’s corporeal origination and spiritual subsistence, the present study seeks to demonstrate that his method is not a simple eclecticism, but rather a systematic and structured process in the production of philosophical knowledge.

Mullā Ṣadrā’s Research Program in Examining the Views of Earlier Philosophers

Mullā Ṣadrā sets forth the detailed elaboration of the doctrine of **the soul’s corporeal origination and spiritual subsistence** in the later sections of the discussions on the soul in the *Asfār*. His procedure is to first present a concise account of his own preferred position so that the reader, from the outset, becomes acquainted with the claim itself and can better perceive the shortcomings and conceptual dead ends of rival theories in light of it. The full development of the argument and the final articulation of the theory are then deferred to a later point in the discussion. Ṣadrā’s engagement with the views of earlier philosophers is not a mere recital of opinions or a set of disconnected polemics; rather, it follows a relatively systematic procedure. He first offers a

sympathetic exposition of each view—within the framework of its own principles and presuppositions—and then reports, analyzes, and evaluates the criticisms directed at that view, whether those criticisms come from himself or from commentators and critics. Some of these objections are internal critiques: that is, objections arising from misunderstanding, inexact quotation, or the improper application of a theory's own principles. In such cases, once the error is corrected, the problem can, at least on that level, be resolved. By contrast, some criticisms are structural, since they point to limitations intrinsic to the theoretical system itself; even after correcting the exposition and removing misunderstandings, these limitations remain insoluble within the same set of principles.

A significant point is that, in reporting the theories of **origination** and **eternity**, Ṣadrā presents them in an interwoven and overlapping manner. Yet this interweaving is not a sign of methodological disorder. The evidence suggests that he is pursuing a historically ordered narrative, and that the principle governing his enumeration is—at least apparently—the chronological sequence in which these views emerged, so that the process of the progressive refinement of arguments and the gradual transformation of formulations can be made visible. Accordingly, he first reports Plato's view on the eternity of the soul, and then, in sequence, presents the arguments of the Peripatetics who affirm origination, together with the challenges raised by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the radical advocates of the soul's eternity, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (who holds origination), Shaykh al-Ishrāq (who also holds origination), and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (who holds eternity).

Nevertheless, in the present study, and in view of the limits of the inquiry, we shall proceed first by tracing Ṣadrā's account of those who affirm the soul's origination, then his report of those who

maintain its eternity, and finally his own theory in brief. We also make it explicit that our investigation at this point is concerned with the appearance of these doctrines in Mullā Ṣadrā's presentation, rather than with judging the correctness of his understanding or assessing the accuracy of his textual attributions in reporting those views. Accordingly, in this section we confine ourselves to Ṣadrā's own claims and formulations of these doctrines, while reserving a comparative evaluation of his account against the writings of the philosophers in question for another occasion.

1) Advocates of Origination

Mullā Ṣadrā presents—and subsequently critiques—a range of arguments advanced by proponents of the soul's origination, namely those who maintain its "origination with matter but not from matter," that is, its spiritual origination. He reports these views under three principal groups: the Peripatetics, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, and the Shaykh al-Ishrāq (Shīrāzī, 2011, vol. 8, p. 332). What follows is a concise account of Ṣadrā's presentation of these three positions.

1-1) The Peripatetics

One of the points of disagreement between the Peripatetics and the Platonists lies precisely in this issue; although Mullā Ṣadrā seeks to reconcile the views of Plato and Aristotle by way of interpretation (Shīrāzī, 2011, vol.8., pp. 332–333). He begins his report of the Peripatetics from Ibn Sīnā's *al-Nafs* in the *Shifā'*, and he also devotes considerable attention to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's challenges—as commentator and critic—in *al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyya* (Avicenna 1983, pp. 359-416; al-Rāzī, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 390–396). Ṣadrā then subjects Fakhr's replies to criticism in turn and advances the discussion in a critical manner. The general structure of the Peripatetic argument for the origination of the

soul is a critique of the soul's eternity. They consider the possible states of a pre-eternal soul and, by refuting those states, infer origination. In summary, the argument runs as follows: if souls were eternal, they would be either one or many. If they were one, then either they would remain one even after their attachment to bodies—in which case a commonality of awarenesses would follow, which is absurd—or, given that the immaterial is indivisible, the multiplication of the one soul after its relation to bodies would be inexplicable. If they are many, then either they are distinct prior to attachment to bodies or they are not. On the Peripatetic view, which holds souls to be of one species and their multiplicity to be merely individual, their prior distinction can be neither essential/natural nor brought about through accidental differences without matter and potentiality; and since the realm of immateriality is devoid of matter, the prior distinction of souls before their attachment to bodies becomes impossible.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī examines the problematic elements of this argument—including the impossibility of the transition from unity to multiplicity and the impossibility of multiplicity prior to bodily attachment—formulates six possible objections, and answers them. These replies are in effect a more elaborate version of the Peripatetic formulation itself. Ṣadrā, while quoting Fakhr, intervenes whenever he disagrees with the position by using the expression “I say” (*aqūlu*). Since it is not possible in this brief discussion to mention all of Fakhr's objections, we will focus below on those points in which Ṣadrā highlights a methodological gap. For example, in the first objection, the issue concerns multiplicity at the moment of attachment to the body, and the objector may regard it as possible by denying any necessary connection between corporeality and receptivity. Fakhr rejects the multiplicity of what is non-corporeal by invoking the

difference between part and whole; that is, the individual souls cannot be taken to be identical with the same one soul before division. He then adds that even if one accepts the divisibility of immaterial beings and the compatibility of immateriality with multiplicity, the resulting individual souls are products of division and therefore originate; and the claim of the advocates of origination concerns the origination of multiple souls, whether they were previously one or not.

In response to these formulations, Ṣadrā judges both the view and the method of the Peripatetics and Fakhr to be insufficient, locating the root of the problem in a kind of methodological exclusivism: the difference in the mode of being of the soul before the body, after its attachment to the body, and after separation from it is not a simple matter to be solved by a few hypothetical alternatives; rather, it is a fundamental issue that cannot be answered merely on the basis of Peripatetic premises (Shirāzī, *ibid.*, p. 338). Pure rationality, in Ṣadrā's view, is unable to explain how one passes from pre-natural unity to natural multiplicity and then returns again to immateriality. Hence, while citing Fakhr's answers in the discussion of the transformation of individual souls into actual intellects, he explicitly states that the investigation of this issue requires "a fresh beginning of inquiry in another mode" and that not every temperament is capable of grasping this path: "This is an issue the investigation of which requires a fresh beginning of inquiry in another mode ..."
(*ibid.*, pp. 337–338). Later, Fakhr also derives another paradox from a combination of certain Peripatetic principles:

1. the generic unity of souls;
2. the individuation of souls at the time of their origination in relation to bodies;
3. their individuation after separation by acquired intellectual apprehensions;

4. the hylomorphic status¹ of souls that do not apprehend universals.

According to Fakhr, the multiplicity of souls endowed with cognition after death can be explained, but what about souls lacking such intellectual apprehension? If their distinction in this world is due solely to the body, then what distinguishes them after separation? He rejects the Peripatetic answer—that the souls' self-awareness individuates them—because he regards immediate knowledge as identical with the soul's essence, whereas in the Peripatetic system individuation does not belong to essence. Fakhr sees the way out in essential generic distinction; Ṣadrā, however, does not agree with him. Ṣadrā concurs with the Peripatetics regarding the essential unity of souls and regards essential distinction as implying impossibility; nevertheless, he considers the objection unanswerable within the Peripatetic framework and holds that solving it requires introducing principles beyond the boundaries of Peripatetic philosophy.

Ṣadrā then enters into Peripatetic psychology and examines the soul's properties from that perspective. Here the discussion originates in the definition of the human being as **rational/capable of apprehending universals**: the essence of a thing is its form under the condition of exclusion; hence, for them, the reality of the soul returns to the apprehension of universals, and the persistence of the soul is likewise organized on that basis. The human soul, insofar as it is the bearer of universal and intelligible apprehensions, unlike animal and vegetative souls, is capable of enduring without the body. Since the

1. Hylomorphic refers to the Aristotelian doctrine that natural beings are composed of two intrinsic principles: matter (hylē) and form (morphē). Within the Peripatetic framework, many natural entities—including certain accounts of the soul—are understood in terms of such a matter-form composition.

simplicity of intelligible forms entails the simplicity of the soul as their locus, and simplicity entails incorruptibility, they conclude that corruption pertains to material beings, which contain the potentiality of non-being within themselves (ibid., p. 435). Šadrā regards this framework—apprehension of universals, simplicity, immateriality, and subsistence—as the furthest reach of the philosophers’ understanding of the soul; not that he denies it, but he insists that reducing the soul’s reality to these elements and remaining confined within them generates contradictions, including the following:

- If every simple thing is immaterial and every immaterial thing is temporally eternal, this becomes incompatible with origination.
- Given the immateriality of the soul, how is the numerical multiplicity of souls simultaneous with the multiplicity of bodies to be explained, and what is the criterion of their plurality?
- Explaining the transformation of the soul’s essence and its course of perfection—even through intellectual apprehensions—is difficult in the Peripatetic system, because the denial of substantial motion leads to the soul’s essence remaining fixed from beginning to end.

In addition, a set of Peripatetic philosophical-logical principles leads to yet another contradiction: the distinction between matter/genus and form/differentia as a distinction of reason, the unity of form and differentia, the constitutive role of differentia for species, the mental existence of genus and its accidental status in this respect, and the treatment of the rational soul as the differentiating form of composite beings made of soul and body. On these premises, the rational soul is the form of bodily matter; and since predication of genus over

differentia is valid and both are existent in external reality through a single existence, body must also be predicated of the rational soul, and such predication would indicate some kind of external unity. This, however, is incompatible with the position of those who hold the rational soul to be immaterial both in origination and in subsistence (ibid., vol. 8, p. 345). Ṣadrā takes this not as a denial of the original premises, but as evidence of an inconsistency within the Peripatetic structure and as a manifestation of a fundamental gap that he later traces through the views of its proponents.

1-2) Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī

Mullā Ṣadrā represents Abū al-Barakāt's argument indirectly through Fakhr in *al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyya*. Hence, setting aside the question of how far Ṣadrā's report corresponds to Abū al-Barakāt's original words, we will rely here solely on Ṣadrā's narration. On this account, Abū al-Barakāt's argument is built on the rejection of eternity: if the soul existed before the body, then either it had already belonged to other bodies (transmigration or *tanāsukh*) or it had not, in which case it would have remained suspended from its proper acts (suspension or *ta'īl*). By means of various theological arguments, he refutes both possibilities and therefore concludes that the soul originates. Although Ṣadrā finds this argument extremely weak, he nonetheless critiques it and, in addition to substantive criticisms, raises a methodological objection as well: restricting the possible states to the two alternatives of transmigration (*tanāsukh*) or suspension (*ta'īl*) is unjustified, and other possibilities—such as the hypothesis of non-material bodies—must also be taken into account (ibid., vol. 8, pp. 341–342).

1-3) Shaykh al-Ishrāq (Suhrawardī)

Despite his inclination toward Plato, Suhrawardī agrees with the

Peripatetics in this issue and defends the spiritual origination of the soul. He regards souls as among the governing lights (*anwār mudabbira/ishpahbadī*), which are immaterial yet attached to bodies and receive effusion from the overpowering lights. Ṣadrā represents three arguments from him. In the first argument, Suhrawardī, like the Peripatetics, examines and rejects the states and impossibilities entailed by the hypothesis of the soul's eternity, though with differences that are largely formal and arise from his own luminous metaphysics (Shirāzī, vol. 8, pp. 348–349; 2001, vol. 2, p. 287). The key difference here is that Shaykh al-Ishrāq, unlike the Peripatetics who generally accept gradation only in accidents, also considers substances to be susceptible to intensification and gradation; this affects his account of the differentiation of souls.

By analyzing Suhrawardī's arguments, Ṣadrā attributes some mistakes to invalid commitments or misunderstandings; for example, he rejects the entailment between the unity of souls and the sharing of cognition—especially in cognitions dependent on bodily faculties—and he also rejects the possibility of subsequent multiplicity through bodily division, since quantitative unity is only one kind of unity, alongside other kinds such as intellectual, specific, generic, and individual unity (*ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 349–353). Nonetheless, Ṣadrā regards some objections as structural; for instance, he does not accept the differentiation of souls through gradation or accidents and sees souls as modes of a single reality that, while multiple, do not possess independent existential distinction.

In Ṣadrā's criticisms of Suhrawardī's later arguments, another methodological point becomes salient: the Shaykh's rejection of "descent" (*hubūt*) in his system, Ṣadrā argues, entails consequences that also lead to the rejection of "ascent" (*su'ūd*), thereby producing a foundational gap. In contrast, within Ṣadrā's own theory, belief in

descent and origination is compatible. He reinforces the possibility of descent by invoking the verse “As We originated the first creation, so we shall repeat it” and by analogizing ascent to descent, thereby extending the discussion partly into the realm of scriptural support (ibid., vol. 8, p. 354). In other formulations of Suhrawardī as well, Ṣadrā often shows that restricting possibilities or inferring an infinite regress is valid only if there is an actual ordering among the items in question; if there is no such ordering, the conclusion does not follow. He also advances a coherence-based critique concerning the compatibility of some of Suhrawardī’s positions with his other principles, such as the **the archetype of the species (rabb al-naw‘)** and gradation among lights (ibid., pp. 370–371).

2) Believers in the Soul’s Pre-Eternity

In opposition to the belief in the soul’s temporal origination, a group of philosophers maintains that immaterial souls existed prior to the origination of bodies and subsequently became attached to them upon their creation. Mullā Ṣadrā classifies those who hold the soul’s priority over the body into three categories: Plato, the radical Platonists, and the advocates of transmigration (*tanāsukh*). He does not offer a detailed critique of transmigration here, deferring it to the ninth volume of the *Asfār*; instead, he focuses on those theories that have, in some way, penetrated Islamic thought. In this discussion, he endeavors to provide a hermeneutical interpretation (*ta’wīl*) of Plato’s view to make it compatible with his own position, while rejecting the other two theories.

2-1) Plato’s Theory and Islamic Revelatory Knowledge

According to the famous historical account, the doctrine of the soul’s pre-eternity in philosophy is traced back to Plato and his discourse on

the Forms (*al-muthul*) as immutable, eternal realities. According to Ṣadrā, Plato does not explicitly assert the “multiplied existence of souls prior to the body”; nevertheless, two distinct readings of this view found their way into Islamic thought. The first reading takes the pre-eternal existence of the Forms to mean the distinct, individual existence of all souls in pre-eternity. In response, Ṣadrā seeks to offer an alternative reading based on two considerations: first, Plato did not explicitly state the priority of multiplied existences; second, the issue is not merely a philosophical, single-text problem, and given its religious dimension, one must not rely solely on philosophical data. Consequently, alongside rational-demonstrative data, Ṣadrā utilizes scriptural data (*naqlī*), invoking the revealed scriptures (*The Qur’ān and Hadith*), the symbols of the prophets, and the allusions of the saints (*ishārāt al-awliyā*): “... for in the Noble Qur’ān, the descent (*hubūt*) of the soul is mentioned” (Shīrāzī, vol. 8, p. 335). He also references specific Qur’ānic verses (e.g., al-A’rāf 7:25 and 7:29, al-Tīn 95:4–5), Hadith narrations, and mystical allegories (such as *Salāmān and Absāl*, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, and *The Ring-necked Dove [al-Ḥamāma al-Muṭawwaqa]* in *Kalīla and Dimna*) to demonstrate how difficult it is to comprehend these scriptural data within the theoretical framework of those advocates of origination who deny the soul’s prior existence.

Thus, Ṣadrā’s methodological pluralism extends to the level of “gathering sources”: although committed to the temporal origination of the soul, he does not completely dismiss its “pre-eternity,” but rather attempts to formulate a hermeneutical interpretation: “The interpretation of what has been transmitted from Plato regarding the pre-eternity of souls” (Shīrāzī, *ibid.*, p. 331). And also: “We have oriented their two statements concerning the pre-eternity and the origination of souls in a manner that accords with their intent and unifies their meaning” (*ibid.*, p. 333). From Ṣadrā’s perspective, Plato’s intended

meaning of the pre-eternity of souls is not a multiplied and particular existence, but rather a mode of unified, intellectual existence: the existence of the soul in the intelligible realm prior to its natural existence, characterized by a collective unity and cognitive identity—namely, the “immaterial intellectual forms” which are the Divine Forms (ibid., p. 333). In this way, the verses and traditions concerning the soul’s “descent” are interpreted as indicating something other than the multiplied existence of souls, allowing them to be integrated into Ṣadrā’s theoretical network alongside its other components.

2-2) The Radical Platonists

Another group, whom Ṣadrā calls “the fanatics of Plato’s school” (*al-muta’asṣibūn min madhhab Aflātūn*) (Shīrāzī, ibid.), maintains that souls existed as distinct and multiplied entities prior to their attachment to bodies. Ṣadrā critiques both their understanding of Plato and their interpretation of the concept of the soul’s descent in Islamic teachings. Their first argument rests on two principles: the immateriality of the soul, and the premise that temporal origination must be preceded by matter and time, because a temporally originated thing requires a prior potentiality/readiness and a material bearer (Ibrāhīmī Dīnānī, 1987, vol. 1, p. 215). Therefore, immaterial entities cannot be temporally originated, and the immateriality of the soul becomes incompatible with origination (Shīrāzī, 2011, p. 331 p. 333). Ṣadrā argues that resolving this conflict is possible by shifting the underlying principles, since his conception of the soul’s immateriality in Transcendent Philosophy is not identical to that of earlier philosophers—especially those who held the complete immateriality of the soul from the very beginning of its origination.

Their second argument refers to a principle of classical physics: the eternity of natural species and the infinity of individuals.

From this, they infer that if the soul is temporally originated, the actually existing souls must be infinite, whereas any number that is subject to addition must be finite (Miṣbāh, 1401 AHsh, p. 232). Ṣadrā replies that the impossibility of the infinite is conditional upon specific constraints, such as ordering (*tarattub*) and coexistence in existence; since these constraints do not apply to departed souls, the objection of infinity does not hold against the origination of souls in that sense. Their third argument—which carries greater sensitivity within the structure of Islamic philosophy—concerns how to transition from temporal origination/temporality to eternity/timelessness. Ṣadrā attempts to resolve this by distinguishing between two aspects of the soul: its essential, incorruptible aspect, and its relational, originated, and corruptible aspect (Shīrāzī, *ibid.*, p. 334).

2-3) Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī's (1236–1311) Argument for the Soul's Pre-Eternity

Mullā Ṣadrā reports the view of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī—the commentator on *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*—after discussing Shaykh al-Ishrāq, and then subjects it to criticism. Quṭb al-Dīn considers Suhrawardī's proofs for the soul's origination—which rely on the refutation of transmigration—to be “persuasive rather than demonstrative.” He deems transmigration rationally possible, thereby strengthening the case for pre-eternity and invoking Plato, Qur'ānic verses, and Hadith in support. Ṣadrā rejects both of Quṭb al-Dīn's premises and characterizes his attribution of this view to Plato and “the great ancients” as “a fabricated falsehood” (*mukhtalaq kadhib*) (Shīrāzī, vol. 8, pp. 373–376). Quṭb al-Dīn offers a causal (*limmī*) formulation for the pre-eternity of the soul: if the complete cause is immaterial (the Intellect), its effect (the soul) must also be pre-eternal; he regards the relation between body and soul as that of an instrument to its agent,

rather than that of matter to form. Hence, the body is a condition for the soul's activity, not for its actualization, and the soul persists after separation (ibid., vol. 8, p. 375). Şadrā accepts the rule that “the immateriality of the complete cause entails the pre-eternity of the effect” within a specific domain, but argues that its scope is limited to simple effects devoid of matter and time (such as the Intellects), not the soul, which is a substance that governs a body. According to Şadrā, the soul originates simultaneously with the body, and with the dissolution of the body, its relational existence also dissolves; however, the essence of the soul, through its perfecting substantial motion, transforms into an immaterial substance. Therefore, Quṭb al-Dīn's arguments are insufficient to prove either the soul's pre-eternity or its subsistence; Şadrā attributes this error to the incorrect application of the causal principle (ibid., p. 378). He also points out the fallacy of “taking the accidental in place of the essential” (*akhdh mā bi-l-'araḍ makān mā bi-l-dhāt*): Quṭb al-Dīn treats the relational aspect of the soul as accidental, whereas in Şadrā's view, the very mode of the soul's existence is essentially relational and connective, and assuming its prior existence would entail suspension (*ta'īl*) (ibid., p. 376).

Mullā Şadrā's Theory and Its Methodological Logic in Explaining the Origination of the Soul

After reporting and critiquing earlier views on the origination and pre-eternity of the soul, Mullā Şadrā presents his own theory not merely as an alternative opinion, but as an explanatory framework that, in his view, preserves the strengths of rival positions while resolving their internal tensions. His central thesis—the soul's corporeal origination and spiritual subsistence is not simply a claim about the soul's beginning or end. Rather, it is the outcome of a broader ontological and

psychological system; apart from that system, the theory is either reduced to an oversimplified formulation or confused with earlier doctrines.

The methodological significance of this discussion lies in the fact that Ṣadrā does not rely on a single type of proof. On the one hand, he grounds his theory in the general principles of Transcendent Philosophy, especially the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*), the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), and substantial motion (*al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya*). On the other hand, in explaining the levels of the soul and its relation to the worlds of being, he draws on elements that cannot be derived from Peripatetic demonstration alone. His theory should therefore be understood as marked by plurality at the level of argument, yet unity at the level of principle. In other words, his method is synthetic, but this synthesis does not consist in a loose accumulation of heterogeneous claims; rather, it consists in integrating diverse elements within the horizon of a unified ontological foundation. This theory rests on two fundamental pillars: first, the soul's three levels of existence (*nasha'āt*) and the distinction between **cognitive existence** (*wujūd 'ilmī*) —the existence of things in the divine knowledge— and **actual existence** (*wujūd 'aynī*); second, the doctrine of substantial motion. The first makes it possible to explain the distinction between the soul's pre-individual aspect and its individuated aspect; the second explains how the soul passes from the material level to the immaterial one. Thus, if the theory of the soul's levels of existence clarifies the ontological structure of the discussion, substantial motion provides its developmental and genetic logic (see in: Shirazi, vol. 8, p. 346).

3-1) The Soul's Different Ontological levels of existence and the Problem of Individuation

One of the most difficult dimensions of Ṣadrā's theory is to explain

the relation between the soul's unity at the pre-natural level and its multiplicity at the level of attachment to bodies. Ṣadrā ascribes to the soul distinct levels, which may be summarized in three levels of existence:

1. the pre-natural level: the soul's cognitive existence in relation to its agent
2. the natural level: its existence in relation to the material cause, together with the body
3. the post-natural level: its existence in itself as an immaterial reality

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The significance of this division lies not merely in describing three "temporal stages," but in distinguishing three modes of existential realization. If these levels are understood simply as three separate moments in time, the metaphysical precision of the theory is lost.

In the pre-natural level, the soul has not yet been realized as an individual and determinate entity. What is meant by this level is the soul's existence in relation to its cause, or in its cognitive and collective mode: an existence in which the soul possesses a kind of unity, though not numerical personal unity. Such a unity, which appears in the works of Plato, Plotinus, and in non-dual traditions such as Zen and Buddhism concerning the universal soul, does not possess a numerical character. Rather, it falls within panentheistic interpretations that present a unitive vision of the transcendent realm, in which the soul is understood as a part or expression of that reality. This theme can be found across mystical traditions, including Islamic mysticism (Stace, 1961, pp. 307-320).

For this reason, Ṣadrā's view should not be too quickly identified with the Platonic theory of Forms, the mystical doctrine of "immutable entities" (*a'yān thābita*), or the separate forms of the

Neoplatonic tradition, even though a certain structural affinity can be discerned among them. What may be established here is rather a hermeneutical and narrative connection: what Plato called the “pre-eternity of souls” and what religious texts describe as the “descent” of the soul can, on this interpretive reading, be reconciled with corporeal origination. By invoking the Qur’ānic verse, ‘As We began the first creation, We will repeat it’ (21:104), and by analogizing the ascent to the descent, he deems the descent also possible and proceeds with the remainder of the discussion using scriptural evidence. The soul exists in divine knowledge—not in the external world—in a unified and non-individuated manner; when the body becomes prepared, this cognitive existence is transformed into an individuated and originated actual existence in matter. Ṣadrā himself makes clear that this truth cannot be grasped through demonstration alone, but requires mystical witnessing and scriptural corroboration, although he never denies the authority of philosophical demonstration (Shīrāzī, 1981, vol.8, p. 370).

The crucial distinction is that, in Ṣadrā’s system, this level must be interpreted in relation to the primacy of existence and the gradation of existence, not as a return to some independently fixed essential quiddity. The important point is that the soul in this first level—unlike some monistic mystical readings—is neither an eternal soul that is one in the sense of a single person, nor an externally real and multiplied existence. Rather, what Ṣadrā means by the soul’s existence before the body is its cognitive existence in the knowledge of the agent (the Necessary Being) or in the separate intellects. This existence lacks numerical individuation and external particularity; it belongs to the order of cognitive forms, whose multiplicity follows from the multiplicity of the known objects, not from the multiplicity of externally separate immaterial substances. Ṣadrā explicitly states in the *Aṣfār* (ibid, vol. 8, pp. 366–367) that “the existence of a thing in

relation to its agent is its strongest existence,” but this strength pertains to collective and cognitive unity, not to separate personal existence: “The soul’s unity in that level is a collective unity encompassing the other levels, not a numerical unity capable of division” (ibid, vol. 9, p. 412). In that level, the soul has not yet become the individual “I.” Its individuation arises in conjunction with the body and within the horizon of its perfective motion. For that reason, the natural level is not merely the site of the soul’s accidental attachment to the body; it is the very arena in which individuation emerges. This point marks Ṣadrā’s fundamental distance from theories that regard the soul from the outset as an actually existing, immaterial, and personally determinate entity, whose relation to the body is secondary or merely administrative. By contrast, Ṣadrā insists that the human soul, at the beginning of its origination, arises within nature itself and through the perfective motion of matter. That said, it must be acknowledged that Ṣadrā’s account of the precise relation between the soul’s pre-natural unity and the multiplicity of personal souls is not entirely free from ambiguity. In some passages, he himself suggests that a complete understanding of this relation exceeds the capacity of ordinary demonstration. Methodologically, the significance of this lies in the fact that instead of denying one side of the problem, Ṣadrā seeks to redefine it by distinguishing levels of existence. His principal move, therefore, is not to eliminate the tension, but to show that the tension arises only when the soul’s existential levels are collapsed into one another.¹

1. Mullā Ṣadrā posits that post-bodily existence spans two supra-natural realms: the imaginal and the intellectual. He distinguishes between perfected souls, which ascend to the intellectual realm, and imperfect or wretched souls, which remain in the imaginal, thereby elucidating the varying degrees of the soul's immortality (Shīrāzī, 2007, p.312-313).

3-2) Substantial Motion and the Coming-to-Be of the Soul

If the theory of the soul's ontological levels clarifies the distinction among its existential levels, substantial motion explains how the soul rises from a level dependent on matter to one independent of matter. Here substantial motion is not merely one premise among others; it is the very condition of possibility of the theory. Without it, explaining how a material being—or a being dependent on matter—can attain immateriality becomes exceedingly difficult, and the theory would either be forced back toward the thesis of the soul's prior immateriality or fail to explain its subsistence after bodily separation. Within the framework of Transcendent Philosophy, the soul is not, from the outset, a fixed substance with a fully completed essence; rather, it is a graded and intensifying reality. This conception is directly tied to the doctrines of the primacy of existence and the gradation of the levels of being. On this basis, change in the soul does not pertain merely to its accidents or acts; rather, a kind of perfection and intensification occurs in its very substance. At the beginning, in its weakest existential degree, the soul is strongly dependent on the body; but in the course of its perfective motion, it reaches a level at which its acts no longer depend on material instruments, and a mode of immateriality is thereby realized.

In the second level, the soul originates corporeally: that is, at the beginning of its emergence, it is a material substance dependent on the body, not immaterial from the outset. This marks Ṣadrā's difference from both the Peripatetics and the Illuminationists, who take the soul to be spiritual from the very moment of origination. Yet within this same natural level, by means of substantial motion—which Ṣadrā establishes throughout the whole of material substance—the soul gradually moves from materiality to immateriality and from potentiality to intellectual actuality. In this process, the soul's quiddity

does not change into another quiddity, nor is its personal unity destroyed; rather, the graded levels of the soul's existence are traversed in terms of intensity and weakness without interruption of identity. Ṣadrā explains this transformation through the principle of the gradation of existence, which itself follows from the primacy of existence. The result is that the soul is corporeal at the beginning of its origination, but spiritual and enduring in its subsistence and in its acts of intellection. Moreover, the soul's supra-natural life is not confined to the intellective level alone; the imaginal level (*nash'a khayāliyya*) also provides another mode of non-material subsistence for deficient souls, such as the wretched (Shīrāzī, 1981, p. 313).

The importance of this analysis lies in the fact that Ṣadrā thereby reconstructs the rigid binary of "material/immaterial" as an existential process. The soul is neither fully immaterial from the outset nor merely material to the end; rather, it passes through its levels within motion itself. This formulation not only grounds the explanation of the soul's spiritual subsistence, but also helps explain, from Ṣadrā's perspective, why earlier thinkers disagreed: each had grasped one level of the soul and then generalized that level to the whole of its reality. It should also be noted that immateriality itself has degrees in Ṣadrā's system. Accordingly, the soul's subsistence after separation from the body is not restricted to the intellective level; the imaginal level may also constitute a degree of the soul's non-material life. This point is especially important in explaining the posthumous persistence of imperfect souls and shows that, in Transcendent Philosophy, the soul's relation to the levels of cognition is hierarchical and analogical, not abrupt and dualistic.

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the secret behind the divergence of earlier philosophers' views largely stems from their neglect of substantial motion (Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 8, pp. 346–347). This principle

transforms the soul from a fully actualized, fixed, and motionless essence—which merely changes its abode and temporarily descends from an exalted station into the confinement of body and matter—into a fluid and gradational existence possessing multiple degrees.¹ The Peripatetic philosophers admitted gradation only in accidents, while Suhrawardī subsequently allowed it also in substantial quiddities (Suhrawardī, 1993, vol. 2, p. 119). With Mullā Ṣadrā’s doctrine of the primacy of existence, however, gradation is ultimately attributed to existence itself.

3-3) The Final Formulation of the Theory: Corporeal Origination and Spiritual Subsistence

The outcome of these two pillars is that the human soul, with respect to its origination, depends on the world of nature and is, in Ṣadrā’s phrase, **corporeal in origination**; but with respect to its subsistence and its higher cognitive actualities, it acquires a spiritual and immaterial degree. Here corporeal origination should not be understood to mean that the soul is material in its entire reality, just as spiritual subsistence or survive does not mean denying the soul’s developmental continuity with the body at its initial stage. These two expressions refer to two aspects of the soul’s existential course, not to two independent substances. From this perspective, three levels of the soul’s realization may be distinguished:

- **the pre-personal level:** the soul is considered in a collective and non-personal mode
- **the level of natural individuation:** the soul acquires

1. A reference to Ibn Sīnā’s *al-Qaṣīda al-‘Aynīyya*, which opens with the verse: “It descended to you from the most exalted station, a dove possessed of dignity and reserve” (Khalīf, 1974, p. 129).

individual identity in conjunction with the body and within the course of perfective motion

- **the level of immaterial subsistence:** after traversing the stages of perfection, the soul attains a degree of existential independence from matter

This formulation shows that Ṣadrā's theory does not seek a mechanical reconciliation between the two opposing views of the soul's pre-eternity and origination. Rather, it seeks to show that these two positions, if understood as referring to two different aspects of the soul's being, can be reinterpreted within a hierarchical and non-contradictory structure. His theory is thus not merely a compromise among doctrines, but a redefinition of the very basis of the dispute.

Levels of Argument in Ṣadrā's Theory

To understand Ṣadrā's methodology more precisely, one must distinguish the different levels of argument in his account. This distinction shows that the plurality of sources in his theory is not a sign of incoherence, but reflects the differentiation of justificatory layers.

The Demonstrative-Philosophical Level: At its most fundamental level, Ṣadrā's theory rests on the demonstrative foundations of Transcendent Philosophy. Substantial motion, the primacy of existence, and the gradation of existence constitute the principal elements of this level. Here Ṣadrā seeks to show that the soul, like other natural beings, is fluid and perfective in its very substance, and that both the soul's origination and the possibility of its subsistence can be explained through an existential analysis of the soul and its relation to matter. This layer forms the backbone of the theory; without it, the other elements of his method would lack an ordered place.

The Unveiling-Intuitive Level: In certain places—especially where the distinction and relation among the soul’s cognitive existence (one and non-individuated), natural existence (corporeal and individuated), and immaterial existence after death are at issue, or where the unity and multiplicity of the soul and the way in which its pre-natural levels are apprehended are under discussion—Şadrā explicitly states that demonstration alone is insufficient for a complete grasp of the matter. This does not amount to a rejection of demonstration, but rather to an acknowledgment of its limits in certain boundary questions. At this level, witnessing or unveiling (*kashf*) assumes a complementary role. It is important, however, to stress that in Şadrā’s system unveiling does not replace demonstration; rather, where demonstration reaches its threshold, unveiling broadens the horizon of understanding. Şadrā explicitly states that “restricting the method to demonstration alone” is insufficient for understanding this truth, but this does not mean setting demonstration aside; rather, it means completing it through mystical witnessing and recourse to unveiling and sound spiritual taste. Hence he refers to Pythagoras, who in a visionary disclosure had beheld his own existential levels (*ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 370).

The Confirmatory-Interpretive Religious Level: The third level is the use of Qur’ānic verses and Hadith. At this level, Şadrā employs religious texts as a source for confirming, deepening, and at times re-reading philosophical concepts. Verses such as “Descend!” (*ihbiṭū*) (The Qur’an 2:38) and the covenant verse of “*alast*”¹ are interpreted in light of the theory of the soul’s cognitive existence and

1. “When your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, ‘Am I not your Lord?’ and they replied, ‘Yes, we bear witness!’” (*The Qur’an*, 7: 172).

thereby become corroborative of corporeal origination. The relation of transmitted revelation (*naql*) to demonstration here is not merely ornamental. In some cases, the religious text functions as a horizon for understanding aspects of truth that philosophy alone can illuminate only partially. Even so, from the standpoint of systematic construction, this level is understood under the general principles of Transcendent Philosophy, not independently of them.

In sum, Ṣadrā's method may be described as synthetic yet disciplined. He appropriates diverse elements from different traditions, but this appropriation is not an unregulated aggregation. Rather, each principle is admitted into his theoretical structure only insofar as it can be integrated and reinterpreted within the horizon of the general principles of Transcendent Philosophy—especially the primacy and gradation of existence. Accordingly, his theory operates with three foundational levels: the philosophical foundation (substantial motion), the mystical foundation (a unity-oriented view of the levels of being), and the religious foundation (the interpretation of Qur'ānic verses and Hadith). These levels function together in a hierarchical order, not as scattered and incompatible elements.

Ṣadrā's Interdisciplinary Approach and Its Affinity with the Integrative Model

Ṣadrā's Interdisciplinary Approach and Its Affinity with the Integrative Model From Mullā Ṣadrā's engagement with diverse intellectual traditions—ranging from the Platonists, the Peripatetics, and the Illuminationists to the *Theologia* (the Arabic Plotinus translation), theoretical mysticism (especially Ibn 'Arabī), kalām theologians such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and, above all, the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth—it becomes clear that he recognized the multi-genealogical character of the problem of the

soul. The question of the soul's origination or pre-existence emerges at the intersection of philosophical psychology, metaphysics, mystical anthropology, theology, and scriptural interpretation, and Ṣadrā's treatment of the issue reflects a clear awareness of this plurality of sources. Ṣadrā himself emphasizes the subtlety of the problem and warns against methodological reductionism. He describes it as a "delicate path of inquiry and profound in depth" (*daqīqat al-maslak ba'īdat al-ghawr*) (Shīrāzī, 1981, vol. 8, p. 343), and remarks that its discussion requires a mode of investigation "other than purely philosophical and demonstrative discourse" (ibid., vol. 8, pp. 337–338). Such statements indicate that the complexity of the problem cannot be exhausted by the procedures of a single discipline. Yet this methodological plurality does not lead Ṣadrā toward eclecticism. Rather, the diverse intellectual resources are organized within the metaphysical framework of Transcendent Philosophy, especially through the principles of the primacy of existence, the gradation of existence, and substantial motion. In this respect, Ṣadrā's approach shows a notable affinity with interdisciplinary models of inquiry discussed in contemporary methodological literature (Farāmarz. Q., 2016, p. 388). These models begin from the recognition that certain problems possess a multidimensional structure and therefore require the coordinated use of different forms of knowledge. Instead of restricting inquiry to a single disciplinary perspective, they employ multiple conceptual and methodological tools in order to illuminate the various dimensions of a complex problem. Within the literature on interdisciplinarity, at least two major models are often distinguished: the challenging (or competitive) model and the integrative model. In the challenging model, different disciplines confront one another critically and expose the assumptions and limitations of competing approaches. By contrast, the integrative model seeks to coordinate insights from different fields in order to construct a more comprehensive

explanatory framework (Newell, 2013, pp. 22–32).

When Ṣadrā's treatment of the problem of the soul is examined in this light, several methodological features become apparent. First, he presents earlier doctrines—those of Plato, the Peripatetics, the Illuminationists, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī—in a detailed and philosophically sympathetic manner, thereby reconstructing the historical debate surrounding the soul's origination or pre-eternity. Second, he subjects these positions to critical analysis, distinguishing defensible insights from elements that generate conceptual difficulties. Third, the defensible elements are reinterpreted within the metaphysical principles of Transcendent Philosophy, particularly the doctrines of substantial motion and the gradation of existence. Within this framework, the soul is understood not as a static substance but as a dynamic reality whose existential intensity undergoes continuous transformation. Alongside this philosophical reinterpretation, Ṣadrā employs a plurality of complementary methods. Rational demonstration clarifies the ontological foundations of the discussion, mystical insight illuminates the existential trajectory of the soul, and scriptural sources—especially Qur'ānic verses and transmitted ḥadīths concerning creation, resurrection, and the afterlife—are interpreted within the broader metaphysical horizon of his philosophy. Through this interaction of historical exposition, critical evaluation, and systematic reinterpretation, Ṣadrā constructs the conceptual context within which the doctrine of the soul's "corporeal origination and spiritual subsistence" is articulated. In this sense, the emergence of this doctrine can be examined as the result of a sustained engagement with multiple intellectual traditions and methodological resources rather than the outcome of a single disciplinary perspective. Within this analytical context, the distinction between Ṣadrā's procedure and mere

eclecticism becomes clearer. Eclecticism typically involves the unregulated combination of doctrines from different traditions without a unifying conceptual structure. Ṣadrā's engagement with diverse sources, however, takes place within a determinate philosophical architecture governed by explicit metaphysical principles. His approach is therefore characterized by the precedence of critique before the adoption of inherited doctrines, the presence of guiding principles such as the primacy of existence and substantial motion, and the incorporation of insights from different traditions within a single systematic philosophical horizon.

Conclusion

The methodological analysis undertaken in this study has shown that Mullā Ṣadrā, in addressing the complex problem of the origination (*ḥudūth*) and subsistence (*baqā'*) of the soul, employs a systematic and multi-dimensional model that remains free from eclecticism while exhibiting notable affinities with certain contemporary interdisciplinary approaches. The principal features of this method may be summarized under three main headings:

- 1) The Stage of Comparative Critique:** Rather than wholly rejecting or uncritically adopting the views of his predecessors, Mullā Ṣadrā adopts a critical–selective approach, distinguishing defensible elements within each school from propositions he considers untenable. For example, he accepts from the Peripatetics the principle of the “unity of souls at the beginning of origination,” yet reinterprets it within the framework of the gradation of existence. Likewise, he appropriates the Platonic doctrine of Forms, but through religious hermeneutics rearticulates

it as the doctrine of the “immaterial hosts of spirits” in the pre-temporal covenantal realm (‘ālam al-alast).

2) The Stage of Organic Integration (Not Eclecticism):

Ṣadrā’s central innovation lies in integrating selected elements from philosophical, mystical, theological, and scriptural traditions into a coherent and hierarchically ordered framework through principled interpretation (*ta’wīl*). This integration is governed by stable metaphysical principles —most notably the “primacy of existence” and “substantial motion” and therefore does not result in a conflation of doctrines or internal contradiction. On the contrary, each adopted element is deepened and completed in light of more fundamental principles. Within this unified architecture, empirical observations (such as the stages of embryonic development), rational demonstrations (e.g., the immateriality of the soul), mystical insights, and scriptural sources (*Qur’ānic verses* and *ḥadīths* concerning the afterlife) are all situated within a single, comprehensive theoretical system.

3) The Stage of Theoretical Innovation through Purposeful Methodological Pluralism: Mullā Ṣadrā explicitly maintains that resolving this problem requires the concurrent employment of multiple methods:

- Rational demonstration (*burhān*) to articulate the theoretical foundations of the discussion, such as the individuation of the soul_ and to resolve the apparent paradox between origination and immortality by means of substantial motion and the gradation of existence;
- Theoretical mysticism to elucidate the soul’s descent

and return, as well as its pre-individuated mode of being;

- Scriptural reasoning (*naql*) through the hermeneutical interpretation of *Qur'ānic* verses and transmitted reports in support of these metaphysical claims.

Although he affirms methodological plurality, this plurality does not entail a lack of unity. Rather, these diverse instruments are ordered toward a single, integrated doctrine culminating in the formulation of his well-known thesis of the “corporeal origination and spiritual subsistence of the soul”. In light of the foregoing, Mullā Ṣadrā’s method—by attending simultaneously to multiple dimensions of the problem, systematically employing diverse methodologies, and achieving a comprehensive and trans-perspectival synthesis—may be regarded as broadly comparable to integrative models in contemporary interdisciplinary studies. Yet unlike eclectic approaches, his synthesis rests upon three foundational principles: the priority of critique over integration, the subordination of pluralism to clearly defined methodological and metaphysical principles, and its articulation within a single, unified philosophical system—namely, the Transcendent Philosophy. In doing so, Ṣadrā establishes a framework for epistemic convergence among the various domains of knowledge operative in his intellectual milieu.

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