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### MULLA SADRA'S THOUGHTS AND SOLUTIONS ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

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#### ABSTRACT

The problem of evil is one of the cases that has always been discussed by various thinkers throughout history and has attracted their attention, and this is due to its complex nature and on the other hand its conflict with the divine attributes as well as the good system. In his works, especially Asfar Arbaeh, which is his most important work of Mulla Sadra, he has paid special attention to the problem of evil. According to Mulla Sadra, evil is the lack of the essence of a thing or the lack of perfection and it is non-existent. Examining the nature of evil in Mulla Sadra's thought and explaining its relationship with the divine attributes and system of this world and expressing the types and solutions of evil is something that can make us more familiar with evil in Mulla Sadra's system of thought as one of the greatest Islamic philosophers. In this article, with a descriptive-analytical method and citing library sources, an attempt is made to comprehensively study the nature of evil in Mulla Sadra's intellectual system, and the most important attention is to Asfar Arbaeh as his most important work. Mulla Sadra considers evil as a requirement of the good system of this world, which in a minimal sense is a requirement of the nature of this world, and by using it well, many charities can be obtained.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of evil has always been the source of the existence and emergence of doubts about the existence of God and divine attributes, which in fact has been one of the most fundamental preconditions for rational criticism of arguments based on theism or the absoluteness of divine attributes. In the meantime, the question arises that if God is pure good and created the world well, then why does man face evil? And on the other hand, with events such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, etc, the balance of nature is disturbed? The existence of such questions throughout the history of human thought has made the problem of evil one of the most fascinating and at the same time one of the main challenges of theism.

In modern times, the problem of evil has provided the most serious rational critique of the arguments for belief in God or the absoluteness of God's attributes. The diversity of the debate has led many theologians, philosophers, and thinkers in the East and the West to address about evil. The existence of shortcomings, distortions, all kinds of disasters and injustices in the world of human evolution raises questions about the originality of these matters (Spinoza, 1987, 82). The existence of such matters has led some, such as J.L. Makki and William Rowe, to use the existence of evil as a pretext for atheism and denial of the existence of God, and this has led to the problem of evil becoming a refuge for atheism in modern times.

Mulla Sadra, who had played a major role in the development of Islamic philosophy, has paid special attention to the problem of evil in his various works, especially the precious work "Asfar Arbaeh". According to Mulla Sadra, the existence of evil is part of the nature of this world, and this world, which is the material world, cannot be imagined without the existence of evil, but nevertheless, these evils play a minimal role and lead to the acquisition of charity. Mulla Sadra considers evil to be non-existent, and believes that the things we consider evil are in fact either good or a prelude to achieving good, and their evil thinking is due to ignorance and lack of proper understanding of the facts of those matters. According to Mulla Sadra, God is pure good and this material world has been issued from Him and He is a creator who is more complete and complete than the outside of the imagination and is the only creator of the universe.

In the article "study of the confrontation of evil non-thinking with the problem of perceptual evil from Mulla Sadra's point of view, written by Masoumeh Ameri and Zohreh Tavaziani", only the nature of perceptual evil in Mulla Sadra's system of thought and the lack of understanding of this type of evil in his view is emphasized and the nature of other types of evil and Mulla Sadra's solutions and explanation of the relationship between evil and divine actions and attributes are neglected. Also in the article "study of the problem of evil in the philosophical approach with emphasis on Mulla Sadra's point of view, written by Ghorban Ali Karimzadeh Gharamaleki "In fact, the emphasis has been on the nihilism of evil in Mulla Sadra's thought, and like the first article, addressing other aspects of evil and mentioning solutions to its problem has been neglected from Mulla Sadra's point of view. In this research, we try to first study the nature of evil and explain its relationship with the divine attributes and the good system of this world from Mulla Sadra's point of view, and then explain the types of evil and Mulla Sadra's solutions for solving the evil problem and we try to answer these questions by using reliable references and appropriate analysis;

What is Mulla Sadra's description of the nature of evil? Is evil non-existent or existential? Can evil be a violation of the divine attributes and the good system of this world? How many types does Mulla Sadra consider evil? How can charity be achieved in the face of evil? What solutions has Mulla Sadra stated to solve the problem of evil?

## 2. THE NATURE OF EVIL

In his various works, Mulla Sadra has expressed various discussions about evil and, as appropriate, has examined the nature of evil. The manifestation of the problem of evil and Mulla Sadra's answers and views in his various works are evidence of the importance of the problem of evil in Mulla Sadra's view.

The evil argument in Mulla Sadra's works is a philosophical argument, not a theological problem, and the difference between the two methods is that the theologian method is persuasive and controversial, and the philosopher also deals with rational reasoning. Therefore, the argument is based on the will of God, faith and Infidelity leads and misleads. In topics such as the quality of the entry of evil into divine judgment, he discusses how evil is compatible with the good system and also discusses the nature of evil. In continuation of the philosophical answer to the problem of evil, the question of the nature and origin and why of evil, its absoluteness and relativity and its relationship with the attributes of goodness and divine power such as absolute knowledge and absolute power, is of central importance (Sadat Madani, 1396, 6).

Mulla Sadra in the definition of evil states: "Evil is the absence of the essence of a thing or the lack of perfection of the perfections to which the object belongs in the sense that it is the same object" (Mulla Sadra, 1928, 90).

Mulla Sadra considers any thing or object that has a lack of perfection as evil and considers the absence of goodness and perfection in the object as the reason for its evil. On the other hand, Mulla Sadra, like Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi, believes in the non-existence of evil and considers evil as non-existent. He believes that if evil is an existential thing, then it must be other than evil, and in this case it is a false reflection and evil cannot be an existential thing, and since it does not exist, it is a non-existent thing.

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From Mulla Sadra's point of view, since good is an aspiring thing and man wants it to reach it and thereby bring his existence and soul to a higher level of perfection, it is an existential thing and evil because it is hated by human beings and people consider it a moderator of their happiness, it is non-existent.

Mulla Sadra accepts the view of the sages as an indication of the non-existence of evil, and while denying the pure evil of foreign beings, considers their principles, which are the opposites of existence, as evil. He then refers to the existence of a perceptual evil such as suffering and considers them as a contradictory perception, and then asks how such a perception, which is an existential attribute, can be considered non-existent? In response to this question, Mulla Sadra believes that sometimes absence is absolute, in which case it can only be reported in a negative way, and sometimes absence is in itself an object for the object, but it has a form such as lack of knowledge and vision (Nasri and Etemadi Nia, 2013, 128-129).

According to Mulla Sadra, the source of any darkness is its essence, which is the root of all evil and is non-existent. In his view,

existence is always light, and this is related to all beings, and does not include only human beings, and darkness is related to non-existence, and evil is rooted in the non-existence of possibilities.

Mulla Sadra states: "By reflecting and inferring from the meanings of evil, their condition and relation, it can be said that whatever is called evil is not out of two states; they are either pure non-existence or things that ultimately lead to non-existence" (Mulla Sadra, 1928, Vol 7, 59).

Just as goodness is every gentle perfection that the object demands and chooses, so is the evil of every abomination from which the object escapes, and the source of its abstraction is the "perfect licking" or "incomplete licking" satellite. In philosophical analysis, then, the concept of evil is always inherently non-existent, since evil is the opposite of good and existence versus non-existence. When the result of proving the originality of existence is that good is an existential thing, the existence of pure good, on the contrary, we come to the conclusion that evil is non-existent (Batahi et al, 2014, 54).

Mulla Sadra believes that the type of opposition between good and evil is that evil is a special non-existence and is not an absolute non-existence, and not every lack of goodness is called evil. For example, not listening to a wall that does not have hearing is not considered evil because it does not have the capacity to exist, and because it does not, it is not considered evil for it.

### **1-2 Evil And Divine Attributes**

From Mulla Sadra's point of view, the universe has been issued by a creator who cannot be imagined more complete and complete than him, and as the beginning is from him, the end is towards him. God is the ultimate perfection of existence that cannot be more perfect and better than it is, because He is absolute in all attributes and no one or something is beyond Him, but everything and everyone is created by Him. God, who is obligatory is the origin of existence, and all other beings are dependent on Him.

According to Mulla Sadra, God is wise and God's wisdom requires that all beings reach their perfection and worthy end. Mulla Sadra refers to the wisdom of death, eating the flesh of animals, pain, hunger and thirst and the like, and about the good and evil of human beings states: "Charity and evil that are attributed to human beings, because it is under religious orders and prohibitions, all of them are considered charity" (Khademi and Abbasi Kia, 2012, 22).

Mulla Sadra believes that assuming the existence of evil spontaneous, they can still not contradict the existence of God, but at most, evil itself is an event and every event needs a narrator and the proof of occurrence and possibility, the necessity of the necessary existence for the event prove. The harm that the existence of evil can cause is related to the issue of knowledge, care and wisdom of the Almighty, and this harm also occurs if the existing evil is equal to or greater than good; that is, if evil is an existential thing but less It is good, it does not harm the care, wisdom and the good system that created by God (Javadi Amoli, 1996, Vol 1, 506).

According to Mulla Sadra, God is pure good and the rest of the creatures are interconnected beings, in the sense that they are

manifestations that exist in the existence of a single right, that is, other than God, all due to existential limitations, are considered a kind of evil.

Mulla Sadra believes that the existence of evil has no contradiction with the attributes of justice, wisdom and absolute benevolence of God, because God is pure good and nothing but goodness is issued from Him. Therefore, the source of the creation of evil must be sought somewhere other than the divine will, and it is unreasonable to attribute evil to God. He believes that man's will to sin is one of the main reasons for the existence of evil in the universe.

### **2-2 Evil And Its Relation to the World of Creation**

Mulla Sadra believes that, from the point of view of the human researcher, the system of the universe is the best possible system, and better than that is basically inconceivable, and this fact is confirmed by all people.

Mulla Sadra considers the reasons for the prosperity of this world as follows;

A. God created the world and has an infinite existence.

B. Whatever is non-God is His grace, because if something has a share of existence in the world of creation, but it is not God's grace, it is either independent in nature or it is documented by another God.

C. God is free from all imperfections and shortcomings in every way.

D. God, since He has infinite perfection, does everything from His essence, because it is impossible for Him to have a purpose beyond nature.

E. According to the science of obedience, God is fully aware of the perfection of His creatures, and this world is good in nature and created by God.

F. Whatever is created by God, in fact, originates from His essence and is His effect, and that effect and creature must be the highest possible.

G. The meaning of the best possibilities of this universe is what we call the good system.

Mulla Sadra, by proving that God has pure knowledge and power and His existence is not limited, proves that the grace and action of God must also be higher than manifestation of grace, and it is impossible to assume and realize better than what was created from Him; because if it were better and more perfect than that, surely God would have created it, and if He had not created the existing system in perfect form, it must either be due to lack of knowledge or lack of power or lack of existence and perfection at the origin of existence, that all these components are wrong.

Mulla Sadra, by proving the inherent nature of God's grace and that He, due to the totality of His essence and perfection of existence, is also inherent in His grace, considers the relationship of the world system with God as a relationship of grace and benefit. According to Mulla Sadra, the essence of God appears in His essence due to being super-complete and grace is the same as His essence (Nowruzi and Berenjkari, 2014, 92 -93).

Mulla Sadra believes that this world has been created in its best possible state and that the minimal evil of the world is also necessary for this good system, because the world of pure goodness was created by God before and it is the world of angels, and despite this world, there was no need to recreate the whole world of good. Therefore, the minimal evil of

this world is an inseparable part of this good system and gives meaning to its nature. Mulla Sadra believes that the creation of a world could not have been better than this world, because if such a world were possible and the creator had the will and authority to create such a world, he would not have knowledge and awareness, then his knowledge would be limited to generalities and details but if he had knowledge and despite his power over it, did not create it, it would be in conflict with his all-encompassing mercy and forgiveness.

### 3. DIVISION OF EVIL

Mulla Sadra in "Asfar Arbaeh" considers evils in these types; 1. Non-existent matters such as poverty and death 2. Perceptual evil such as compound ignorance and pain 3. Ugly acts such as murder and adultery 4. Principles of ugly acts such as lust, anger, stinginess, etc. (Mulla Sadra, 1928, Vol 1, 414).

Non-existent matters are like blindness, which is a kind of evil but non-existent; that is, there is no such thing as blindness, and what is called blindness is the dysfunction of the eye. In fact, the first type of the four types of evil that Mulla Sadra has expressed belongs to things that do not have an external existence and are expressed only in the form of words in order to get closer to the mind, otherwise no nature or essence is attributed to it.

Perceptual evil refers to the pain and suffering that a person suffers in the face of various factors such as watching events or hearing bad news or trauma to the body. This kind of pain is related to the human soul, because the soul realizes and is affected by their misfortune due to its dominance over the course of affairs. Therefore, any pain is accompanied by the perception of the opposite, and if this perception is not present, there will be no pain and suffering, and moral and natural evils return to this kind of evils because the physical pains and sufferings and other hardships caused by natural evils are perceived by the soul.

Ugly acts such as murder and adultery are the same as moral evil. Moral evil is evil that is the result of a person's voluntary action, whether it is conscious, such as lying, adultery, slander, etc, or it is unconscious, such as using alcohol to lose focus and commit murder.

Mulla Sadra states: "Some believe that the occurrence of moral evil or the sins originating from man is documented by divine destiny, and since God is just and merciful, He should not punish people for the moral evil from which they were urgently issued. However, the Qur'an and hadiths explicitly speak of the torment promised by God about sins, and this apparently contradicts divine justice (Ibid 81).

Principles of ugly actions also refer to states that are related to the soul and can be sinister if it is exaggerated or deviated. For example, if the power of anger is exaggerated, man becomes arrogant, which is a moral evil, and if he suffers from excess, man becomes cowardly, which is also a moral evil, and it must be kept in balance, and the balance of the power of anger is the same courage that is one of the highest moral virtues.

### 4. SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

In order to show the evil compatible with the divine attributes and the good system, Mulla Sadra in his various works has expressed solutions and answers to solve the problem of the evil that is as follows;

**1-4 Evil Is Non-Existent:** This view seeks to disprove the duality rather than to solve the problem of evil; according to this view, because evil is non-existent, it does not need a creator, so because we have a kind of creator in the world who is also good, so only we have a creator, and the notion of doubt and dualism is false. (Motahhari, 1988, 154).

Mulla Sadra believes that human nature considers evil to be non-existent and man realizes by his nature that evil is non-existent and this is the good that exists and God has made the world full of it.

Mulla Sadra considers evil to be either pure non-existence or that which leads to non-existence. Although what leads to nothingness is not inherently evil and can be considered perfection, but because it leads to nothingness, it is considered evil. From Mulla Sadra's point of view, since evil is a non-existent thing, no existence and essence can be considered for it, and also whatever its return to non-existence is evil, and it cannot be considered for that existence. Considering the importance of the issue of existence in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, it seems that he tried to deny the duality and prove the oneness of God by proposing the non-existence of evil, and for this reason he stated other solutions to solve the problem of evil.

**2-4 Evil Is the Result of Ignorance and Lack of Awareness:** Some people believe that evil is the result of ignorance and lack of awareness of the reality of things, otherwise if we look at the issue of evil with knowledge and awareness, there is no evil and it is the ignorance of people who imagine evil that deprives them of peace.

Metrilang states: "Whatever I think, I can not accept that a generous, just and wise God will satisfy to create in this world, imperfect or weak and miserable. No, the truth is other than what comes to our eyes, and it is impossible for the God we worship to be ignorant and insane, and certainly the subject matter is somewhere else that we have not realized and may not realize forever" (Metrilang, 2010, 56).

Mulla Sadra, referring to the limitations of human science and other creatures in knowing and acquiring knowledge, has stated that it is one of the solutions to solve the problem of evil: "But there is no one who desires to be surrounded by the subtleties of his secrets and his grace and mercy on the world of the unseen and the kingdom, because the sciences of scientists are less than what the prophets and saints know and what they knew is very little about the angels and those who reached the position of the supreme. Therefore, the knowledge of all angels, jinn and humans is so insignificant than the knowledge of God that it can not be called knowledge" (Mulla Sadra, 1028, Vol7, 147).

**3-4 Evil Is Relative:** Another solution to evil is to know relativity. According to this theory, evil is relative and may be an evil phenomenon for some people and the same phenomenon may seem good to others, and we should note that relativity is against the truth. Also, the conditions and situation of time indicate that the evil is relative, because in a certain period, a phenomenon may be evil for a person, and in another period and time, the same phenomenon may appear as good. Although ignorance of

evil solves the problem of many evils due to not attributing existence and aspect of existence, but still some natural evils such as floods, earthquakes, pains and the like remain and ignorance does not solve the problem of this group of evildoers, and the sages have acknowledged the relative nature of this evil group to solve its problem.

The reason why evil is relative is that if we consider a creature to be evil, it is either evil for itself or its cause or for others. If it is evil for itself, it must destroy itself, and such a thing will never exist. If it is evil for its cause, then it will not be in harmony with it, and this is contrary to the nature of cause and effect. If it is evil for non-self, it will repel it, and this is contrary to the premise; therefore, evil is evil for non-self, cause and effect (Javadi Amoli, 1996, Vol3, 157).

Mulla Sadra about the relativity of evil states: "How evil it is that one is good by comparing one person to another, such as lust and anger, because both of these are evil in comparison with the narcissistic soul, because the perfection of the narrator's soul is in taming the two, so that for the soul of the body and the form, the superiority of the body and its forces is achieved and is adorned with intellectual ornaments and gets rid of animal depravity, so both have been silent, good and perfect in comparison with other populations" (Mulla Sadra, 2007, Vol5, 470).

**4-4 Evil Is Necessary for the Existence of Good:** Many charities are obtained for us by evil. In other words, some evils are the prelude to the acquisition of charity, and it is with the occurrence of that evil that we attain or realize the charities and strive more seriously to preserve those charities. For example, we do not realize the importance of health unless it is a disease, or we do not realize the importance of security and tranquility unless it threatens our danger and insecurity. Thus, although evil may seem detrimental in appearance, it will either direct us to charity to try to pay more attention to its preservation, or it will lead us to newer charities.

By experiencing evil, we discover the nature of good and know its full value. Good without evil is neither known nor its value will be known. This approach can also be called the theory of divine benevolent justice. By believing in this theory, theologians cling to the all-encompassing dimensions of the universe that they believe are truly good and they prove that these good deeds are conditional on the existence of some evil or that the realization of these good deeds requires some evil ones (Taliafro, 2003, 500).

Mulla Sadra, considering that the relativity of evil can not be the complete answer to solve the problem of evil, under the influence of Aristotle, places beings based on good and evil in five categories, which are: pure good, abundant good and little evil, equal good and evil equal, abundant evil and little good and pure evil. Mulla Sadra believes that in the meantime, only the first two cases are realized and the last three cases do not exist in the realm of existence. Pure good is God, and the great good and the little evil belong to the world of nature or the material world, and this little evil is necessary to achieve the great good in this world.

**5-4 Evil Is Necessary for a Good System:** Evil is necessary for contradiction and contradiction is necessary for movement and movement is necessary for the material world; therefore, evil is necessary for the material world. God has placed the system of the beings of the universe

according to the natural and physical laws, and therefore operates the natural system according to his natural and internal system, but the possibility of natural evil is inherent in this natural system. The same water that quenches our thirst can overwhelm us and this is natural (Mohammadzadeh and Niroumand, 2010, 106 -107).

The influence of material beings on each other and change and transformation and contradiction and antagonism are inherent features of the material world, so that if it were not for these features, there would be no such thing as the material world. In other words, the special causal system among material beings is an inherent system that is necessary for the type of material beings; therefore, either the material world must come into being with the same system or it must not come into being at all. As a result, the evils and defects of this world are an inseparable requirement of its causal system (Mesbah Yazdi, 1995, Vol2,459).

Mulla Sadra believes that evil is necessary for the existence of this world and without the existence of evil this world can not be a good system and the goodness of this world is in the light of the existence of good and evil together, which is the maximum good and the minimum evil in this world.

**6-4 There Is a Maximum of Good and a Little Evil:** One of the most important arguments given by some thinkers as an answer to the problem of evil is the dominance of the aspect of charity over evil in the world. According to this idea, although there are some evils in the world, and some of them, like earthquakes and floods, are the product of nature, and some, such as murder and slavery, are the result of human malice, but it should be noted that the world's charity is much greater than its evils and should not be unaware of many charities and simply consider evil as non-charities. This view was first put forward by St. Irenaeus and later developed by other thinkers.

Mulla Sadra believes that the evils of this world are very small and incomparable to its good deeds, and that this minimal aspect of evil has no contradiction with the good system, because few evils and many goods do not contradict each other, but complement each other and there is an inseparable link between these two things (Mulla Sadra, 1995, Vol2,265).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The problem of evil, which is one of the most important theological cases in Mulla Sadra's system of thought, is a non-existent thing that does not exist, and in the universe, the things that we consider evil are either evil or necessary for the introduction of good. Mulla Sadr's non-existence of evil indicates his influence on the philosophy of ancient Greece and also the forerunner of Islamic philosophy, because Aristotle, Ibn Sina and Farabi also stated that evil is non-existent. Mulla Sadra, on the other hand, considers evil to be the lack of perfection in the essence of the object, that any object that lacks perfection is in fact evil.

Mulla Sadra believes that attributing evil to God is contrary to God's absolute wisdom, justice, and benevolence, and that this is one of the things that causes evil in the world of creation by not using his authority properly, otherwise God is pure good and had not created evil. According to Mulla Sadra, one of the necessities of the essence of this

world, which we call the good system, is the existence of evil, and the world of pure good belongs to the world that God has created in advance.

Mulla Sadra considers the types of evil in non-existent matters, perceptual evil, moral evil and many ugly deeds, and it seems that his non-mention of natural evil in *Asfar Arbaeh* is due to the fact that he considers natural evil as one of the aspects of perceptual evil, and although he has also mentioned natural evil in other topics. In solving the problem of evil, Mulla Sadra first tried to remove doubts from monotheism and stated that evil is non-existent, and then to the relative and variable nature of evil, the necessity of goodness, maximum goodness and minimum evil, the necessity of a good system and the result of ignorance and lack of human awareness has pointed out. From Mulla Sadra's point of view, despite these solutions, evil is not only a deterrent to harm to human beings, but by using them properly, many good deeds can be achieved that never contradict the divine attributes and religious beliefs.

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