The Model of "Normative Education" based on Mulla Sadra's Philosophical System

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	In the face of the contemporary era's semantic, ethical, and identity crises, the need for a re-evaluation of educational foundations is felt more than ever. This research, drawing upon the philosophical foundations of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy, seeks to present and elucidate a novel model entitled "Normative Education." This form of education is grounded in the existential transformation of human beings and within the framework of principles such as the primacy of existence, substantial motion, existential of gradation, and the teleological nature of creation. In this educational pattern, education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but rather a multi-dimensional existential process aimed at the intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and emotional growth of individuals along their existential journey. Normative Education, through the internalization of moral oughts and ought-nots, guides individuals from external obligation towards internal responsibility, placing them on a path towards the realization of their authentic and meaningful self .This article utilizes a Descriptive-Analytical methodology and an Interpretive-Hermeneutic approach. It first elucidates Mulla Sadra's significant philosophical foundations and then, by emphasizing the potentialities for existential transformation, proceeds to formulate the proposed educational model. The implications of this type of education at the individual level include the deepening of self-knowledge, the strengthening of inner morality, increased psychological resilience, and the balanced growth of intellect and meaning. At the social level, these implications encompass the reduction of conflicts, the promotion of civic engagement, and the groundwork for the realization of a moral and spiritual society. Finally, while offering an initial critique and examination of this educational model the article emphasizes the necessity for its further development, empirical testing, and dialogue with other educational schools of thought.

Intruduction

Education, as a fundamental pillar of human civilization, has consistently garnered the attention of thinkers and social reformers, for the destiny of the individual and society is intertwined with the quality of education. In today's world, we face profound ethical, identity-related, and existential challenges – challenges that cannot be resolved merely by transmitting information or skills-based training. Instead, they necessitate a re-evaluation of the philosophical foundations of education. One approach that holds the potential for deep inner reconstruction of the human being is education based on existential transformation; an education that can be extrapolated from the philosophy of Transcendent Wisdom (Hikmat-e Muta'aliyya) and the ideas of Mulla Sadra. Mulla Sadra, the prominent philosopher of the eleventh century AH (seventeenth century CE), by integrating intellect, tradition, and intuition, established a philosophical system grounded in principles such as the primacy of existence (Asalat al-Wujud), substantial motion (Harakat Jawhari), the gradation of being (Tashkik al-Wujud), and the teleological nature of creation. Within this system, the human being is a fluid, dynamic, and becoming entity on a path toward perfection. Through their existential journey, individuals can attain a level of rationality and spirituality called the 'Perfect Human' (Insan-e Kamel). In such a framework, education is not merely a tool for socialization or skill production; rather, it is an ontological and meaning-making process in which the individual ascends from a lower level of existence towards higher levels. This approach is formulated in this article under the title of 'Normative Education'; an education that not only emphasizes ethical 'oughts' and 'ought nots' but also internalizes these imperatives within the very being of the individual. Consequently, instead of external obligation, the individual behaves responsibly and ethically based on their inner understanding of existence. The central question of this research is: drawing upon the philosophical foundations of Mulla Sadra, what kind of model of education can be derived that is based on existential transformation? Can an educational model be extracted from these foundations that is effective in the contemporary world grappling with a crisis of meaning and ethics? The significance of this issue becomes even more pronounced when we recognize that many educational systems worldwide, particularly in the modern world, have succumbed to a form of reductionism. They reduce the human being to an economic instrument or a factor of production, neglecting their deep existential, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. In such a context, re-examining the Islamic philosophical tradition and reviving an education based on the 'existential becoming of the human being' can serve as an important starting point for mending the existing rifts in educational model and practice. Employing a descriptive-analytical method with a hermeneutic-interpretive approach, this article seeks to present a model of education, titled 'Normative Education,' based on the philosophical foundations of Mulla Sadra. This theory aims to possess both a deep epistemological and ontological underpinning and the potential for practical expansion in modern educational systems.

1. Explanation of Existential Transformation

Existential transformation is a fundamental concept; therefore, to explain it, it is better to first briefly mention the important primacy of Mulla Sadra's philosophy (Atrak & Shaminejad, 2024, 99-115).

1-1. Primacy of Existence (Asalat al-Wujud)

One of the important philosophical foundations in the Sadraean system is the primacy of existence. From Mulla Sadra's perspective, quiddity is like a shadow that follows the existence of a person. Therefore, what is primacy is existence itself, and essence is considered secondary (Mulla Sadra, 2011, 292). He says: "Indeed, the reality of everything is its existence, upon which effects and judgments are based. So, it is worthy that existence be real because others become real through existence..." (Mulla Sadra, 1984, 10).

1-2. Substantial Motion (Harakat Jawhari)

Substantial motion is the inherent motion in material things, which is the origin of the apparent motions of phenomena and causes a change in the essence of things; in other words, substantial motion is the motion in the core, reality, and origin of a thing (Malekshahi,1997, 278). Philosophers before Mulla Sadra considered motion in substance impossible and accepted motion only in accidents (Shirvani, 2008, vol.1, 126; Mesbah Yazdi, 2000, vol.2, 369; Ibn Sina, 1994, vol.1, 81). However, Mulla Sadra's view was contrary to those of previous philosophers. He considers motion to be the gradual exit of a thing from a potential state towards actuality and considers the motion of accidents to be dependent on the motion of substance. He proves substantial motion with arguments in his works and creates a great transformation in philosophy (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol.3, 102). In Mulla Sadra's view, every material being is temporal; every being that has time is gradual in existence; therefore, the material substance is gradual and has motion (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol.7, 291); in general, a being is either actual, potential, or composed of actuality and potentiality. If a being is pure actuality, change in it is impossible; but in a potential being and a being composed of potentiality and actuality, change is possible, and this change and motion are either gradual or sudden, and this change is generally applicable to all categories (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 3, 22).

1-3. Gradation in the Levels of Existence (Tashkik al-Maratib al-Wujud)

Mulla Sadra considers existence to be a gradational reality that has levels of intensity and weakness. In his view, the weakness and deficiency of the imperfect level of existence is not additional to it; rather, it is the very reality of its simple external reality; therefore, the existential level of multiple existences is their essence (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1, 412). When a level becomes the essence of a particular existence; in this case, the being is not separate from that level, and that being's particular existence is in its own particular level. Therefore, according to the principle of gradation of existence, the reality of existence has different levels, and these

levels are not attached to existence; rather, they are the very existence (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 1, 401-402).

1-4. The Principle of the Unity of the Intellect and the Intelligible (Ittihad al-'Aqil wa al-Ma'qul)

One of Mulla Sadra's most profound and fundamental principles is the issue of the Unity of the Intellect and the Intelligible (Ittihād al-'Āqil wa al-Ma'qūl) or, more generally, the Unity of the Knower and the Known (Ittihād al-'Ālim wa al-Ma'lūm). The central question revolves around how an object is present within the human soul (Nafs) when the soul perceives a form, such as seeing an image or hearing a sound. Does only the form of that object become imprinted upon the soul, or is the process such that the perceived form unites with a specific level of our existence? Ibn Sina (Avicenna) holds that although sensible and intelligible forms are present in the soul, their existence is not one of union with the soul; rather, these forms are merely appended (annexed) to the soul (munḍamm ilā al-Nafs). (Ibn Sina, 1996, 128). Mulla Sadra, however, rejects the dualism between the soul and its cognitive forms (ṣuwar-i 'ilmiyyah). He asserts that intellectual apprehension means finding something within the very substance of human existence. Therefore, the cognitive forms unite with the soul, and the soul becomes the cognitive forms (the soul is what it apprehends). In this sense, the soul becomes whatever it perceives. Consequently, Mulla Sadra, in his critique of those who deny the Unity of the Intellect and the Intelligible, raises two main objections: Firstly, the logical consequence of their position is that the human soul would remain static from childhood to adulthood, with only accidental matters being annexed to it, whereas the soul expands and develops existentially to the extent that it acquires knowledge. Secondly, their view implies there should be no inherent essential difference between the substance of the souls of the most ignorant and the most excellent individuals, with the discrepancy between them being solely due to accidental qualities extraneous to their essence—a demonstrably false notion. (Mulla Sadra, 1981, Vol. 3, 327-328).

Therefore, in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, knowledge is not merely a mental representation (or subjective form), but rather a mode of existence (naḥw min al-wujūd). When a human being gains knowledge of something, they unite with it on a specific level of existence, and it becomes an integral part of their being. Consequently, if an individual reaches a certain level of existence (or perfection), they can't ignore that realization or act contrary to it. From this principle, it can be inferred that the existential substance (Jawhar-i Wujūdī) of the human being is in a constant state of perfection (or becoming). By traversing the path of their existential structure, individuals construct their quiddity (māhiyyah). This quiddity, through existential intensification (ishtidād-i wujūdī) along the path to the Divine Unity (Ḥaḍrat-i Aḥadīyat), occupies various existential ranks (marātib-i wujūdī), acquiring its substantive structure and undergoing perpetual transformation. This existential transformation is not merely a matter of "putting on one form after another" (labs ba 'd labs); rather, it is a matter of "existence after

existence" (wujūd ba'd wujūd). Crucially, at each existential rank, the individual possesses the structural characteristics pertinent to that specific rank.

2. Education in the Shadow of Existential Transformation

Now that the concept of existential transformation within Mulla Sadra's philosophical system has been elucidated, it is essential to examine the role of education in this transformation, as well as the impact of existential transformation on the educational process. In this perspective, education is not merely the transmission of knowledge or skills; rather, it is an existential process through which the human being ascends from one stage of existence to another. Authentic education (Tarbiyah) is defined as the existential unity of the soul (Nafs) with the intelligibles (Ma'qūlāt), culminating in the soul's transformation into the very realities it has apprehended. This process, which transcends mere conceptual instruction and encompasses purification of the soul (Tahdhīb al-Nafs), contemplation (Murāqabah), and intuitive apprehension (Idrāk Shuhūdī), relegates the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator for this existential union. Consequently, education is defined as a spiritual and ontological process wherein, through the internalization of actions within the soul and their unity with it, the soul's trans-substantial motion (al-Ḥarakah al-Jawharīyyah) from deficiency towards perfection is realized (Shaminezhad, 2022, 5-18).

Lexicographers have different views on the definition of education. In general, the word "education" implies a kind of change and growth, and it means the continuous transformation of anything to bring it to perfection (Raghib Isfahani, 1991, 184; Baydawi, 1989, vol.1, 10). In Mulla Sadra's view, which emphasizes the primacy of existence (Asalat al-Wujud), education is understood as the growth and intensification of the human being's existence. From this standpoint, the aim of education is growth in the various ontological dimensions of the human being; that is, the individual ascends from a stage of weak existence towards more intense levels of existence (Mulla Sadra, 1981, Vol. 1, 412).

Therefore, it can be said that education in the shadow of existential transformation means nurturing a person in the direction of personal, moral, and spiritual development, which affects not only the level of knowledge and skills but also the depth of a person's being. Education is one of the most fundamental topics in the humanities, the goal of which is to flourish talents and guide individuals towards growth and perfection (Shariatmadari, 2011, 123). In this context, the existential transformation approach considers education not only as the transfer of knowledge but also as a profound transformation in the intellectual, spiritual, and moral structures of a human being (Nasr, 1989, 231). Therefore, the concept of existential transformation means a fundamental change at the ontological level of a human being. This transformation occurs as a result of deep spiritual, cognitive, and emotional experiences and causes a change in the way a person perceives themselves, the world, and their place in it (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol.8, 223). A person's existence in the existential circle of the world expands with

their existential transformation, and with individual expansion in various existential dimensions, the world moves towards becoming a utopia.

In traditional approaches to education, the focus is often on the transmission of information, behavioral discipline, and adherence to external models. However, in education based on existential transformation, the human being is viewed as a fluid, dynamic entity in a state of 'becoming' who must actualize their inner potentials. In other words, education should not merely signify the teaching of theoretical knowledge, but rather it should provide the context for substantial motion and existential perfection; a movement that leads towards the active intellect ('Aql-e Bi'l-Fi'l), the acquired intellect ('Aql-e Mustafad), and ultimately, connection with the universal intellect ('Aql-e Kull). Therefore, in contrast to the traditional educational approach, which primarily emphasizes the transmission of knowledge and skills, the existential transformation approach to education views the human being as a dynamic and evolving entity in whom education and existential transformation are concomitant.

This means that education and transformation are not separate categories but rather complementary and interdependent. Therefore, having a lasting and profound change in an individual's personality and attitude, existential expansion and breadth of awareness and spiritual understanding of life, increasing the ability to understand and accept the complexities of existence, and transformation in the value system and beliefs are among the characteristics of education in the shadow of existential transformation (Frankl, 1963, 205; Palmer, 1998, 134).

Consequently, in Mulla Sadra's view, if the reality of the human being is their existence (Primacy of Existence), and this existence is fluid and undergoing essential transformation (Trans-Substantial Motion), and the acquisition of knowledge is identical to the actualization of a new quality within this dynamic existence (Unity of the Intellect and the Intelligible), education is nothing other than the conscious guidance of the soul's trans-substantial motion through existential unity with realities and virtues. Therefore, the acquisition of knowledge (e.g., knowledge of justice or courage) is not merely the addition of a concept to the mind, but rather the creation of a new existential quality within the soul (Nafs).

2-1. Dimensions and Types of Education in the Shadow of Existential Transformation

Dimensions of Existential Education Education in the light of existential transformation is multidimensional: *Epistemic Dimension (Kian, 2015, 9–35): Elevating human awareness of the fundamental concepts of being and the ability for critical reflection. * Ethical Dimension: Internalizing ethical virtues as an integral part of one's being, rather than as external rules. * Spiritual Dimension: Spiritual growth, self-purification, and a mystical journey (Sair o Soluk) towards the perception of absolute truth. * Aesthetic-Emotional Dimension: Cultivating an appreciation for subtlety and meaning in ontological experiences, akin to what Paulo Freire calls 'poetic awareness' (Freire, 1970). In this view, the teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but an existential and human guide who is themselves on a path of perfection. Such a teacher can, through their presence, elevate the quality of the learner's being (Nasr, 1989, 86).

Similarly, Palmer emphasizes in The Courage to Teach that genuine teaching occurs when the teacher is fully present in the educational process (Palmer, 1998, 16). The educational environment should also be a calm, spiritual, questioning, and inspiring context in which reflection, intuition, participation, and exploration are prioritized. Consequently, in the light of such education, individuals emerge who recognize their meaning and place in existence. Live ethically with internalized commitment. They are responsible towards society and others. Have progressed from imitative worship to intuitive reasoning. Move on a path of continuous development and self-awareness. In such education, inner discipline replaces external control, and education transforms into a process of existential awakening. Consequently, it must be acknowledged that in the shadow of the existential transformation approach, human education occurs in all its dimensions. This is because existence is original, and essence is a limit abstracted from the existential level. If an individual's existence expands and transforms, transformation will occur in all educational dimensions, including intellectual, moral, emotional, spiritual, and so on. With the individual's existential expansion, their deep outlook and philosophical understanding expand, consequently strengthening moral virtues within them and establishing a deep connection with the transcendent truth. In this case, they better understand the meaning of life and take steps towards happiness. By cultivating positive and transcendent feelings, individuals reach their original nature, and eventually, veils are removed, and they recognize themselves at the human-divine level. Such individuals will be normative beings.

Therefore, it can be inferred that within the framework of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, which is based on the primacy of existence and substantial motion, education is a multidimensional process encompassing all aspects of the human being. Since human existence possesses various degrees of intensity and weakness, with each degree having its specific effects and characteristics, the existential transformation of the human being necessitates a comprehensive transformation in the diverse dimensions of their life. Consequently, education in the light of existential transformation is not limited to the transmission of knowledge or ethics but rather aims at the gradual growth and flourishing of all the ontological capacities of the human being (Mulla Sadra, 1981, Vol. 1, 412). In the dimension of intellectual and epistemic education, which is one of the fundamental aspects of existential education, the theoretical intellect develops such that the individual ascends from the stage of 'potential intellect' ('Aql-e Hayulani') to the 'actual intellect' ('Aql-e Bi'l-Fi'l') and then to the 'acquired intellect' ('Aql-e Mustafad') (Mulla Sadra, 1981, Vol. 3, 22). This intellectual journey is not solely achieved through the teaching of scientific concepts but rather through reflection, intellectual striving, and an inner encounter with existence. The goal of this type of education is not merely the acquisition of superficial information but rather the 'understanding of truth' and the 'finding of meaning.'

The ethical dimension of education, in Mulla Sadra's view, has a close connection with the existential journey. Because ethical attributes are decisive in determining the levels of human existence, the change in ethics is also a part of one's existential transformation. In this education, 'ethics' is not considered as imposed laws but as intrinsic characteristics resulting from spiritual striving. For this reason, in an educated person, ethical 'oughts' and 'ought nots' are not merely instrumental and temporary behaviors but manifest in an internalized and inherent manner.

In Mulla Sadra's existential system, the emotional dimension of the human being also follows the levels of existence. With existential elevation, emotions also become more refined. Emotional education means cultivating the capacity for empathy, love, intimacy with others, and the appreciation of the beauties of existence. This education lays the groundwork for strengthening positive imagination, art, and illumination. As Freire also points out, true education is not only rational but also poetic and emotional (Freire, 1970, 88). In the spiritual and mystical dimension, which is the deepest layer in the journey of existential education, Mulla Sadra considers the human being's movement towards the Exalted Truth as the ultimate goal of human life. In this stage, the individual transcends the limits of the theoretical intellect and attains mystical intuition and inner spiritual practice (Nasr, 1989, 65–70). In this path, teaching and learning serve the purification of the soul, monotheism (Tawhid), and the experiential perception of truth.

Based on Mulla Sadra's philosophical foundations, different types of education also take shape by the existential capacity of the learners: *Elementary Education: In the lower levels of existence, the focus is on order, behavior control, and the establishment of basic cognitive and ethical structures. *Transitional Education: In the middle stages, education moves towards intellectual elevation, critical reflection, and the strengthening of individual conscience. *Transcendent Education: In the higher levels of existence, education aims at illumination, spiritual practice, deep self-knowledge, and connection with truth. Consequently, education in the light of existential transformation is a continuous, dynamic, and multidimensional process that is meaningful based on the individual's degree of existence and must be designed accordingly.

Overall, it seems plausible to realize a form of education that emanates from the individual's existential depth, where the educator endeavors to actualize each person's existential capacities commensurate with their graded ranks of existence (Marātib-i Tashkīkī). In this paradigm, the facilitator focuses on the flourishing of the individual's inherent talents and inner potentialities. From this perspective, every action originates from the individual's existential substance, which is essential (inherent) and not accidental (accidental) to them. Consequently, for such an individual, moral imperatives ("oughts" and "ought nots") become integrated into their very essence, rendering them non-deviant (non-norm-violating). Given that, based on the existentialist perspective (Primacy of Existence), the individual's existential substance transforms a meaningful life within a teleological universe, under the influence of trans-

substantial motion and the gradation of existence, thus rendering the human being a norm-abiding (normative) entity, this type of education can be appropriately termed "Normative Education."

This type of education is a dynamic education that can have good individual and social consequences in the direction of achieving human happiness. One of the important consequences of this type of education is individual law-abidingness. In this type of education, the law also transforms with the existential transformation of individuals in society, according to their existential levels, and originates from the essence and levels of human beings. Therefore, no individual can deny their essence and be lawless; rather, the law itself has a direct relationship with the actions of individuals in society and expands and transforms with the existential expansion of individuals. Therefore, in this model, the law is no longer an external compulsion but rather a manifestation of the individual's own essence. If education is based on existential levels, lawlessness will be meaningless because individuals feel the law within themselves, not as an externally imposed factor. Therefore, the universe shows its greatness in a different way every moment with the individual's perfection.

Increased sense of responsibility and social ethics, expansion of empathy and altruism in society, reduction of tensions and conflicts arising from ignorance and self-centeredness, improvement of quality of life, and meaning-making to social activities can be other educational consequences of normative education.

2-2. Strategies for Normative Education

To achieve this type of education, education must be focused on existential transformation and inherent flourishing. In Mulla Sadra's view, human beings can reach the level of super-abstraction through substantial motion in this world and loving motion in the other world. Therefore, according to Sadra's philosophy, various methods can be used to achieve normative education:

a) Teleology: A teleological and purposeful view of the world can be an important educational strategy for individual normativity. In Mulla Sadra's goal-oriented view, the world has a movement from Him and towards Him. God is the origin and the end. To achieve true happiness, human beings go through various stages of existence with substantial motion of the soul and reach God, who is the ultimate goal and the happiest of beings. Therefore, with a God-centered and goal-oriented approach, individuals must achieve true self-knowledge through existential transformation and normative education to reach true happiness and better understand their place in creation with a better understanding of existence.

b) Existential Transformation, not Existential Decay: Another specific strategy of Mulla Sadra is "existential transformation based on substantial motion." According to Sadra's foundations, it can be inferred that individuals undergo existential transformation through their movement in the world, not existential decay. Therefore, by making individuals aware of their

existential structure, they can be guided on the path of normative education (Shaminezhad, 2024, 105-123).

c) Deep Spiritual and Moral Experiences: Interaction with spiritual texts, mystical experiences, and being in situations that lead individuals to reflect on high human values can lead to internal transformation.

d) Education Based on Dialogue and Critical Thinking: Sadra's philosophy is dynamic. In this type of philosophy, human beings are in a state of transcendence. Education is not based on knowledge without action; rather, Mulla Sadra's philosophy is based on knowledge and action, and these two are together, to the extent that in the book "Asfar al-Arba'ah," he introduces four journeys of the seeker, in which the seeker must reach perfection in practical reason with the Four Journeys while enjoying theoretical reason in order to become a seeker of the path. Therefore, knowledge and action are together throughout Sadra's philosophy. His foundations, including the principle of substantial motion, clearly state that the existential essence must change with action alongside knowledge. Therefore, it seems that action-based education can be an important strategy for normative education. A learning environment based on questioning, dialogue, and analysis must be provided so that individuals can gain a deeper understanding of the truth.

e) Communication with Cultured and Inspiring Individuals: Since in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, human beings are fluid beings with many potential talents, and normative education is based on inherent and existential transformation, communication with expert and knowledgeable individuals is very important in this type of education. Communication with teachers, educators, and individuals who have deep thinking and enjoy normative education plays an important role in shaping human personality.

f) Emphasis on the Role of Existential Transformation in Social Education: Societies where normative education prevails, are more transcendent societies. According to Sadra's philosophy, human perfection is the result of existential transformation and intensification of their existence, and this existential transformation affects not only the individual level but also the social level. Societies that pay attention to the cultivation of transformed and aware individuals move on the path of growth and transcendence

2-3. Critique and Expansion of the Model of Normative Education

The model of normative education is derived from Mulla Sadra's dynamic philosophical approach, which can be more effective in today's society by addressing its weaknesses and strengthening its strengths in both theory and practice. Today's society is a society in which cultural and economic differences have created a huge gap between people. If this theory can be put into practice, the gaps in various dimensions of society will be somewhat eliminated. In fact, most human differences stem from a lack of self-awareness. If an individual recognizes their existential level and can achieve existential promotion by actualizing their potential existential talents, they will surely be guided toward moral virtues, and as a result, war and

conflict will give way to peace and understanding. However, every theory, according to human and social capacities, has its own strengths and weaknesses, which must be critiqued and examined for its continued existence so that its weaknesses can be addressed and ultimately it can be placed in the stages of scientific evolution.

To comprehensively analyze and evaluate the proposed educational pattern (or model), it can be examined from two distinct perspectives: first, from the philosophical foundations of Mulla Sadra that constitute the theoretical superstructure of this model, and second, from the perspective of the practical application of this philosophy in the form of an educational model. In the realm of critiquing the philosophical foundations, it must be acknowledged that the three fundamental principles employed in this model -namely, the Primacy of Existence (Aṣālat al-Wujūd), Substantial Motion (al-Ḥarakah al-Jawharīyyah), and the Union of the Knower and the Known (Ittiḥād al-ʿĀqil wa al-Maʿqūl)- have historically been subjects of serious disagreement and debate within Islamic philosophy, and the claims related to them remain topics of discussion and dialogue in contemporary philosophical circles. For instance, regarding the issue of the Primacy of Existence, thinkers such as Shaykh al-Ishrāq (Suhrawardi) and Mīr Dāmād took a dissenting stance, advocating for the Primacy of Quiddity (Aṣālat al-Māhīyyah) and regarding existence as merely a mental and contingent (or superadded) concept. In the other two principles as well, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), by presenting multiple arguments, both denied Substantial Motion -allowing motion only in accidents (quality, quantity, where, and position)- and rejected the Union of the Knower and the Known, instead believing in the conjunction (Inḍimām) and association (Iqtirān) of the scientific form (the concept/idea) with the soul (Nafs). These fundamental contrasts in the underlying principles indicate that an uncritical acceptance of these principles as a starting point could be challenged by followers of other philosophical schools. Notwithstanding these fundamental disagreements, the primary focus of this article is not on defending the philosophical foundations themselves, but rather on investigating the possibility and manner of their application in the educational domain. Therefore, in the following sections, we will direct our critique and analysis toward the second level of analysis: the capabilities and limitations of transforming this theory into an educational model.

Given that in educational systems, external factors such as punishment and reward usually play a significant role, the first question is how can normative education replace punitive education. Does normative education require philosophical and religious prerequisites, or can it be implemented in a secular system as well? From Mulla Sadra's point of view, people are at different levels of existence. This means that some people may not be inherently susceptible to normative education and need external control (punitive education). Does this educational pattern accept that punitive education is still necessary for some people?

In response to the first objection, it can be said that efforts should be made to bring people's existential levels to the desired level by expanding their existence, and according to the aforementioned strategies, this substitution can be done gradually and over time.

Regarding the second point (i.e., the secular applicability of the theory), given that this normative model of education is fundamentally rooted in the rational and demonstrative philosophical system of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Theosophy (al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyyah), this theoretical framework can potentially be utilized even within secular systems.

This possibility is primarily conceivable through two avenues: The first avenue involves redefining the ultimate objective of this educational model. This is achieved by transforming the final destination of "closeness to the Divine" (Qurb Ilāhī) into "existential self-perfection and the complete flourishing of human potential within this world." Since the soul (Nafs) in Transcendent Theosophy is understood as a fluid substance (Jawhar Sayyāl) intrinsically oriented towards perfection (Kamāl-Khāh), this inherent drive for perfection can be interpreted, within a secular framework, as the process of actualizing innate human potentialities. In this reading, the educational aim is not tributary convergence toward the Originator, but rather the harmonious unfolding of an individual's intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, and emotional faculties within the temporal horizon of this life.

The second approach emphasizes the process rather than specific content. By focusing on the dynamic structure of Substantial Motion (al-Harakat al-Jawhariyyah) and the soul's innate educability, the model offers a comprehensive framework for explaining the continuous and essential transformation of human personality. This utilization does not necessitate the imposition of specific religious doctrines or content (ma'ārif dīnī). This inherent processual structure can accommodate diverse content, ranging from the humanities and the arts to secular ethics. Therefore, what remains transferable in this transition is not the specific metaphysical foundations but a dynamic pattern for understanding and structuring the developmental stages of education. Nevertheless, it must be explicitly acknowledged that this reinterpretation comes at the cost of semantic reduction and the discarding of the original system's integral, transcendent motivation and ultimate purpose. Consequently, the resulting model offers a limited and modified version of the authentic theoretical paradigm.

In response to the third objection, it can be stated that the educational pattern of "normative education" is based on the existential relativity of individuals, and naturally, transformation in all its dimensions is happening at every moment. Since in Mulla Sadra's view, human beings are fluid beings and go through stages from the level of potential intellect to the level of acquired intellect in the form of existence after existence, appropriate education should be considered based on each individual's level, and efforts should be made to bring people to the minimum desired levels by developing appropriate education. In this regard, the rulers of society themselves must have normative education in order to develop a correct educational system with a deep understanding of human beings. The root of individual and social abnormalities

should be examined, and individuals' levels should be transformed accordingly. Most people have extraordinary talents, but due to incorrect interactions, they suffer from internal loneliness, and ultimately, existential conflicts arise.

To promote individualindividual levels, philosophical education, and critical thinking, which lead people to a higher understanding of life, can be used in the educational system. Also, proper education in life skills that can teach people conflict resolution skills, empathy, and self-awareness increases their existential understanding. By relying on education through experience and facing real issues, individuals' existential promotion can also be helped; because if people are involved in real issues and have the freedom to choose their path, they will gradually achieve an internal education.

Therefore, the solution is to identify each individual at their current point and raise their existential levels with appropriate education. But for this, firstly, a practical model for the entry of transformed individuals into government must be designed. Secondly, specific educational methods must be developed to promote individuals' existential levels.

To implement educational and social changes based on existential transformation, it is necessary for leaders and policymakers to transform from within. However, for these individuals to reach power, we need structures that guarantee the process of intellectual and moral transformation. In the first stage, an introspective education process should be considered for leaders. This means that, firstly, educational systems should be designed in such a way that leaders are placed on the path of existential transformation from the beginning. For example, this system can be considered in the form of philosophical and ethical training programs that develop individuals intellectually and morally and prepare them for social responsibilities. Secondly, teaching the principles of Mulla Sadra's philosophy and awareness of substantial motion as a main part of educational courses can give individuals a deep understanding of themselves and the world. This makes them pay more attention to public welfare and not personal interests when making social decisions. Thirdly, practical and experiential workshops to improve self-awareness, empathy, and human relations can help policymakers gain a better understanding of people's social and individual problems.

In the second stage, special election committees should be formed to select leaders. Committees should be established to select individuals who have the criteria of existential and intellectual transformation. These committees can evaluate individuals based on criteria such as moral awareness, intellectual growth, ability to resolve social conflicts, and personal experiences in the path of transformation. In this way, society not only uses an external criterion to select individuals but also focuses on their personality and internal transformation.

In the third stage, entering the government should have a gradual process. This means that individuals who have experience and internal transformation are first placed in lower-level management positions and gradually, with the change of their existential level, according to their existential level and transformation, they take on greater responsibilities.

After the practical model for individuals' entry into governmental responsibilities is defined, educational methods should also be designed to promote individuals' existential levels, which place individuals on the path of existential growth and enable them to reach higher levels of awareness and self-awareness. The first strategy is philosophical and ethical education. Education based on existential philosophies helps individuals to reach a deep understanding of themselves and the world. Teaching Mulla Sadra's philosophy can include topics such as gradation in existence, substantial motion, and intensification of existence. These teachings help individuals to be on the path of their intellectual and spiritual growth. In addition, books and texts (other than religious) that include human science and psychology teachings can be used to strengthen people's intellectual and emotional abilities.

The second strategy is critical thinking and self-awareness education. Critical thinking allows individuals to have independent and deep views in the face of information and social and cultural conditions. This type of thinking can use philosophical theories, social history review, and experiential education. Self-awareness is also developed through meditation, psychological exercises, and individual dialogues.

3. Comparative Analysis of Mulla Sadra's View with Western Theories of Education.

The normative educational pattern based on existential transformation in Mulla Sadra's philosophy can be better understood by comparing it with some prominent Western theories in the field of education. This section examines two important thinkers, John Dewey and Paulo Freire, to reveal their points of convergence and divergence with Mulla Sadra's perspective.

3-1. John Dewey and Experiential Education

John Dewey, an American philosopher and educational theorist, considers education to be an experiential, social, and continuous process within the context of life, the aim of which is to develop the individual's abilities for thinking and problem-solving. In Dewey's view, education should begin with the individual's lived and meaningful experiences to lead to lasting learning and inner growth (Dewey, 1938, 25–28). He views the human being as a growing and changing entity who, through social interaction and critical reflection, can actualize their potential capacities. In this regard, similarities with Mulla Sadra's viewpoint can be observed. Both philosophers consider the human being as a dynamic and evolving entity and believe that real transformation must begin from within the individual. Furthermore, both believe in the connection between education and individual ethics; however, Mulla Sadra sees this transformation at an ontological and metaphysical level, while Dewey emphasizes psychological and social growth more.

Consider, for example, a self-centered student who is unwilling to share their toys with others. We analyze the pedagogical response to such a student according to two distinct educational philosophies: In accordance with Dewey's principles, the educator creates a meaningful experimental situation. For instance, they design a group game that necessitates

sharing resources to win. If the child insists on keeping everything for themselves, the group loses, and the child tangibly experiences the consequence of their action, such as the disappointment of playmates, the group's defeat, and a feeling of exclusion. In the subsequent step, the teacher guides the children toward critical reflection on this experience: "Why did we lose?", "How did you feel when he didn't share the toys?", "How can we play better next time?". The result is that, from Dewey's perspective, the child gradually and internally comprehends that sharing is not an external compulsion but a psycho-social tool for success, fostering better relationships and achieving a happier life. This development represents an internal growth in their social and ethical skills.

In Mulla Sadra's educational method, the facilitator begins the work at the level of external acts, but the ultimate goal is change in the child's substance and existence (Jawhar and Wujūd). The educator first teaches the child to perform the act of giving (benevolence) consciously and voluntarily, even if they initially lack the internal desire to do so (e.g., giving a small toy to a needy child). This act, although initially artificial or forced, constitutes an existential experience. Subsequently, the educator asks the child to reflect on their inner feeling following this act of charity: "Did you feel light and tranquil after giving away that toy? This good feeling is a sign of God's contentment and the growth of your soul." The practice of these acts and the contemplation of their spiritual results continue. The consequence is that the child's soul (Nafs), through the repetition of these virtuous actions and reflection upon them, is gradually transformed. Based on the Theory of Trans-Substantial Motion (al-Ḥarakah al-Jawharīyyah), the very essence and substance of their soul shifts from a state of stinginess to a state of generosity. At this stage, generosity is no longer a social strategy for the child but an existential attribute, linking them to the ultimate source of all giving (God).

3-2. Paulo Freire and Liberatory Education

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian thinker, considers education as a tool for raising awareness and liberation from domination. Criticizing the traditional model of education, which he calls 'banking education,' he emphasizes active participation, dialogue, and critical thinking instead of the one-way transmission of knowledge (Freire, 1970, 66–72). Freire believes that only through the awakening of critical consciousness can an individual be moved from a state of 'objectification' to a conscious and active state. This view aligns with Mulla Sadra's perspective, which sees the human being as an entity on a path of evolution and the discovery of the truth of existence. Both believe that transformation in the human being occurs not through external coercion but through inner awareness and substantial motion. The main difference is that Freire emphasizes social and political aspects, while Mulla Sadra's emphasis is on the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of the human being's movement towards absolute perfection.

The comparison between Mulla Sadra and Western thinkers such as Dewey and Freire shows that despite cultural and philosophical differences, concepts such as growth, self-awareness, and fundamental transformation are common points in the philosophy of education.

While Western theorists focus more on social and practical aspects, Mulla Sadra pays attention to the metaphysical and existential dimensions of education. This approach can complement modern and secular theories, especially in societies that need ethical and spiritual reconstruction (Nasr, 1989, 53).

The example of the self-centered student, the responses of two distinct philosophical approaches highlight fundamentally different aims: Based on Freirean principles, the educator engages in dialogue (dialogical method) with the student to explore questions such as: "Why do some children have many toys while others have none?". The objective is for the child to develop a critical awareness (Conscientização) that their stinginess reproduces social injustice and perpetuates the existing societal power dynamics. By participating in the co-design of an equitable sharing system, the student is transformed into an advocate for social justice and an active citizen. The core transformation is socio-political and critical.

According to Mulla Sadra's educational principles, the facilitator instructs the student to practice the act of giving (benevolence). The core objective is the substantive transformation of the child's essence (Jawhar-i Nafs)—a shift from the state of the stingy person (bakhīl) to the state of the generous person (sakhī). Through the discovery of the inner feeling of lightness and existential expansion following the act of charity, the student is transformed into a more perfected human being (Insān-i Kāmil). The core transformation is ontological and spiritual.

Since the 20th century, transformative approaches in education have emerged as a cornerstone of educational thought. These theories view education not merely as the transmission of knowledge but as a process of change within the internal structures of the human being (Mezirow, 1997, 5). Within this trajectory, the perspectives of cognitive theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner, and later, subsequent transformative theories by Mezirow and Dirkx, have each elucidated a specific dimension of this transformation. Through his theory of Cognitive Development, Piaget posited transformation as an internal and dynamic phenomenon occurring within the mental structures of the individual. From his perspective, learning takes place when an imbalance (disequilibrium) is created in the cognitive structure of the mind, which the individual resolves by restructuring these schemes to achieve a new equilibrium (Piaget, 1964, 40–42). Crucially, in Piaget's theory, transformation is limited to the cognitive level, with less attention paid to the emotional or existential aspects of the human being. In his seminal work, *Mind in Society* (1978), Lev Vygotsky viewed learning as a social process that first occurs on the interpersonal level and then on the intra-personal level. He argued that true development happens when learning is framed within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), meaning the learner is able to transcend their current capacity through interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978, 86). *In Toward a Theory of Instruction* (1966), Jerome Bruner conceptualized learning as the process of constructing meaning. He maintained that learning is deep and lasting when the individual engages in self-discovery of meaning and reconstructs their understanding of the world through various modes of representation

(enactive, iconic, and symbolic) (Bruner, 1966, 53). In the later decades of the 20th century, the concept of transformation broadened from the cognitive level to include the existential and spiritual dimensions. Mezirow defined "Transformative Learning" as a process of critical reflection on presuppositions that leads to the restructuring of an individual's perspective of themselves and the world (Mezirow, 1997, 6). Following Mezirow, researchers like Cranton (2020) highlighted the emotional and spiritual dimensions of this transformation, referring to transformative learning as "existential becoming" (Cranton, 2020, 44). Recent studies, including research by Sugito (2024) and McClain (2024), affirm the effective role of transformative education—with its emphasis on self-awareness, meaning-making, and inner growth—in both teacher education and lifelong learning.

By comparing the educational model of Mulla Sadra with contemporary transformative approaches, one can observe profound points of both convergence and divergence, which attest to the unparalleled richness of the Sadrian philosophical system in elucidating the existential dynamics of the human being. While theorists such as Piaget restrict transformation to "cognitive structures," Vygotsky to "interpersonal processes," and Bruner to "meaning-making," Mulla Sadra, drawing upon core principles like the Primacy of Existence (Asalat al-Wujud) and substantial Motion (Harakat-e Jowhari), extends transformation to encompass all levels of human existence. He views it not merely as a psychological change, but as a metaphysical metamorphosis in the learner's very Being. This perspective, in effect, simultaneously "integrates" contemporary developmental theories and "transcends" them. Furthermore, although the concept of "restructuring of presuppositions" in Mezirow's theory and "existential becoming" in Cranton's view bear some resemblance to the Sadrian trajectory, a fundamental distinction remains: In the Sadrian system, the ultimate end (ghāyah) of this transformation is Divine Proximity (Qurb Ilahi), which lies beyond any purely cognitive or affective restructuring. In other words, while contemporary theories speak of "a change in how one thinks and how one is," Mulla Sadra discusses "a change in the human essence itself" and a trajectory toward a Superior Existence. Therefore, it can be claimed that Mulla Sadra's educational model, by providing a comprehensive map of the human existential journey and by emphasizing the unification of all dimensions of human existence, not only aligns with many findings of transformative education but, by going beyond them, opens up entirely new horizons for educational thought.

4. Individual and Social Consequences of Normative Education

Normative education, with its emphasis on the existential transformation of the human being within the framework of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, has profound and multifaceted consequences for both the individual and society. These consequences are not limited solely to intellectual growth or the enhancement of individual skills but also exert influence in the ethical, spiritual, psychological, and social domains.

4-1. Individual Consequences

a) Deepening Self-Knowledge and the Quest for Meaning

A life based on meaning, in addition to saving individuals from futility, is hopeful and enjoyable. Since self-knowledge is necessary for a meaningful life, normative education enables individuals to gain a deeper understanding of themselves by comprehending their existential status and progressing along the path of perfection. Such individuals discover the meaning and purpose of life in connection with their existential evolutionary journey and experience a meaningful life through existential transformation.

b) Strengthening Inner Morality and Individual Conscience

The more that "oughts" and "ought nots" become internalized within a person's being, the stronger their moral conscience becomes. Normative education, through existential transformation, leads to the internalization of these "oughts" and "ought nots." Therefore, relying on such education, individuals possess a greater ethical commitment, not out of fear of punishment, but rather based on conscience and awareness.

c) Increasing Resilience and Psychological Cohesion

Normative education enhances an individual's capacity to cope with difficulties. As mentioned earlier, this type of education increases the quest for meaning and meaningfulness in life. Viktor Frankl also emphasized this point, stating that the search for meaning can increase an individual's tolerance in the face of suffering (Frankl, 1963, 75-78). Furthermore, since human beings are constantly in a state of existential evolution and transformation, adapting to their levels of being, they can possess good psychological cohesion.

d) Balance Between Rationality and Spirituality

Considering the aforementioned explanations, it appears that normative education cultivates both the rational and spiritual dimensions of the human being, guiding individuals towards a balance between theoretical intellect, practical intellect, and spiritual intuition.

4-2. Social Consequences

a) Formation of an Ethics-Oriented and Responsible Society

Given that the model of normative education emphasizes the existential transformation of individuals, and that their transformation is not superficial but fundamental, in a society where individuals are on the path of existential evolution, ethical principles and adherence to the law will not be imposed externally but will be observed internally. In such a society, individuals are committed and responsible, and an ethics-oriented society will be formed.

b) Reduction of Social Conflicts and Violence and Enhancement of the Quality of Civic Participation

In the model of normative education, the existential levels of individuals determine their place in society, and each individual's expectations of themselves and others are within the limits of their own and others' existential level and transformation. Therefore, egocentricity, conflicts, and violence among individuals, which arise from expecting more from those at

higher levels, are reduced, and each individual understands themselves in connection with existence and others. Thus, as Palmer believes that existential awareness makes individuals more active and committed in social decision-making and responsibility (Palmer, 1998, 16), the quality of civic participation is also enhanced in the model of normative education.

c) Gradual Realization of the Ideal Society (Utopia)

By awakening the existential capacities of human beings, normative education provides the foundation for the formation of a society based on meaning, justice, and growth. Individuals whose education is based on the normative education approach will grow in all existential and epistemological dimensions and will reach existential perfection through existential transformation. Since society is composed of individuals, if individuals in a society grow with the normative education approach, the society will also gradually evolve with the evolution of individuals, paving the way for becoming a utopia. Therefore, normative education is not merely an educational model but a blueprint for human and social renewal, guiding individuals from a partial and fragmented state to a holistic and comprehensive state, and directing society from disorder towards meaning and transcendence.

5. Research Method

The present study, grounded in the transcendent philosophy of Mulla Sadra, utilizes a documentary (library-based) methodology combined with a descriptive-analytical and epistemological inferential approach. Crucially, the investigation into the relationship between Mulla Sadra's philosophical tenets and the concept of tarbiyyat (education/nurturing) is not executed via a formal, syllogistic deduction but rather through a hermeneutical interpretive process. In formal deduction, the conclusion is necessarily derived from pre-defined major and minor premises. Conversely, this research addresses a unified intellectual system wherein principles such as the primacy/fundamentality of existence (Aṣālat al-Wujūd), trans-substantial motion (al-Ḥarakat al-Jawhariyyah), and the unification of the intellect and the intelligible (Ittiḥād al-ʿĀqil wa al-Maʿqūl) are understood not as discrete premises but as interconnected components of an integrated totality. Consequently, defining tarbiyyah as the 'guidance of the soul's substantial motion toward unification with ultimate realities/truths' is an outcome derived from grasping the internal relational dynamics of this philosophical structure and the inherent coherence observed between these fundamental principles and the concept of education.

Conclusion

This research endeavors to articulate a novel model in the field of educational philosophy. Drawing upon the foundations of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy (Hikmat-e Muta'aliyya), it proposes the model of "Normative Education" as a theoretical and practical response to the ethical, identity-related, and existential crises of the contemporary world. Based on this perspective, humanity is not a static entity but rather a fluid, dynamic, and evolving

reality. Through substantial motion (harakat-e jawhari) and the gradation of existence (tashkik dar marateb-e wujud), individuals possess the potential to transcend lower levels of being towards higher existential realms. Consequently, within this intellectual framework, education (tarbiyat) transcends mere instruction or behavioral conditioning; it is a profound existential and transformative process that encompasses all intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of the individual.

"Normative Education," in this context, is a form of education that not only instills ethical "oughts" and "ought-nots" within the individual but also guides them along a path of existential growth, self-knowledge, and the pursuit of meaning. In such an educational approach, ethical imperatives are not rooted in external coercion but rather emerge from inner understanding, spiritual intuition, and a conscious presence in the world. This perspective propels individuals towards a balance between rationality and spirituality, presenting them as autonomous and responsible agents in both personal and social spheres.

Within the framework of this educational model, the educator assumes the role of an existential intermediary who must have traversed the path of transformation themselves to effectively accompany the learner on their journey towards perfection. The educational environment, too, must possess a dynamic, inspiring, inquiry-based, and meaning-oriented structure that facilitates the growth of human existential levels. Strategies such as emphasizing the teleological nature of creation, utilizing profound spiritual experiences, fostering dialogue and critical thinking, engaging with spiritually advanced individuals, and designing gradual processes for the elevation of existential states are among the tools for realizing this form of education.

From a consequentialist standpoint, Normative Education not only fosters inner ethical growth, psychological equilibrium, resilience, and a sense of meaning at the individual level but also contributes to the reduction of social conflicts, the enhancement of civic engagement, responsibility, empathy, and the formation of a just and ethical society at the societal level. Gradually, the realization of such an education on a macro scale can pave the way for approaching the ideal city (madina fadila) – a society where law is not based on external compulsion but emanates from the very essence of individuals, and where education is not merely the behavioral control of human beings but a means for existential awakening.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that while the model of "Normative Education" is grounded in Islamic philosophy, particularly Mulla Sadra's intellectual system, it also possesses the capacity for adaptation and dialogue with modern Western theories, such as the perspectives of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. This adaptive capacity allows for its potential utilization in diverse educational systems, both religious and secular. Given that this educational model is formulated and analyzed for the first time in this article, its further development, empirical expansion, and critique in future research are essential endeavors that can open new horizons in educational theorizing.

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