



Research Paper

Analytical review of the principles and consequences of "physical food" from Mulla Sadra's perspective

Ayoob Khorsandi^{*1} , Mohammadali Vatandoost² , Abolfazl Akhondzadeh³ 

¹ PhD Student of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, University of Razavi, Mshhahd, Iran

² Assistant Professor of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, University of Ferdowsi

³ PhD Student of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, University of Razavi, Mshhahd, Iran

***Corresponding Author:** Ayoob khorsandi
Address: University of Razavi, Mshhahd, Iran

Email: ellatoo.sa@gmail.com
Tel: 09354309784


[10.22080/jre.2024.27983.1215](https://doi.org/10.22080/jre.2024.27983.1215)
Received:

August 11, 2024

Accepted:

November 11, 2024

Available online:

December 1, 2024

Keywords:

Potential nourishment, actual nourishment, union of the perceiver and the perceived, Mulla Sadra.

Abstract

According to the perspective of the Peripatetic philosophers, the true nourishment for the human body is that which enters it, decomposes, and then replaces the previous forms of the body's organs as a "substitute for what is decomposed." Initially, this nourishment exists in potential form for the human being; however, through processes of transformation, it becomes actual nourishment. Portions of this food transform into flesh, blood, and bone. Similarly, as the food reaches each organ, it takes on the form of that organ and becomes part of it. In contrast to this theory, known as "al-Saq," Mulla Sadra posits that physical food plays merely a preparatory (numerical) role, serving as a foundation for the soul to generate a form analogous to that of the physical food. This form, according to Sadra, constitutes the true nourishment for the human body. In essence, the intellect emanates the true form of food through the soul, and since the soul already possesses this form at the level of its essence, it manifests it for the body at the level of multiplicity and action. This article adopts a descriptive-analytical method and a philosophical approach to examine and reinterpret the principles and implications of bodily nourishment and its connection with the soul. The study concludes that the essence of nourishment and its active status belong to the soul rather than the physical matter of food and drink, which are only incidentally and potentially consumed. Instead, food and drink serve as mere material and preparatory factors. This explains why perfect souls can independently generate the forms of nourishment and, through this ability, sustain their bodies. Such souls are, in fact, among the manifestations of God Almighty's name, "al-Raziq" (The Sustainer).

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Among the philosophical systems of Islam (Mashsha, Ishraq, and Hikmat-e-Muta'aliyyah), no philosopher has delved into the nature and reality of food from a philosophical and theological perspective as profoundly as Mulla Sadra. In the philosophical framework he constructed, grounded in his ontological and anthropological principles, nutrition and growth carry a unique significance, distinct not only from other philosophical systems but also from the perspectives of empirical scientists. According to his doctrine, not only humans but all beings—from the earthly realm to the heavenly domain—require sustenance, whether material or spiritual. It is worth noting, however, that despite introducing this subject, Mulla Sadra refrained from exploring it in detail. He believed that addressing this issue would necessitate a different style of discourse, one that people are not typically accustomed to hearing.

2. Method

The research method employed in this study is analytical-comparative, and the primary data was collected using library-based research.

3. Results

The essence of nourishment and the active role of food lie within the soul, not in the material food that is received potentially and incidentally as nourishment or drink. These foods and drinks merely serve as preparatory grounds, holding a numerical and material role.

Perfect souls are capable of generating food forms themselves, thereby sustaining their bodies. Such souls are, in fact, manifestations of the divine name "al-Raziq" in a numerical sense.

Based on this theory, the philosophical issue of the eater and the eaten (shubhat akil wa ma'kul) is resolved entirely. This is because material food consumed by humans does not truly become the human body in the essential sense of it being the human body. In this context, the human body is not what is consumed, buried in the ground, or subjected to natural material transformations. The human body is far nobler than to be dominated by natural matter or con-



sumed by an animal. Thus, the statement that an animal eats a human and becomes “part of their body” is invalid; it concerns only the material shell, not the true essence.

The soul, as the agent in the act of nourishment, plays a fundamental role in forming the essence of the sperm. Since the sperm passes through the channel of the imagination, the purity of imagination holds significant influence over the upbringing and spiritual development of offspring.

4. Conclusion

Contrary to the popular view that considers the role of food in the event of nutrition and growth as an agent, Sadra believes that in providing our substitute for analysis and also in the discussion of growth, food has only a numerical role and the agent is that of the human soul. What enters the human body from food is a substance and prepares the ground for the soul to impart the true form of food to the body, similar to what it has received. This form of food is actual food and becomes part of the organ and similar to it.

In explaining Sadra's theory, it should be noted that firstly, the human body is a physical and partial substance and has actual unity. Secondly, food that enters the stomach from the outside is also a physical and partial substance and has actual unity. Therefore, if the food that enters the body becomes a part of the human body, this is not compatible with the personal unity of the body and the proximity of two physical substances next to each other will not mean the unity of food and nourishment. Sadra analyzes the relationship between food and nourishment based on all the foundations he has established in transcendental wisdom. Abandoning any of the foundations he has established would seriously challenge his explanation of the relationship between food.

Funding

There is no funding support.

Conflict of interest

Authors declared no conflict of interest.



References

Ibn Sina, (1404), *Al-Shifa*, first edition, Qom: Ayatollah Al-Marashi Library.

Ibn Fanari, (2010), *Misbah al-Auns*, first edition, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah.

Mulla Sadra, (١٩٨١) *al-Hikma al-Muttaaliyyah fi al-Asfar al-Arabah, Beirut*: Dar Ihya al-Trath al-Arabi.

Fakhr al-Din Razi (1411) *Al-Mabahid al-Mashrakiya*, Qom: Bidarfar.

Sabzevari Mullahadi (1390) *Sharh al-Manzooma fi al-Mantiq wal-Hikmah*, research and commentary by Mohsen Bidarfar, Qom, Bidar