Approaches to Aesthetics in School of Mulla Sadra

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to attain an understating and familiarity with aesthetics in the school of Mulla Sadra so as to determine if there is any separate and independent debate concerning aesthetics in his Islamic and philosophical school? Thus, this research examines the ideas and perspectives of Mulla Sadra through an analytical-descriptive or historical method and library research. At last, the findings showed that there was no independent debate with regard to aesthetics in the school of Mulla Sadra and he attributed the whole beauty in the earth to god. He considered the deep-rooted perspective of the creature of the world as the manifestation of perfection, beauty, real lover and beloved and all the levels of the world held kindness, grant and eminences which are symbols of the all the beautiful attributes given to god. God has granted them to his righteous people and servants.

Keywords: Islamic Philosophy, Aesthetics, Mulla Sadra.

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1- The current paper was extracted from author's masters' thesis entitled Aesthetics in Mulla Sadra's school under the supervision of Dr. Reza Akbarian and Dr. Hamidreza Saremi at Islamic Azad University of Borujerd. It is worth mentioning, the thesis has not been defended yet.
1. Introduction

Aesthetics in the Islamic art is one of the five fields of philosophy and has been stressed in many Islamic schools. Among these schools, Mulla Sadra’s perspective about aesthetics is very prominent and rich. He thinks beauty is based on the system of ontology of Aristotle. On the other hand, he relates it to the Sufi’s ontology. Since the past there was such a unity among the two perspectives, and both necessarily deny evil in the world since god does not show any evil or evil is not a manifestation of god (Razavi, 1384: 118). Paying attention to beauty and attempts to reach an understating of it are among the issues which were stated for the first time in the eighteenth century to justify the art products especially fine arts (Parvizi and Arghavani, 2009: 2). The study of aesthetics in the thoughts of the philosophers is a key to understand their point of views showing the formation of art.

In fact, beauty is one of the deep meanings of philosophy which can be recognized and examined by the immortal power (Afrasiabpour, 2008). The word aesthetics was first introduced after the Greek philosophers in the area of world of feelings and it was mainly concerned with science and that how to recognize things through senses (Madadpour, 2011: 204). In fact, after Baumgartner, this word was meant the art of thinking beautifully, and viewing beautifully in all the created products (Babai, 2013: 15). But not only the German interpreters but also in the most art schools of western philosophers including Goodman (1979), Wellheim (1980), and Collingwood (1983) they viewed the beauty differently and associated it with the creativity in the art products (Louisen and Gayer, 2013: 17).

Grouche believes that beauty is not the intrinsic attribute of the things but it is in the essence of the viewer. Since it is because of the spiritual activities which attributes beauty to things. Roger Scruton sees beauty as the result of analysis of the hidden concepts in the issues which create an understating through interaction with other subjects which include very complicated issues (Hasperz and Scruton, 2014: 75). Alberti1 also regards beauty as a systematic harmony between the components and asserts that that collection is beautiful when we can add or remove something from it (Grouter, 2009: 103-955). For Motahari, the nature of beauty cannot be interpreted and defined.

He means that beauty is perceived as "مما يدريك و لا يوصف" but it cannot be described (Ganjour and Imami Jomeh, 2010: 126-127). Allameh Jafari in his book entitled "Beauty and Art from an Islamic Perspective" says that: god is beautiful and likes and prefers beauty which is the manifestation of his bounty in his servants2 (Jafari, 2013: 287). According to Mulla Sadra, wisdom is one of the most important manifestations which have been put in humans by god. In his many philosophical works, he talked about wisdom and wrote a book entitled "Description of sufficient Principles" which is much associated with wisdom.
As a matter of fact, beauty and perfection are solely attributed to God say God Almighty is the origin of all goodness and beauties in the world (Hashemnejad, 2013: 230). By the virtue of what was said previously, beauty can be classified and the philosophers, through many ways, regard it as the mental power which is attained from beauty of humans (Akbarian and Hosseini, 2013). But what is manifest here is that, aesthetics has not been presented thoroughly and independently in the juridical texts and only in some writings it can be found such as: Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Mulla Sadra, Allameh Tabataba’i and Jafari. But when we analyze the available findings, no independent debate can be found to be called aesthetics in the Islamic schools. Therefore, the current study examines the aesthetics from the view of Islamic philosophers in particular Mulla Sadra (Table 1).

### Table 1: Aesthetics from the view of Islamic philosophers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophers</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avicenna</td>
<td>He considers beauty as the result of being neat and moderate leading to harmony and symmetry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suhrawardi</td>
<td>Suhrawardi in his writing, &quot;the fact of love or the companion of lover&quot; sees beauty and kindness beyond the material world and believes that the need for beauty and love should first exist in the thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulla Sadra</td>
<td>Beauty is the result of the performance and creative thinking of the artist in the material world which promotes and changes the upper worlds and other worlds by his/her thoughts and beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allameh Jafari</td>
<td>Beauty is a manifestation of the clear performance of the things which have covered them and it causes their interior in the channel of rightness and appropriateness to be reflected in the soul of humans and the current universe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morteza Motahhari</td>
<td>He sees the beauty as the result of the elegance and gift of the artist when creating the art works that generates beauty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinani</td>
<td>نور السماوات و الارض &quot; god is light, the heavens and the earth. It means that we can see god through the world. If there was no god, nothing could be seen and perceived. Thus, god is light and now he is light, he is also beautiful, and light is beautiful and beauty is whatever which can be understood and perceived.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors, 2015.

### 2. Research questions

1. What does in the ontology of Mulla Sadra make his view toward beauty in arts or humor arts?
2. Why are humans basically creative from the Mullas Sadra’s philosophical point of view or why can they create art works?
3. Methodological considerations

The main approach employed for this study is analytical-descriptive and historical. In this regard, it has been attempted to make use of the library and documentary research methods. Thus, based on the four journeys book and their interpretations, it was tried to investigate the meaning of beauty. Consequently, the study aims to examine the dimensions of aesthetics from his perspective and to investigate the presented ideas using Islamic writings and published articles on the website, Sadra Islamic philosophy research institute, so that beauty is determined and revisited.

4. Aesthetics from the view of the Quran

There are many have been verses (from the Quran) with regard to beauty from an Islamic point of view which appropriately prove that one must pay attention to them and one must follow them to satisfy their spiritual and psychological needs. On the other hand, it is crystal clear that the material and spiritual requirements of the humans are not limited to the tangible beauties. Put it differently, it does not mean that humans many sacrifice all the realities for the sake of beauty specially by considering this common trend that selfish humans destroy many aims and principles by showing their beauty and polishing their appearance.

As a result, Islam has called its followers to remember that creating beauty is not for pure profiting since beauty for the righteous people is a bipolar issue as they are the only one who could analyze its objectivity and subjectivity (Saremi and Shahmohammadi Daneshvar, 2014: 441-438). We should consider this fact that god regards obedience to the prophets' orders as obedience to his orders, and the Quran is a real and true miracle. Following these facts, Mulla Sadra sees beauty as taken from the Quran messages.

In other words, the beauty is absolute and each beauty is part of god's beauty and god almighty is the source of each kindness, perfection, and origin (Shabanibab Anari and Khosronejad, 2010: 2). That is the reason why the issues of beauty, love and art are not separable in the Quran and have been presented in the view of a certain aim, and it is natural why we should not seek the reasons for the beauty of things and material affairs. But we should examine the understating of beauty from the angel of inspiration and we should extract it from the meaning of the text.

The perspective of seeing beauty is that of aesthetics since sometimes a general meaning of beauty is sought, for instance, in the Surah Yusuf, there is no mention of aesthetics in any of the verses, but it is clear that he holds much beauty as it is mentioned to the cutting of the
women’s fingers. At last, beauty is regarded appropriate which is the ultimate goal (Saremi and Shah Mohammadi Daneshvar, 2014: 442).

Consequently, from an Islamic perspective beauty cannot be understood from the words, in other words, beauty, lover and art cannot be separated as god almighty in a holy tradition states: I was a hidden treasure and was revealed to remained unrecognizable, put differently, "کنزاً محفیاً" refers to the secrets of beauty which cannot be seen in the performances; as a matter of fact, only theosophy that he holds could see the beauty (Karimian Sighlani, 2013: 67).

5. Aesthetics in the Mulla Sadra’s school

Mohammad Ibn Ibrahim Ghavam Shirazi is one of the eminent scholars in the history of the Shites (1572-1635). He believed in earthly world and was much familiar with the spiritual world, in his school he emphasized on the material world as a ground to achieve elevation and to reach an upper world, and for him, this is the only way to reach god. Mulla Sadra's philosophy looks like a crossroad which has been divided between peripatetic's intelligence, Aristotle's intelligence, Avicenna's intelligence and illuminationism's intelligence which shares the same concepts and creates a roaring river (Saremi and Shah Mohhamdi Daneshvar, 2014: 5-11).

For the current authors, such a person, holding a high understating by interpreting other Islamic schools in particular Ibn Arabi's perspective, could analyze their positive and negatives points and finally gathered them under one section entitled transcendent theosophy. Beyond all doubts, the main learnings and the most luminous laws and orders in the quranic inspirations and Gnosticism excellence in the transcendent theosophy have been taken from him. In addition to be philosophical in the debates, it has been integrated with essence and theosophy and in most cases it is called modesty and humidity, and in his aesthetics works he is named as: the learned sheikh, the greatest sheikh and inquirer sheikh (Nadri Abianeh, 2009: 4).

In Mulla Sadra's school, many criteria have been ignored and it is the relation which he created between the anthological ontology and he found such a relation by means of love knowledge foundations and paid a special attention to them. This relation made Mulla Sadra famous in his philosophy in transcendent theosophy and in Isfahan's school of philosophy. It also guided him towards special perspectives in aesthetics. These perspectives caused us to make a systematic relation between aesthetics and philosophy of art through his points of view and present a clear picture of this relation. Perhaps, anyone who is familiar with transcendent theosophy and its philosophical foundations is surprised with such a perspective as the current authors were surprised too. Now we are surprised with this fact that how we can believe that transcendent theosophy is the Isfahan's school of philosophy but they lack any art or aesthetical
relations or a spiritual philosophy is generated whose nature is associated with god but disregards art and art aesthetics (Imami Jomeh, 2009: 13-14).

It is worth mentioning that Mulla Sadra did not widely make any theories with regard to art but considered and paid attention to art. He wrote some poetry, which is part of art, and made some of his special interpretations about art and art utility in the social areas. As a matter of fact, in the school of philosophy, it is clear that like other philosophers he studied aesthetics from anthological perspectives but by considering the facts mentioned before, we should say that what makes Mulla Sadra’s philosophy distinct from other previous philosophies is that he not only pays attention to beauties of art but also considers an appropriate place for it that the later philosophers deeply examined it. The first question which is asked is what in the ontology of Mulla Sadra that underlies his view toward beauty and in arts or humor arts. In response to this question, it can be said that love was the only motivation and love knowledge for him was as a communicating bridge that is called "philosophy of art" nowadays (Ibid: 15-16).

Not denying that love for Mulla Sadra is a communicating bridge manifesting the nature of art and ties the internal events between the lover and beloved. He studied and examined these relations and considered the result based on presence of arts and humor arts in amorous looks of the artist. Here, the audiences know that in these relations, one can have a pure philosophical look and at the same time an aesthetics look at generating art and play, and dream plays an important role in reaching humans to their love (Ibid: 203).

But it is worth stressing that in the Mulla Sadra’s aesthetics there is no coherent view about beauty since he did not separate art and beauty. But in some debates on which the interpreters rely in the following verse are associated with art, love and beauty in the seventh volume of journeys have been interpreted by the interpreters:

«ما المبادي فلانا نجد اکثر نفوس الامم التي لها تعلیم العلوم الصنائع اللطیفه و الادب الریاضیا... مثل اهل الفارس و اهل العراق و اهل الشام ... أفیهم الدقیقه و الصنائع اللطیفه و الادب الحسنة... غیر خالیة عن هذالعشق اللطیف... لذي منشا استحسان ش Merrill المحیوب و نحن لم نجد فيها حب الازدواج و السقاد و الغرض منها في الطبيعه ابقاء النسل و حفظ الصور في هیولیاتها بالجنس ... كانت الشخاص و أئمة السیلان و الاستحالة».

Mulla Sadra's statement about this verse shows that he, by some objective and valuable debates, considers the nations and groups complementary in terms of understating in association of one form of pure love in their nature of events resulting in generating love. Thanks to his attempts, some of the lovers and beloveds hold a kind heart and an innocent mind and a compassionate soul which is able to understand the beautiful forms and icons. However, some of them have a cold and indifferent soul which is not able to understand the gentle forms. Thus, based on what was mentioned, understanding the beauty is only understandable for the intellectual.
6. Love Knowledge in the Mulla Sadra's school

As mentioned previously, it is possible to determine the philosophy of transcendent theosophy based on the love knowledge foundations. This debate of philosophy is more comprehensive in comparison with the other philosophical schools as in defining love, he used outstanding beauty and it refers to true love which is solely attributed to god (Akbari, n.d.). Mulla Sadra in his school does not see the picture of beloved in the dream of the lover as a simple and natural picture which is the reflection of the external from the internal since he sees the picture of the beloved for the lover as an allegorical picture. But this allegory is limited to aspects of dream and the role of dream. It exactly follows the procedures and stages that the lover does so that the beloved's face is allegorized in his heart. But it should be noted that most of these doctrines that Mulla Sadra's use to create the beloved's face have been in the attention of many philosophers after him to analyze that how the art work is created.

On the whole, what causes us to regard the beloved's beauty by the lover as an art work is the passion of the lover for the beloved. Although we will go through the comparative discussions, we can better consider the art dimensions of the Mulla Sadara's perspective. He sees beauty as an allegory, as it has been stated in transcendent theosophy translated by Suzanchi, Mulla Sadra by refereeing to documents written before him considered them as an art form. He, however, investigates beauty from an artistic perspective. But, collecting these and making a connection between these depends on many experiences and he certainly produced his art perspective in a period with many problems. Thus, he clearly determined that how the lover, in his initial observation, takes the natural beauty into account and then deeply ponders over it, and how he richens his experience by allegory and istihan that richness which leads him to love and satisfaction, "و منها محبة الصناع في اظهار صاناعتهم و حرصهم علي تتميمها و شوقهم الي تحسينها و تزيلها كانه "عززي لهم، لما فيه من مصلحة الخلق و انتظام احوالهم شيء".

By the virtue of the said verse, Mulla Sadra like the philosophers living before him worked on this issue that love influences the beautifying of the beloved by creature of the work and considered those who know love and those who know beauty as complementary. He sees love and loving for the humans as human and animal which are "pure and chaste" and "impure and sordid', respectively. But what makes him distinct from other philosophers is presenting an art determination of the processes that the lover has passed in his chaste love. Perhaps, none of the philosophers living before him considered the role of dream and beauty in generating love and occupying the lover. But none of them took into consideration the allegorical and istihan dimension of art as Mulla Sadra did so. In sum, love for Mulla Sadra, starts with an initial picture and ends with a final picture. But the initial and final pictures differ; the initial picture is a natural picture of the beloved and is achieved by his observation. But the final picture is an art picture and is achieved by allegory and istihan. For the first time in love knowledge, Sadra made
a distinction between the natural picture of the beloved and the figurative picture of the beloved. This distinction made a connection between arts, humor arts and love as well as a connection with pure or chaste. All of these are revolutions that launched in love knowledge and made them well-known in the world of philosophy. For him, "a gentle figure", "great fitness" and "beautiful face" provoke the pleasure. Thus there is a relation between love and pleasure of beautiful face and great fitness and gentle figure. But allegorical and istihan beauty make beauty produce friendly and affectionate relations among all the creatures of the world.

Therefore, love carries the conditions for generating beauty; as a result, the love for him will exist in the essence of the beloved. It is worth mentioning that transcendent theosophy in his most philosophical works with wisdom of Gnostic justifications is an attempt to understand all the senses of his surroundings with love (Table 2). Notwithstanding, this paper investigates aesthetics and briefly love in the Mulla Sadra's school which illustrates that he assumes that love to creatures and their interest to achieve the real perfection, that is, god could bring about all the real loves (Akbari, n.d). Thus, the presented explanations about love in his philosophy is entirely humanistic, and based on the existing foundations it can include one degree of love. For Sadra, each degree of love has its own characteristics and is placed in a special grade since proved the presence of love and passion in the nature of the creatures.

Table 2: The classification of love based on the ranks of creatures from Mulla Sadra's perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees of Loves</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The first love - excellence</td>
<td>This stage of love knowledge is the most complete and comprehensive type of romantic relation between the lover and the beloved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The love of angles- wisdom</td>
<td>The wisdom love, because of jubilation, does not pay attention to essential nature or his nature and it only enjoys since he is servant before god almighty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The love of the penetration - the heavens</td>
<td>These souls are eager to see their metaphysics and may have one thing but lack another thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The love of penetration grade - human</td>
<td>This degree is concerned with humans who deal with the material world. The humans make love with the one similar to themselves or in a lower rank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The love of soul grade - animal</td>
<td>This is the lowest degree of love as the lover seeks his beloved in dreams and follows his material and illusory needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Stand up and escape from world of wisdom and intelligence
listen to the words of a fool
Stand up and escape from the world of arrogance
so the wisdom and intelligence would not force you
Put away the chain of wisdom from my neck
make me famous in insanity and intoxication
The wisdom went away and was replaced by love
love is the inheritor of wisdom, o' worshiper

7. The Relation between cosmology and humans' creativity

Feeling is something other than recognition; in other words, we may understand and perceive something as we may have created it in vacuum, and we might not know anything or we perceived or understood those works with signs previously. In fact, the difference between humans lies here as some just perceive the materials of the world even-though in addition to feeling the world outside humans also change the internal conditions to fulfill their spiritual needs. For instance, thousands of viewers could see a screen or play and probably will perceive it similarly but a few would analyze, predict and interpret it. Thus, generalization, based on their creativity, depends on the world interpretation with the mediation of his sense and wisdom from the environment. According to the philosophers, we are faced with the world view: philosophical world view, ontological and explanation world views (Mesbah Yazdi: 2001: 15-17). To state it simply, world view is a kind of general understating of the universe which includes knowing the world, knowing the creator of the world, knowing the creatures and finally their rank. Generally, the world view demands knowing the universe.

In this regard, anybody could be based on their life conditions which have been generated throughout history and they have been dealing with that or have grown up with that or developed with that. Till now, at least three rich fields of philosophy were introduced that each lasted ten years and they introduced a new world view to the history of philosophical thinking of Islam's world and each period is manifested with some titles (Imami Jomeh, 2013: 2-5). Therefore, world view is a response to issues which determine the world and show its face, it also affects the human's ideological pillars in relation with the environment. Due to his philosophical view toward the world, Mulla Sadra separates the common world and supernatural world and presents a special vision for each. With a quick glance at his works, it can be found that for him the only way to understand and know reality in the world is wisdom, revelation and theosophy justifications. As a matter of fact, the words in Table 3 show the foundations of Mulla Sadra's thoughts and they have been fused in way which cannot be separated.

The basis of imagination in the world is associated with soul and angels. According to Dr. Dinani and Dr. Babai, it is possible to consider the worlds of which Sadra thought as the world of
bounty and blessing since philosophy of human's denying that in the world the degree of beauty and factors of beauty are different for all the creatures of the world. In this regard, Sadra considers cosmology as god's wisdom. In the first volume of Journeys, he takes wisdom in cosmology as a form of cleansing the soul from the impurities or according to all Islamic philosophers he seeks help for immateriality of the human soul and then asserts: modeling god's attributes is the most important basis that art and humor art are wisdom since god likes the situations when his creatures follow the beautiful attributes (Akbarian, 2007).

As it was mentioned in the second question, creativity in humans is due to world view and cosmology. Sadra in the same volume points out that: the world and humans were created by magnificent god, he creates artists since creativity is part of his essence and humans were created by go so they may carry his attributes and the reason to call humans as artists is that they are the manifestations of the words creator, source, beautiful, and loving beauty. Considering what was alluded to earlier, Sadra sees humans as an example of god and the worlds between god and humans show this. It means that god holds the world of unseen and visible, world of creation, world of command, and world of kingdom and sovereignty. He created humans in a way that they have these two worlds command; the creation world is "کن فیکون"، the world in which imagination is done without any materials in an innovative way but not gradually. In this world, will is creation, for example, humans can create everything in their mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different World Views</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical world view</td>
<td>This world view is arisen from mental abilities which are the basis of methodology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnostic world view</td>
<td>This world view is arisen from intuition. The mystic and righteous could see the realities of this world and state them with the language of wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation world view</td>
<td>This world is arisen from transfer. The speaker is obliged to protect the religious doctors and beliefs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adopted from four journeys, volume 1, section 1, 2001.

Conclusion

As mentioned previously, Mulla Sadra is among those philosophers who paid sufficient attention to aesthetics, and their philosophical approach is based on an ontological perspective. According to aesthetics approaches in his school, it is not surprising if he might have related it to originality of the entity or have looked at it from that angle. Thus, we should state that aesthetics in his school might be based on Ibn Arabi's and Rumi's approaches which are mainly dependent on lover's love for the beloved and beauty and perfection of existence which have an aesthetics
nature in his school as one may find a creature enjoyable because it has perfection. Somewhat it creates beauty and it contains attributes of beauty. In fact, here beauty involves perfection and perfection involves beauty. It is worth stressing that this issue was previously mentioned in the schools of Islamic philosophers but Sadra introduced a more comprehensive type of it. Put it differently, the main nature of his aesthetics is loving and showing passion toward god which has been repeatedly stated in his school. In his school, he solely sees god almighty and nothing else as He deserves light. Notwithstanding, in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, god's beauty is placed in the highest level of beauty and god has put this beauty in his creatures' nature. Additionally, no independent school on beauty can be found; neither in his school nor in the schools of others. But in his philosophical life we observed that due to lack of comprehensive schools the eminent philosophers sought the Greek philosophy and were eager to follow the foreign beliefs and they also found doubts about the Islamic philosophers. But Sadra with his intelligence and creativity within some years could deeply and thoroughly study the previous philosophy. He then, by addressing the doubts and finding relation among them, could introduce philosophy under a more comprehensive subject known as transcendent theosophy to the Shiite. After 386 years, his philosophy not only is still alive and flourishing but also has opened new avenues and more and more new lessons emerge out of his wisdom.
Notes
1. The Italian author, artist, architecture, and philosopher during the Renaissance, 1404-1472.
2. "ان الله جميل يحب الجمال و يحب أن يرى أثر نمتته على عبده." god is beautiful and he likes and prefers beauty and its manifestation can be found in his graces (Surah Al-Isra, verse 18), (Beauty and art from the islam's perspective, eighth publication, p. 174).
3. From this article, the possibility and impossibility of mulla sadra's philosophy of art and aesthetics (A Reflection on the place of art and beauty for mulla sadra), written by abdollah amini, 2011.
5. Four journeys, volume 7, p. 110.
6. The main statement by mulla sadra is:
ان هذا العشق... اعني الالتداذ الشديد بحسن الصورة الجميلة و الناحية المقررة لمن وجه فيه الشمائل اللطيفة و تناسب
الأعضاء وجودة التركيب... لما كان موجوداً علي نحو وجود الأمور الطبيعة في نفس أكثر الأمم (Mulla Sadra, Volume 7, n.d.: 172), "
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