

An Analysis of Mulla Sadra's Philosophical Reading of the Verses of Return

Narjes Bahaadini *

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Abstract

This study examines Mulla Sadra's reading of the so-called "Verses of Return" in the Quran, focusing on the verses "As He originated you, so you will return" (7:29) and "As We began the first creation, We will restore it" (21:104). The analysis demonstrates that Mulla Sadra interprets these verses, by relying on their linguistic and semantic components, as evidence for the theory of "Substantial Motion." This philosophical reading is defensible within the coherent framework of his "Transcendent Theosophy," yet it faces significant challenges, such as distancing from the apparent meaning and conventional context of the verses. The present article explains these critiques and provides cogent responses. A comparative review of Mulla Sadra's works reveals that he does not offer a one-dimensional or exclusive interpretation; rather, his belief in "the esoteric depths of the Quran" leads him to assign diverse, multi-layered semantic functions to these verses. This reflects his simultaneous attention to both the apparent context and the profound interpretive dimensions of the Quran. Consequently, although exclusively limiting these verses to the theory of Substantial Motion—without adherence to the principles of Transcendent Theosophy—poses interpretative difficulties, this reading holds a distinct position within Mulla Sadra's philosophical system as one of its profound, school-specific interpretations, highlighting the significant capacity of religious texts to engage with philosophy.

Keywords: Philosophical Interpretation of the Qur'an; Şadrian Psychology; Qur'anic Verses on Return; The Corporeal Origination of the Soul; The Inner Layers of the Qur'an.

* PhD student in Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy, Mofid University, Qom, Iran.
Email: nbahaadini@gmail.com



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