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Revolutionary Sages: A Decolonial Reading of the Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra through the Phenomenology of Frantz Fanon

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Revolutionary Sages

A Decolonial Reading of the Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra through the Phenomenology of Frantz Fanon

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Contents

1.	Introduction	1-4
2.	Methodology	5-10
3.	Chapter 1: Sadra on Being	11-24
4.	Chapter 2: Fanon on Colonial Being	25-34
5.	Chapter 3: Justice and Politics	35-42
6.	Chapter 4: Liberation	43-49
7.	Conclusion	50-53
8.	Bibliography	54-56

Introduction

In 1961, in the midst of decolonial struggle Frantz Fanon's seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth* was published after he dictated it to his wife on his deathbed. It became one of the founding texts of decolonial theory and continues to be read by revolutionaries, activists and academics to this day. Fanon lived, wrote and participated in the revolutionary struggle of colonial Algeria at a time when it seemed that the full decolonization, liberation and emancipation of the colonies of the European colonial empires is a matter of time. From a historical distance, it is evident that the anti-colonial movements did indeed achieve some of the set goals. At the same time it is undeniable that the contemporary world is a (neo)colonial world- an amalgam of classical colonial societies (like Israel), modern settler colonies (such as the USA, Canada, Australia) and countries with neocolonial ties to the West.¹ This (neo)colonial reality appears in the form of unequal economic exchange between the Global North and the Global South, the various ways in which global institutions and organizations are used to suppress the voices of people from the Global South, the exploitation of millions by Western private and state-owned companies, the movement of Western industries to the Global South, the disproportionate impact of global warming on the countries from the Global South that are the least responsible for it, the lack of climate justice, etc.

The most recent concrete example is the Western support for Israel's genocide in Gaza not only in terms of arms trade, but also in terms of economic ties, trade agreements, academic and cultural ties and media propaganda. Most academic institutions in the Netherlands, including Leiden University, have not cut their ties with the academic institutions of the colonial entity in Palestine by the time of writing of this thesis.

This dire contemporary situation calls for new ways of thinking and analysis that are able to address this (neo)colonial reality and serve as the theoretical framework of the practice of its dismantling. One way to engage with the problem of (neo)coloniality is through the rethinking of older philosophical traditions. In this thesis I draw my attention to Mulla Sadra's philosophy of Being. I argue that it is open for decolonial reading that offers valuable insights from a philosophical perspective. I chose Mulla Sadra for several reasons. First, Sadra's metaphysical ontology resonates

¹ By 'modern settler colony' here I mean a state with a colonial past that has completed the process of isolation of the native population.

with Fanon's phenomenological approach to the colonial condition and decolonization. As I will demonstrate, the centering of Being as reality itself allows for a dialogue between Sadra and Fanon.

Second, Sadra's discourse on justice and the establishment of just society is closely tied with his philosophy of Being. In other words, his political philosophy is inseparable from his transcendental philosophy, and this shows that the idea of countering oppression and establishing a just society follows directly from his main philosophical theses. This is particularly relevant to decolonial theory which is concerned with the problem of colonial and (neo)colonial oppression. Moreover, the larger Shia Islamic tradition to which Sadra belongs has given particular emphasis on the topics of oppression and its opposite, namely justice.

Third, the political philosophy of Mulla Sadra has generally been understudied by Western scholars. The earlier Orientalist readings of Sadra were insistent on the apolitical nature of his philosophy and this influenced the reading of scholars such as Henry Corbin and Seyyed Hossein Nasr that paid little attention to the political aspects of Sadra's thought. Until recently there were few references to and studies of the social and political dimensions of Sadra's philosophy among which are James Morris' introduction to his translation of *The Wisdom of the Throne* and Sayeh Meisami's work *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī and Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*. Morris concentrates on the broader social aspects of Sadra's pedagogy and method of teaching, while Meisami examines the relationship between knowledge and power in the thought of Sadra. She discusses the political dimensions of Sadra's ontology and epistemology and at times ties them to later political interpretations of his thought. The most recent and most extensive (if not the only such in Western scholarship) research on Sadra's political philosophy has been done by Seyyed Khalil Toussi in his work *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. Toussi discusses at length and in some cases reconstructs Sadra's political philosophy because he never wrote a work solely dedicated to politics. Rather, as Toussi demonstrates, he included discussions on politics in his philosophical works. This shows, I argue, that Sadra's politics are inextricably linked to his metaphysical ontology to the point that the term *ontopolitics* can be applied. One of the main arguments of Toussi's work is that contrary to the interpretations of some contemporary Iranian intellectuals as well as intellectuals from around the time of the Islamic revolution in Iran such as Ruhollah Khomeini and Morteza Motahhari, Sadra did not claim that the position of judges gives them the authority to organize and lead society in the absence of an Imam.² This is important for this thesis as the question of authority is what creates tension between Sadra and Fanon's political philosophy as will be discussed.

² Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, 8.

Lastly, the choice for comparison between Sadra and Fanon on the question of Being and oppression and justice is philosophically interesting. The comparability of Sadra's view on Being and Fanon's phenomenology opens new perspectives for a dialogue between metaphysics and phenomenology. Moreover, it reintroduces a metaphysical view of politics which has the potential to be fused with decolonial theory and be relevant to contemporary politics. Although Sadra's philosophy has been used in certain political discourses especially during the Islamic revolution, in this thesis I aim to provide a reading from a different angle that addresses (neo)coloniality specifically.

My primary sources are Mulla Sadra's *Kitab al-Mashair* (*The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations*), *al-Hikma al-Muta'alyah fi al-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* (*The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect*), *al-Hikma al-'arshiyyah* (*The Wisdom of the Throne*) and passages from *Al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah*. In these works, Sadra outlines and explains his philosophical methodology and discusses at length the question of Being. *The Four Journeys of the Intellect* is likely his most intensive study of Being and the work from which his ontology could be grasped the best. In the same work he also connects his ontology to certain political topics which illustrates that he did not view them as separate. More explicit discussions on politics, especially concerning the question of the Imam's return and the establishment of perfect society could be found in *The Wisdom of the Throne* and *Al-Shawahid al-rububiyya*.

There Sadra's also placed his critique of the political landscape of his time. I use Ibrahim Kalın and Seyyed Hossein Nasr's translation of *The Metaphysical Penetrations*, Şamil Öçal and Mustafa Borsbuğa's Turkish translation of *The Four Journeys of the Intellect*, James Morris' translation of *The Wisdom of the Throne* and Toussi's translations of certain passages from *Al-Shawahid al-rububiyya*. As for secondary literature I rely on works by Ibrahim Kalın, Seyyed Khalil Toussi, Sayeh Meisami, Sajjad H. Rizvi, James Morris, etc. I chose those particular authors not only because of their immense contributions to the study of Sadra's philosophy, but also because they (particularly Toussi, Meisami and Morris) focus more on the political aspects of Sadra's philosophy.

My sources from Fanon are mainly *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skins, White Masks* both translated by Richard Philcox. I also refer to his other works, namely *A Dying Colonialism* and his numerous essays.

The methodology I follow in this dissertation is detailed in the next section. This work is divided into four chapters. The first two chapters are on the question of Being in the philosophies of Sadra and Fanon respectively, the third is on the topic of politics and justice, and the fourth on the notion of liberation. In the first two chapters I introduce separately the metaphysical ontology of Sadra and the phenomenological ontology of Fanon and I explain their respective approaches towards Being. In the third chapter I tie their respective political philosophies to their larger philosophical schemes, and I

discuss how the political thought of Sadra relates to Fanon. In doing so, I reinterpret Fanon through Sadra but also Sadra through Fanon by positing the relevance of Sadra to the colonial reality described by Fanon. In the fourth and final chapter I discuss the concept of liberation in both philosophers and I compare Sadra's eschatology and imamology to Fanon's revolutionary teleology. Then I again apply Sadra's philosophy on the revolutionary condition analyzed by Fanon and I outline a potential Sadrian discourse on (neo)coloniality and decolonization.

Methodology

I approach this topic from the framework of comparative analysis. According to Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber in their *Comparative Philosophy without Borders*, any comparison has four components:

1. Someone that compares (person P);
2. “At least two *relata* (*comparanda*) A and B” that are compared;
3. A *tertium comparationis* (F); and
4. The historical and cultural context that is unique to P.³

This is summarized in the sentence, “From his specific historical cultural context P compares A and B with respect to F”.⁴ In this thesis P is obviously the present author, the two *comparanda* (A and B) are Sadra and Fanon, and the *tertium comparationis*, i.e., the topic through which A and B are compared is the question of justice and being in the decolonial context.

Although this general description is clear, additional details are needed to further clarify the approach taken here. As it has been pointed out by many, any philosophy could be said to be comparative, as all philosophy involves comparison to some extent.⁵ In this sense, Hegel’s comparison of Western, Indian and Chinese philosophies in his *History of Philosophy* is comparative philosophy, as much as Schopenhauer’s reading of the Upanishads is a comparative philosophy.⁶ Sadra’s own reading and analysis of the Islamic Peripatetics and the school of the Illuminationists also falls into the same category.⁷ What is common in all mentioned cases is that all comparison requires difference, e.g., the difference between the Islamic Peripatetic tradition and the Illuminationist school, between analytic and continental philosophy, between ontological monism and pluralism, between realism and anti-realism, etc. This should not be seen as a difference between two completely separated, homogeneous and monolithic philosophical traditions, but rather as a difference between vocabularies and meanings.

³ Chakrabarti, *Comparative Philosophy without Borders*, 16.

⁴ Ibid., 22

⁵ Ibid., 2

⁶ Ibid., 20

⁷ The Illuminationist (*ishraqi*) school of thought was founded by Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191) and developed a monistic philosophy centred around the notion of light as the essence of Being. It is often considered to be an Islamic Neoplatonist response to Ibn Sina’s philosophy and the Peripatetic tradition.

In order to better illustrate what I mean I will use Richard Rorty's notion of vocabulary. According to Rorty a vocabulary is a complex web of interrelated concepts that form a system of thought.⁸ For example, the terms gravity, force and thermodynamics have a specific meaning in the field of physics and they form the vocabulary of that science. As such, they express a concrete way of analysing nature and lead toward a certain set of conclusions. In the same way, different philosophical traditions are webs of interrelated concepts with specific meanings within the given tradition, that lead towards certain ways of approaching the questions of being, ethics, epistemology, etc.

It is through the different meaning of grammatically similar concepts that difference in vocabulary emerges. I should clarify that here by 'different meaning' I understand 1) a clear semantic difference, e.g. Being for Heidegger is something very different than Being in Plato's philosophy; 2) the different use and expression of the same concept, e.g., *wujud* is a shared concept between Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi, yet there is difference in the way it is used by both philosophers. Thus, there could be radical difference between vocabularies in the meaning of a term and there could be difference in the sense of expressing different aspects of the same term. In both cases, difference signifies belonging to different vocabularies and thus different philosophical traditions or at least different currents in the same philosophical tradition.

The fact that there are different philosophical traditions embedded in different vocabularies, however, does not mean that dialogue and communication between them is impossible. Quite the opposite, the presence of borders means that they can be crossed. Evidence for this is simply the history of philosophical thought, which is also the history of philosophical dialogue. Intellectual traditions and schools of thought are defined and formed through engagement between different vocabularies and systems of thought. Through that engagement, differences are formed, which leads to the formation of proper traditions and systems. Thus, dialogue has both the effect of synthesizing different vocabularies and the effect of locating and solidifying differences. Dialogue is then, the phenomenon of movement and change of vocabularies. Moreover, dialogue is the mode of being of vocabularies and systems of thought, as in its absence, those cannot be formed.

In order to tie this notion of dialogue to 'comparison' it should be noted that dialogue always presupposes comparison. For there to be an engagement between vocabularies and systems of thought, a comparison between the participating *relata* is required. Therefore any vocabulary and system of thought comes forth through dialogue and comparison. Because of

⁸ Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 18.

that, there is substance to the claim that every philosophy is comparative. However, having said that, it is important to clarify what is meant today by the academic term *comparative philosophy* as this is the main methodology of the present study.

The term comparative philosophy refers to an approach that takes two or more ideas, authors or philosophical traditions, that have different cultural and historical backgrounds and ties them in a dialogue. Thus, the abovementioned definition of comparison by Chakrabarti and Weber could be extended in order to elaborate on the meaning of *comparative philosophy* as it is broadly understood in academia: “From his specific historical cultural context P compares A and B, each of which belong to different historical cultural contexts, with respect to F”.

It is important to discuss both the broad and the narrow definition of philosophical comparison because the narrow definition is somewhat problematic. As explained, all philosophy could be considered comparative. Why then the need for a narrower definition of the term? Why is there the need to specify that the *relata* should belong to different historical cultural contexts? The answer to that lies in the still existing colonial monopoly over knowledge by the Western academia. In philosophy for a long time, the so-called Western canon has been (and in a lot of places still is) considered philosophy proper. Philosophical traditions outside of this canon fall into the spheres of theology, anthropology, cultural studies, philology, ethnophilosophy, etc. This division is based on the idea that there is a transhistorical entity called ‘the West’ that traces back its origins to the Greek Antiquity and that there is a straightforward line of philosophical thought from Plato to the European philosophers of the Enlightenment. This myth is rooted in the genesis of what could recognizably be called ‘the West’ in the Early Modern period, not only to claim historical continuity with Antiquity, but also in order to justify colonial domination.⁹

Therefore, according to this view Schopenhauer’s reading of Plato through the influence of Kant is not considered comparative philosophy, but someone else’s comparison of Heidegger and Zhuangzi on the notion of Being is considered proper comparative philosophy, although the cultural and historical difference between Plato and Kant is similar to the cultural and historical difference between Zhuangzi and Heidegger. Moreover, it seems, that in the former case the cultural and historical context of Plato is less important than the philosophical content of his writings, while in the second case, Zhuangzi’s thought should necessarily be seen as embedded in his immediate context. This creates another division between philosophers in the

⁹ Cf. “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America” by Anibal Quijano

Western canon and philosophers outside of it, as the ideas of the former are seen as valuable on their own, even outside of historical and cultural context, while the ideas of the latter are seen as deeply connected to their environment.

As shown, the narrow definition of comparative philosophy seems insufficient and biased, as it undermines non-Western thought. At the same time, however, comparative philosophy has its own history of progress. The four stages of comparative philosophy are summarized by Chakrabarti and Weber as follows. The first stage was characterized by a search (albeit often by non-philosophers) for similar concepts between Western and non-Western philosophies.¹⁰ For example, a comparative study in this stage, might try to find phenomenology in Buddhist philosophy or Aristotelian ethics in Confucian philosophy. The second stage is characterized by an emphasis on the differences between Western and non-Western thought often through pointing out the “missing elements” of the non-Western traditions, that need to be introduced there by Western philosophy. The third and current stage, which slowly gaining momentum, goes beyond the limitations of the previous two by focusing on the reinterpretation of Western philosophical notions through comparison with other similar concepts in non-Western philosophies and opens the possibility to create new ideas through dialogue. According to Chakrabarti and Weber the eventual fourth stage “would amount to just doing philosophy as one thinks fit for getting to the truth about an issue or set of issues by appropriating elements from all philosophical views and traditions one knows of but making no claim of “correct exposition”, but just solving hitherto unsolved problems possibly raising issues never raised before anywhere”.¹¹

My approach stands somewhere between the third and the fourth stage of comparative philosophy. It does not fall strictly in the category of the third stage, because the comparison is not strictly between a Western and non-Western philosopher. As it will be discussed further, Fanon indeed uses the language of the Western philosophy of his time, however it would be wrong to say that he is a Western philosopher in the same way Sartre or Merleau-Ponty are said to be. Fanon is engaging in decolonial philosophy from a colonized perspective. This means that his positionality as an author is subversive to the system he is criticizing and his being is both considered subjugated and partial within the colonial system, as it is dangerous and criminal. In other words, in the colonial system, Fanon as an intellectual and revolutionary is seen as a subjugated insider and as an outsider. This gives him the ambivalent position of a Western and non-Western philosopher at the same time.

¹⁰ Chakrabarti, *Comparative Philosophy without Borders*, 36.

¹¹ Ibid.,42

Moreover, Fanon's work is clearly about and from the viewpoint of the colonized subject. Again, an ambivalent identity that is considered both an insider (as workforce, slave, colonial subject, uncivilized savage) and an outsider (dangerous brute, criminal, adversary). Mulla Sadra on the other hand, as a Persian Muslim philosopher writing in Arabic from the 17th century, for obvious reasons fits into the category non-Western philosophers. So here we have a comparison between a decolonial philosopher and a Persian Muslim philosopher writing within the broad tradition of Arabic-Islamic philosophy.¹²

Secondly, my aim is to provide a link between Sadra's philosophy of Being and Fanon's phenomenology by reading Sadra through Fanon's insight into decolonization and the colonial condition. Here the aim is not to reimagine Fanon through Sadra; rather the opposite, to reimagine Sadra through Fanon.

In order to do that, in the beginning I will present each philosopher's views in their own context. The next step however, would require a certain degree of abstraction and decontextualization of both, as my aim is not to show that Sadra's writings indicate that he would necessarily agree with Fanon, but that it is possible to read Sadra through a decolonial lens. This means that after the initial exposition of Sadra I will focus on specific parts of his philosophy that are parallel to or show similarities with Fanon's philosophy. Or in other words, I will focus on specific items from his vocabulary that connect with similar items from the vocabulary of Fanon. The common denominator here is the connection between the question of Being and politics. Of course, this should not be seen as an attempt to misread Sadra, but as an attempt to show that following Sadra's own logic, certain parts of his philosophy could be extended to the sphere of decolonial thought. On the other hand, the same decontextualization has to be applied to Fanon as well, to demonstrate that his philosophy is not a rigid scheme into which one should fit conforming ideas, but that it is an open framework that allows for interpretations of thinkers from other philosophical traditions.

Lastly, the specific approach to comparison needs to be discussed. The following four chapters are about the three components of the philosophies of Sadra and Fanon, that will be compared: 1) Being (the metaphysical account of Sadra and the phenomenological account of Fanon); 2) Politics and justice and 3) The notion of liberation in both philosophers. In each chapter I present the parallel accounts of Sadra and Fanon on the topic and then I compare and reinterpret Sadra through Fanon's decolonial lens, while at the same time I broaden Fanon's views through Sadra. The parallel reading of both philosophers is a useful approach, precisely because of the difference of their accounts. For example, as already mentioned, on the question of Being Sadra's account is metaphysical while

¹² I claim that the word 'decolonial' is useful in this case, as it is able to capture the ambivalent position of Fanon as both a non-Western and Western philosopher.

Fanon does not deal with the scholastic question of Being specifically but engages with the raw experience of colonial Being. Another example is that on the question on liberation, Fanon's account is about decolonial liberation, i.e., both material liberation from the capitalist colonial dominance and liberation from the essentialism of race, while Sadra's account is about the liberation (or ascendance) of the soul and, politically speaking, about the establishment of a just society. As the two accounts are not, strictly speaking, about the same thing, the parallel reading will do justice to both authors. It will show the internal logic of their thought. At the same time, it will serve as an introduction to the second part of the comparison, in which Sadra's concepts will be read through Fanon's decolonial philosophy.

It is in this sense, to return to my previous point, that my comparison is between the third and fourth stage of comparative philosophy outlined above. On the one hand I compare philosophers from two different traditions with the aim to reinterpret one through the other, and on the other hand, I aim to abstract some of their insights in order to address a pressing contemporary political problem.

Chapter 1: Sadra on Being

Mulla Sadra's metaphysical account on Being

In order to understand Mulla Sadra's philosophy of Being it is important to present, albeit briefly, his historical and cultural circumstances. Sadr ad-Din Muhammad Shirazi was born in 1571 or 1572 in Shiraz, at that time part of the Safavid empire.¹³ In his youth, between 1591 and 1597 he studied theology, philosophy, Quranic exegesis and other intellectual subjects, first in Qazvin and then in Isfahan. Among his teachers was one of the most prominent thinkers of the Safavid era, Mir Damad who was deeply influential over Sadra's thought.¹⁴ After the completion of his studies, Sadra briefly returned to Shiraz, however due to his disappointment of the lack of interest in philosophy there and due to his overall disillusionment, he retreated to the village of Kahak, where he meditated and where some of his most important works were conceived such as *Kitab al-Mashair* (*The book of Metaphysical Penetrations*) and the famous *al-Asfar al-arba'a* *The Four Journeys*.¹⁵

His seclusion likely lasted around five years and after that he settled in the nearby city of Qom, where he would teach a number of students, some of which would become celebrated philosophers and theologians.¹⁶ Sadra also maintained contact with Mir Damad and exchanged letters with other thinkers in the empire. He also travelled within Safavid Persia and abroad. Around 1630 Sadra moved to Shiraz and taught philosophy and theology in the great Madrasa Khan.¹⁷ He lived in Shiraz until his death in 1641.

Throughout his life Mulla Sadra wrote profusely and created some of the most important works of Islamic philosophy. He was influenced both by the millennial Islamic philosophical tradition and by the local Iranian Shia philosophy and theology. His philosophy could be characterized as revolutionary and traditional at the same time, as he did not claim to break with tradition as a whole, but at the same time introduced a new way of thinking about reality and Being that contrasted with the existing philosophical notions and traditions. His doctrine of the primacy of existence (*asalat al-*

¹³ Rizvi, "Reconsidering the Life of Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1641): Notes towards an Intellectual Biography," 181.

¹⁴ Ibid., 183

¹⁵ The full title is *Hikmat al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* *The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect*

¹⁶ Toussi, Sayed Khalil. *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, Routledge., 22-23

¹⁷ Ibid., 23

wujud) over essence for example, stands as a way to go beyond the Islamic Peripatetic tradition (Ibn Sina is probably the most influential philosopher for this tradition) and the Islamic Neoplatonist tradition of philosophical monism (an example for that, often quoted by Sadra himself would be the school of the Illuminationists led by Suhrawardi).

The political climate in which Sadra lived varied by the decade. During his early studies in the 1590s there was a war against the Ottoman empire which the Safavids lost, while the coming decades could be characterized as periods of peace and even expansion. One important development however, on which Sadra held strong opinions, was the gradual empowerment of Islamic jurists and the growing presence of the *ulama* (traditional scholars) in the imperial court.¹⁸ As Toussi notes, Sadra strongly criticized the Safavid court as well as the jurists and other representatives of the *ulama*.¹⁹ Sadra's political philosophy is based upon this historical background and, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, both the concrete and particular, and the abstract and universal dimensions of his political thought are connected in some way to this issue.

The question of Being

The mentioned distinction between Islamic Peripatetic and Islamic Neoplatonic philosophy around the time of Sadra seems hasty and overly general as it fails to capture not only the particularities of Islamic philosophers but also the uniqueness of the various Islamic schools of thought. Moreover, it somewhat draws a line between Islamic philosophy and Islamic theology, as some schools of theology had maintained distance from the Peripatetic and Neoplatonist traditions. This view however, has been contested and it seems that philosophy was and still is ever-present in Islamic theology.²⁰ Additionally, the use of the terms *Neoplatonic* and *Peripatetic* might imply that the Islamic schools of thought have merely followed and commented on those established traditions from the Late Antiquity.²¹ This view, of course, could not be farther from truth.

Due to these issues, I think it would be more adequate to speak about three general directions in Islamic metaphysics, rather than generalize Islamic philosophy to Neoplatonic and Peripatetic. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas calls the first two of those directions ‘ontological pluralism’ and ‘ontological monist essentialism’.²² The third position is sometimes called *wujudiyya* in the Islamic

¹⁸ Ibid., 25

¹⁹ Ibid., 25

²⁰ For recent research on this topic cf. *What is Islam?* by Shahab Ahmad.

²¹ As was done by some Orientalist scholars. Cf. *Comte de Gobineau and Orientalism: Selected Eastern Writings* edited by Geoffrey Nash.

²² Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. *Islam and the Philosophy of Science*. 67

sources and is most pronounced in the philosophy of Sufism. The corresponding category here is ‘ontological monist existentialism’.²³

Ontological pluralism broadly refers to the view that an object can exist in various ways and is not reducible to a single essence. This also means that proponents of this view reject the idea of primacy of Being (*wujud*). Some of the more widely known philosophers that held this view in some form are al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. In fact, much of Sadra's criticism towards the ontological pluralist view is directed specifically towards Ibn Sina.

According to Ibn Sina, existence and essence (quiddity) are present in everything, in the sense that everything is composed of both.²⁴ More precisely, Ibn Sina claims that in every thing the question of existence is different from the question of whatness. The question of *if* something is, is separate from the question of *what* something is. This distinction however, could be said only of contingent beings. For the Necessary Being, the question of what it is, is irrelevant as it simply is by necessity.²⁵

Sadra's philosophical goal is to go beyond this and prove that *wujud* as such is primary for the whole of reality and that 1) the distinction between essence and *wujud* is a mental category that does not refer to an extra-mental reality and 2) the fundamental distinction is between the intensities (or modes) of Being.

The ontological monist essentialist position (in which category Islamic Neoplatonism falls) on the other hand, was that reality could be reduced to a single essence that varies in degree. It is, thus a position about the primacy of essence, as for example, according to Suhrawardi, essence is that which gives identity to particulars.²⁶ Existence (or Being, *wujud*), according to Suhrawardi is not a primary concept, on the contrary, it is a concept that has only mental existence and is applicable as a universal abstract to particulars that differ from each other (for example, tree and human are united in the mental concept of existence), while the difference between particulars is established by their quiddity.²⁷ For Suhrawardi the question of the reality of existence is absurd as it leads to paradoxes and fallacies. For example, if existence exists outside of the mind, i.e., if existence is objective, then it must follow that it has existence. From this follows that the existence of existence also has existence and so on, *ad infinitum*.²⁸

²³ Açıkgenç, Alparslan. *Being and Existence in Şadrā and Heidegger: A Comparative Ontology*. 8

²⁴ *The Metaphysics of the Healing* I, 8:15-20

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 20

²⁶ Rizvi, “An Islamic Subversion of the Existence-essence Distinction?,” 224–25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 224

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 220

The third position, maintained by the Sufis, comes very close to Sadra's position, as it is based on the idea that Being is the sole reality, it is all there is. One of the most influential proponents of this view, Ibn Arabi, significantly influenced Mulla Sadra. However, although the basic position seems to be the same, some important differences will be noted during the exposition of Sadra's view. Mulla Sadra on the contrary claims that "the problem of *wujud* is the foundation of philosophical principles, the ground of metaphysical questions" and that one cannot establish any substantial claim without considering the reality of *wujud*.²⁹

Sadra's understanding of Being

Before discussing Sadra's philosophy of Being, I have to clarify the terminology. The term *wujud* here is used to refer to existence and being as for Sadra those are the same thing. *Wujud* is "the reality of all existents in general", i.e., the underlying, most general and universal reality.³⁰ For that reason, here the terms Being, existence and *wujud* are used interchangeably. Sadra uses the term *mawjud* to refer to the existence of existents (particulars, concrete things) and here the term 'existent' will be used to denote that.

Mulla Sadra's philosophy rests on the question of Being. Ibn Sina's distinction between essence and existence introduces the question of which one is primary. It could be said that for a long time, the idea that existence is primary to essence has not received sufficient attention, partly since something's essence already implies its existence. This could be interpreted as meaning that existence is simply an accident of essence, which justifies the claim that it is purely a mental concept, as Suhrawardi argued. Suhrawardi's argument is important here, as it is likely the most significant attempt in the history of Islamic philosophy in claiming that essence has primacy over existence, in the sense that it is the underlying principle of reality. This claim, however, has its own problems as Being (*wujud*, existence) seems to be the most universal and ever-present concept as it is contained in everything and contains everything. This implies, as Sadra argues, that Being (*wujud*) not only has a reality outside of the conceptual, but it fundamentally is reality itself. He writes:

"Of all things, its [*wujud*'s] concept is the least in need of definition because of its manifestness and clarity, and its being the most general among all concepts in its comprehensiveness."³¹

²⁹ *Kitab al-Mashair* I, 4

³⁰ *Ibid.* I, 5

³¹ *Ibid.* I, 5

According to Sadra, Being as a concept is self-evident and clear but also indefinable precisely because it is the most universal concept:

“It [*wujud*] cannot be made known through definition because it has no genus and no specific difference. Thus, it has no [logical] definition. It cannot be described [because] it cannot be conceived through anything that is more manifest or better known than it, nor through a form that is equal to it”.³²

Thus, the universality of Being makes it impossible to define it or compare it to something else. According to Sadra one could attempt only to verbally define it and even then, the result will be distorted and unclear.³³ The mere universality of Being over everything, makes it “neither universal, nor particular, neither general, nor specific”.³⁴ In this sense, the conceptualization of Being as the most universal concept is an attempt to verbally describe the beyondness of the reality of Being, and it is true to some extent, however it does not exhaust the meaning of Being (which is undefinable). Sadra writes

“[*Wujud*] is, in essence, a simple reality, distinguished by its essence without having a genus or specific difference.”³⁵

Wujud is not only the basis for reality and the principle of identity, but also reality itself. In relation to this simple reality, the notions of essence and quiddity here collapse into *wujud* in two ways. First, the essence of *wujud* is simply its existence, i.e., essence and Being are identical on a fundamental level. Second, Sadra makes a distinction between simple *wujud* the *wujud* of everything that exists.³⁶

Simple *wujud* is the purest form of Being and it lacks quiddity because any quiddity requires multiplicity of objects that share it and it is therefore inapplicable to simple Being.³⁷ This simple *wujud* Sadra calls God. The *wujud* of existing things on the other hand, is particularized, it includes a multitude of beings and is therefore the notion of quiddity is applicable to them. Unlike Being

³² Ibid. I, 6

³³ Ibid. I, 7

³⁴ Ibid. I, 9

³⁵ Ibid. I, 10

³⁶ Ibid. I, 11

³⁷ Kalin, Ibrahim. Introduction to *The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations*, xxxv.

however, quiddities do not possess an external reality but exist only mentally.³⁸ This difference between simple Being and the Being of existents should not be seen as a difference in kind but as a difference in degree and it is explained through the modulation of Being and the idea of *tashkik* (systematic ambiguity or modulation) of Being. As Ibrahim Kalin has noted:

“While Sadra introduced “meanings and quiddities” to account for differentiation and particularization among things, he posited *wujud* as the only principle of both identity and difference.”³⁹

The *tashkik* of Being

It is important to note that Sadra’s philosophy is not purely monistic, as real difference exists and happens through the modulation of Being.⁴⁰ Meanings and quiddities are simply linguistic constructs through which existents are named, categorized, differentiated and particularized, while the real difference is due to what Sadra calls the *tashkik* of Being, which is translated as ‘the modulation of Being’ or as ‘the systemic ambiguity of Being’. The reason for the former translation is that the principle of *tashkik* means that something is more or less and, in this case, it means that Being can be more or less, i.e., it can be with different intensity. The latter translation refers to the notion that Being implies both particularity and unity. Sadra writes that “Being is a single reality” and that it is “identically the same in all things”.⁴¹ At the same time, there is difference of Being between existents, not by nature, but by “priority and posteriority, strength and weakness”, etc.⁴² Being must be, by necessity, ambiguous in the sense that it is both the principle of identity and individuation (difference), because on the one hand Being is the reality of every existent and therefore must be identical in everything that exist. If it were the most universal concept and yet was present in everything differently, this would create a problem with commensurability- simply, different things would not be able to interact with each other and the world would be composed of existents that are absolutely disconnected from each other. Thus, it is necessary that Being is present identically all existents. Sadra derives the notion of difference from reality, qualitative and quantitative difference exist; for example saying that a plant exists is different from saying that man exists, which is

³⁸ Mashair III, 18-19

³⁹ Kalin, Ibrahim. *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition*.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Asfar, 1:38

⁴¹ Asfar 1:433

⁴² Asfar 1:433-435

different from saying that God exists. If those differences did not make sense, then everything would be quite literally a monistic unity.⁴³

Now, it is important to note that Sadra was not a proponent of radical difference either. According to him in comparison to God, every other existent is merely a shadow, and the Necessary Being is Being in the strictest and simplest way possible, while the Being of other existents is complex and particularized.⁴⁴ This should not be seen as a rejection of the existence of everything other than the Necessary Being, but rather as an affirmation of the difference between priority and posteriority. In this case, the Being that is by necessity is prior to the Being that is by contingency. Similarly, the cause is prior to the effect and thus, its Being is more intense than that of the effect. Of course, the simple Being is the most intense Being, while the Being of existents has less intensity.⁴⁵

In summary, according to Sadra, the *tashkik* of Being means that Being is ‘unity in multiplicity’ (*al-wahdat fi’l kathra*) and ‘multiplicity in unity’, it is the principle of identity as it is present identically in every existent, and it is the principle of difference, as it is more-or-less intense in every existent. It is important to clarify that the notions of unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity do not imply that the reality of Being as such, is dependent on the existents. This means that Being is not the sum of all existing things.

Sadra however, still maintains that Being is comprised of existing things and there is unity between simple Being and Being of existents, because naturally Being would have to participate in all existing things so they can exist in the first place. The nature of this unity however is not something that can be known rationally, but something that can be experienced and known intuitively:

“Its [*wujud*’s] comprising [of existing things] is of another kind, which is not known, except by the gnostics, those who are “firm in knowledge.”⁴⁶

Thus, the exact way in which Being is the principle of identity and difference and the way in which simple Being and the Being of existents is unified is available conceptually only to the extent in which it can be loosely described and logically justified, but the knowledge of the nature of this unity is available only through particular gnostic experience.

⁴³ *Asfar* 1:815

⁴⁴ *Mashair* I, 11

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* I, 11

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* II, 12

On the one hand simple Being and the Being of existents is identical, and on the other, they differ in intensity, i.e., they differ in their *mode of Being*. As Rizvi notes, in the ontology of Sadra there is a fourfold scheme of modes of Being: spoken Being, written Being, mental Being and extra-mental Being.⁴⁷ For the sake of clarity and brevity the notions of spoken Being and written Being can be reduced to the notion of Being-in-language, although they have their own peculiarities.⁴⁸ Sadra then, using the notion of *tashkik* as a hermeneutic tool, claims that quiddity is Being-in-language, essence falls into the category of mental Being and Being as such is by necessity present in all the modes but is also extra-mental, i.e., it has a Reality, it is not only an abstract concept.⁴⁹

The substantial motion of Being

Another important aspect of Sadra's metaphysics of Being is that Being is not a static reality, but a dynamic process. This is already implied in the modulation (or structural ambiguity) of Being (*tashkik*) and is an important part of Sadra's philosophy as it also concerns the advent of the human soul and stands as the basis for his political philosophy. The reality of Being as a dynamic process is constituted by the ascending and descending movement of Being, or in other words, the change of the intensity of Being from more to less and from less to more. The descending movement is already explained by the reality of difference. The less intense Being is, the more individualized it becomes. The increase of the intensity of Being, on the other hand, is due to the principle of '*ishq* (love), which could be seen as the way in which unity operates.⁵⁰ '*Ishq* is the principle through which unity in Being is realized and is thus, the opposite of the other aspect of Being, difference. If difference moves Being from more to less intensity, '*ishq* moves it from less to more intensity. This means that Being as such is in a constant evolutionary process, changing its intensity and thus moving in *substantial motion*, i.e., the movement of Being in the spectrum of intensity also implies movement and change in its substance. This claim has profound implications for the human soul and subsequently, for human society and politics.

The Movement of the Soul

Sadra describes the human soul as 'corporeal in its advent and spiritual in its survival'. The soul's origins are in the realm of the natural but through its evolutionary transformation it becomes

⁴⁷ Rizvi, *Mulla Sadra and Metaphysics*, 16.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22

⁴⁹ Ibid., 40

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2:236-238

immaterial.⁵¹ According to him, the multitude of stages in the evolutionary ascent of Being can be reduced to three: the world of natural forms, the world of “the forms of perception by the senses [qua] separate from matter” and “the world of intellectual forms and divine archetypes”.⁵² Sadra writes that

“the human soul is unique among all existents in that it [alone] has these three modes of generated beings while remaining permanent as an individual.”⁵³

This means that while other existents go through the evolutionary transformation of Being, only the human soul retains its conscious continuity, its personal identity throughout the process. Moreover, the human soul, by virtue of its more intense Being in comparison with the intensity of Being of plants and animals, is able to consciously strive and move towards unity and perfection. Thus, the human soul has a special position in the ontological hierarchy and has access to what other existents do not. According to Sadra, existents with lesser intensity are transformed substantially by

“generation and corruption, [so that] they reach first the gate of humanness and then, from there, the gate of the sacred presence.”⁵⁴

For example, plants blossom and fade or serve as food for animals. In both cases they substantially transform into existents with more intense Being and the same happens with animals until their souls are transformed into human souls. The human soul on the other hand also goes through a substantial transformation but retains its conscious continuity.

The stages of the substantial transformation that the human soul goes through are also three: the stage of the mortal human, the stage of the psychic human and the stage of the intellectual human.⁵⁵ The first stage is the “natural way of being” that is present in the childhood and concerning the very basic fulfilment of human needs.⁵⁶ Next is the second stage in which the existence of the soul

⁵¹ Ibid., 1:349

⁵² Sadra as quoted in Landolt, “Being-Towards-Resurrection’: Mullā Ṣadrā’s Critique of Suhrawardī’s Eschatology,” 495. The quote is from *Asfar* XI

⁵³ Sadra as quoted in Landolt, “Being-Towards-Resurrection’: Mullā Ṣadrā’s Critique of Suhrawardī’s Eschatology,” 496.

⁵⁴ Sadra as quoted in Landolt, “Being-Towards-Resurrection’: Mullā Ṣadrā’s Critique of Suhrawardī’s Eschatology,” 496.

⁵⁵ Landolt, “Being-Towards-Resurrection’: Mullā Ṣadrā’s Critique of Suhrawardī’s Eschatology”, 496.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 496

“begins the gradual perfection” and becomes purer in substance.⁵⁷ This is the intermediary stage in which the soul matures intellectually and gains the ability to engage with mental existents and to conceptualize sensory experience through its imaginative faculty and thus moves closer to the higher, immaterial world. According to Sadra, in this stage, the soul achieves a degree of immateriality, its Being becomes more intense and it becomes “suitable for resurrection and arising”.⁵⁸ In the last stage, the soul’s Being becomes even more intense and it can grasp the highest intellectual forms. Sadra refers to the person whose soul has reached this highest intensity as the Perfect Man (*al-Insan al-Kamil*) or by the term *wali* which is often translated as sage, saint or gnostic.⁵⁹

Although the trans-substantial evolutionary movement of the soul is corporal in advent, its origins are traced to the initial unity of Being. The soul stems from the simple Being and in the process of differentiation, it becomes individuated and particularized into a corporeal identity. Sadra notes that this descent is atemporal, as Being-outside-of-time is prior to Being- in-time, while the ascent of the soul, through the intellectual journey of the human happens in time, because it is a movement from lower to higher intensity.⁶⁰ This of course, entails the decay of the corporeal body, which results in death. Death is the ultimate separation between the corporeal and the soul, so the human goes through an ultimate trans-substantiation and its soul becomes spiritual in its survival. Sadra writes:

“Physical death is the beginning of the soul’s movement of Return to God, just as physical life is the end of the movement of descent from God.”⁶¹

The soul continues its journey and reaches an intermediary state (*barzakh*) from where it ascends towards the pure Being by virtue of its piety.

According to Sadra, if the soul has not reached the limits of the stage of the psychic, it cannot reach the intensity of pure Being.⁶² This certainly implies exclusivity of life after death; for example, someone that for one reason or another was impaired by an event or condition and was unable to reach the limits of the psychic cannot ascend to unity with pure Being. According to Sadra however,

⁵⁷ *Tafsir Ayat al-Nur*, 392

⁵⁸ Sadra as quoted in Landolt, “Being-Towards-Resurrection’: Mullā Ṣadrā’s Critique of Suhrawardī’s Eschatology,” 496

⁵⁹ In the present work the preferred translation of *wali* is “sage”, however in all cases the term refers to someone who has extensive knowledge of Islamic theology, law and philosophy and is able to grasp the inner and hidden meaning of religious texts. For Sadra’s discussion on the Perfect man cf. *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse in the Qur’an*, translated by Latimah-Parvin Peerwani.

⁶⁰ Landolt, “Being-Towards-Resurrection’: Mullā Ṣadrā’s Critique of Suhrawardī’s Eschatology”, 497-498

⁶¹ *al-Hikmat al-‘Arshiya*, 216

⁶² *Tafsir Ayat al-Nur*, 392

the unity with the pure Being (God) is not the same as the survival of the soul, because as noted above, when the soul transforms from mortal to psychic it becomes “suitable for resurrection and arising”, which implies that the soul that goes beyond the natural mortal Being survives death although it does not reach the highest possible intensity of Being.⁶³

The four journeys of the intellect

I will now focus on the journey from the second to the third stage of human Being and on the journey of the ‘intellectual human’, the human soul that has reached the highest intensity of Being possible for humans. Such a person could be characterized as a philosopher and in order to follow his journey, we need to look at what Sadra describes as the four journeys of the intellect. In order for one to consciously embark on that journey, he must have reached at least the intensity of Being of the psychic, i.e., he must have developed his imaginative and rational faculties.

The four journeys are the following:

“the first [journey] is from the [created] world to the Truth. The second: with the Truth in the Truth. The third: from the Truth to the creation with the Truth. The fourth: with the Truth in the world.”⁶⁴

Each of the journeys correspond to higher intensity of Being. The first journey is the initial evolutionary transubstantiation of the soul from mortal and corporeal to immaterial and spiritual and is the initial stage of knowledge. The second journey corresponds to the purification of knowledge and the higher transformation of the soul into the stage of the intellectual human. In this stage the traveller grasps the intellectual forms and the universals. The third journey, as Sadra notes, corresponds to the first in the sense that it is complementing the first as its other half, while the first journey is a journey from the creation to the Truth without the Truth, the third is a journey from the Truth to the creation with the Truth.⁶⁵

This is the attempt of the soul to unite the universal and the particular. The last journey is the realization of this unification and mirrors the first, as while the first brings particularity to unity, the last brings unity to particularity. In all cases the movement is guided by the principle of unity. The existence of the corporeal human soul, as the initial form of being human is due to the principle of difference, i.e., the descent from the simple Being. What follows is the gradual ascent of the soul

⁶³ *al-Hikmat al-'Arshiya*, 178

⁶⁴ *Asfar*, 1:48

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:48

through the yearning (*'ishq*) for more intense mode of Being, namely unity. Initially this is the unity of the individuated soul with the universal and later is the unity of the universal with the particulars through the united soul.

I claim that the passage outlining the four journeys is key for understanding Sadra's political philosophy. The four journeys of the intellectual human have a clear political implication as it will be shown. Toussi notes this and describes the last four journeys as

“He [the traveller] again returns to the people (the third journey) to help them because the true spiritual traveller should seek to perfect God's servants, thereby embarking upon the proper reconstruction of society” and “at the end of the fourth journey, he is with the Truth amongst the people.”⁶⁶

This unity of the Truth with the particulars (the creation) is also a unity between theoretical and practical philosophy, between metaphysics on the one hand and ethics and politics on the other.

It must be clear by now that for Sadra knowledge is a special category. It is precisely knowledge that guides the intellectual soul in its way back to the world of creation and legitimizes its intervention in and reorganization of society. While Sadra is usually subtle in discussing the sages' duty to participate in politics, in some places he clearly indicates that this is the case. For example he describes the figure of the sage as “the viceregent of God on His earth”.⁶⁷ This might imply only an authority for spiritual guidance, however Sadra also makes it clear that this authority is not only confined to such guidance:

“Those with sacred wisdom are the masters of the world, and through the perfection of their souls receive the Light of the Almighty. They are benefited from God's mercy and providence, and they are deserving of authority on His behalf over others.”⁶⁸

“The one who is able to draw together all the states of perfection has the title of viceregent of Allah, and is therefore entitled to be a leader of the people.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 116

⁶⁷ *Tafsir Ayat al-Nur* 390

⁶⁸ Sadra as quoted in Toussi, Sayed Khalil. *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 188. The quote is from *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* (VI, 277)

⁶⁹ Sadra as quoted in Toussi, Sayed Khalil. *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 191. The quote is from *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyya* (341)

Thus, knowledge is inextricably linked to power. Besides, given that Sadra's political philosophy stems directly from his metaphysics, it would be rather strange to insist that when he discusses authority he only refers to spiritual guidance.

The nature of knowledge

According to Sadra knowledge is actual Being,

“And not just any actual being, but an actual being that is pure and not mixed with non-being.”⁷⁰

Thus, knowledge is placed at the highest intensity of Being and therefore is indistinguishable from simple Being. This claim has several implications. First, if knowledge is identical with Being, then it must follow that it is also modulated. If pure knowledge is the knowledge with most intensity, then there should be knowledge with less intensity, just as there is Being with less intensity. In Sadra's epistemology there are three levels of knowledge: perception, imagination and intellection that correspond to the three general stages of the evolution of the soul, mortal Being, psychic Being and intellectual Being.⁷¹

Knowledge through perception is engagement with material reality on the most basic level. Knowledge through the imaginative faculty abstracts the mental existent from the mere sensible, but this does not lead to actual knowledge of the existent.⁷² According to Sadra knowledge is not an abstraction, but a reality and the problem with this type of knowledge is that it results in the mental representation of the external object, but not in the knowledge of its inner reality. It only reveals to the inquirer the accidents and the attributes of the existent. What satisfies the criteria for true knowledge then, is the third mode of knowing, which is knowledge by presence.

This mode of knowledge is immediate and intuitive, it is essentially the unity between the knower and the known and therefore the unity between the soul and simple Being, so that the knower becomes knowledge.⁷³ This is the highest and most intense mode of knowing for the intellectual human, who becomes perfected in this ultimate unity.

⁷⁰ Sadra as quoted in Meisami, Sayeh. *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Hamid al-Din Kirmani and Mulla Sadra*. 130

⁷¹ Meisami, Sayeh. *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Hamid al-Din Kirmani and Mulla Sadra*. 143

⁷² Rizvi, *Mulla Sadra and Metaphysics*. 88

⁷³ Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 3.

Chapter 2: Fanon on Colonial Being

Colonial Being

Frantz Fanon was born in 1925 to a petit-bourgeoise family in Martinique, at that time, part of the French colonial empire. When he was 18, he left his home and joined the French resistance during the Second world war and fought for the Allies against Nazi Germany.⁷⁴ Soon after the war he returned to Martinique to complete his secondary education, after which he travelled to metropolitan France to study psychiatry and medicine.

Fanon was disillusioned by French society long before he journeyed to France, as he was appalled by the racism he encountered in the army on the front. In Lyon however all this became way too apparent as he was now amongst the metropolitan society of the empire.⁷⁵ Raised in a relatively well-off family, in an island population of which consisted of mainly creole and black people, he for the first time experienced the naked racism against people of colour in the heart of the metropole. In one of his works he writes that this was the moment in which he realized this ‘epidermal difference’ precisely because the racist gaze of that society was so obvious and apparent.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, Fanon stayed to complete his studies and, in the meantime, met some of the most important intellectuals of that time. He became friends with Aime Cesaire, attended Merleau-Ponty's lectures, met and formed a strong relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone Beauvoir.⁷⁷ Fanon was heavily influenced by the European phenomenological philosophical tradition developing at the time and by the decolonial thought of Cesaire and other intellectuals from the Negritude movement.

As a topic for his doctoral dissertation Fanon wrote part of what would later become one of his most important works *Black Skin, White Masks*. There he attempted to engage with the experience of being Black through the medium of psychoanalysis and to analyse the condition of the colonized through an examination of the repressive colonial system and of institutional racism and their effects on the very consciousness of the colonized subject. His thesis was rejected by the university and in the end, he had to write about a different topic to get his doctoral degree.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Shatz, *The Rebel's Clinic*. 29

⁷⁵ Ibid., 49-50

⁷⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. 12

⁷⁷ Shatz, *The Rebel's Clinic*. 70.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 74

Soon after graduating Fanon became involved with the Algerian movement for independence and joined the revolutionary organization Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN). He served as an ambassador the organization in various countries, developed decolonial strategies in his writings and dedicated himself to the Algerian anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle.⁷⁹ During his exile from Algeria, imposed by the French government, he developed a leukaemia and went to the Soviet Union for treatment where he experienced remission. When he went back to Tunisia his health deteriorated again and for some time he was confined to bed. In this condition he dictated to his wife probably his most powerful statement against colonialism, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Not long after his condition worsened and after being urged by his friends Fanon reluctantly decided to go to the USA for treatment. Once there, he was left unattended by medical staff for several days and he caught leukaemia. He died on December 6, 1961 at the age of 36.

Fanon's Phenomenological Ontology

While Sadra's account on Being is metaphysical and constructs an ontology based on a rational inquiry into the question of Being, Fanon's approach could be characterized as phenomenological. He is concerned with reality as it appears to a specific subject, condition mode of being.⁸⁰ However, there is certainly a parallel between both philosophers' approaches. Although Sadra's objective is the unveiling of the reality of Being, he outlines the evolutionary movement of the human soul, thus describing the subjective experience of Being from the stage of the mortal to that of the intellectual soul. It should also be added that for Sadra the human has a special status that allows it to 1) consciously intensify its Being; 2) retain its individual identity throughout the substantial transformations and 3) have access to a higher intensity of Being than other existents. For this reason, I argue that Sadra's account of Being centres around the existence of the human as the key for understanding the underlying question of Being. Açıkgenç has argued that Sadra's metaphysics takes the form of an overarching narrative that goes way beyond human existence and establishes a broader ontological discourse about Being.⁸¹ While this is generally true, I question the extent to which Sadra abandons the human perspective. As seen in the exposition of Sadra's philosophy, it is rather the case that he not only understands the human perspective as a gateway towards understanding Being (and thus intensifying one's Being) but also never truly abandons this

⁷⁹ Ibid., 265

⁸⁰ Although Fanon does not use the term 'mode of being' I claim that it is applicable for the condition of the colonized, the reality of the colonial world and for the privileged existence of the colonizer. The different ways in which colonizer and colonized experience reality is a difference in the mode of being.

⁸¹ Açıkgenç, *Being and Existence in Sadra and Heidegger*. 128

perspective. Throughout the ascension of the soul, what is known to the one who has reached a higher intensity of Being might not be available to the one in a lesser stage of Being, but this does not undermine the point for two reasons. First, the perspective remains distinctly human as the soul from its descent to unity through its bodily advent and ascent back to unity remains human. In other words, it is created human and it returns to God as human.⁸² Second, the last two journeys of the intellectual soul are the journeys from the Truth with the Truth to the creation and in the creation with the Truth. This shows that the intellectual soul with the highest intensity of Being is not only not detached from the reality of other humans, but quite the contrary, it is bound to return to them to complete the unity of Being. It is therefore the case that the intellectual human is ultimately concerned specifically the human way of existence, the everyday human experience and the organization of the community.

This could only be understood if one takes into account the political dimension of Sadra's philosophy, which is an integral part of his whole philosophical system. Sadra's concern with human existence is linked to the way his politics manifest: only a sage that has reached the highest intensity of knowledge (and Being) can have the right knowledge and authority in reconstructing society so that it becomes just and good.

The topic introduced by the last sentence will be discussed further later in this work, however the important point here is that Sadra and Fanon's accounts can both be considered as concerned with the human perspective of reality.

Fanon's philosophy differs in several other aspects. First, the difference of the historical realities of both philosophers undeniably plays a role. While Sadra lived in 16th and 17th century Safavid Iran, Fanon lived in the first half of the 20th century during the colonial and in the dawn of the decolonial period. Sadra, despite his political disagreements with the ruling elites and his philosophical and theological disagreements with other intellectuals and the clergy, was a well-respected thinker and a wealthy man.⁸³ Fanon, on the other hand, despite being born in a petit-bourgeois family, was a colonized subject. He was underprivileged, denied full freedom and humanity because of the colour of his skin, and persecuted for his beliefs and his involvement in the anti-colonial struggle for freedom.

Second, Fanon focuses on the experience of a specific condition of being, that of the colonized person. Similarly to Sadra, Fanon treats this (human) existence as the gateway to understand a larger reality, however the difference is that Fanon is concerned with the particular experience of the

⁸² According to Sadra the soul is pre-existent in the sense that it is created and had existence prior to its unification with the body. Cf. *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 139-141.

⁸³ After all he could afford seven pilgrimages to Mecca.

colonized and not with the metaphysical ontology of Being.

Third, Fanon does not discover an overarching metaphysics and epistemology of Being in order to arrive at the politics of Being. Rather, he moves directly from the concrete experience of the colonized to the diagnosis of colonialism and arrives at the discourse on liberation. This does not mean, however, that Fanon's philosophy is devoid of ontology. On the contrary, through the phenomenological experience of the colonized Fanon outlines the ontology of colonial Being as a power structure constituting the lived experience of both the colonized and the colonizer.

Lastly, Fanon does not uncover an objective ontological reality or hierarchy. Rather through the experience of the colonized, he encounters a rigid system of Being, that enforces and legitimizes oppression, racial discrimination, exploitation and extermination. This ontological reality however does not exist in itself and by itself as the only Truth, as it is the case in Sadra's philosophy. The colonial Being Fanon encounters can be challenged and destroyed to give way to collective liberation. It is this collective liberation, I will argue, that is the Being that Fanon sees as ultimately real, although not in metaphysical terms.

Considering those differences is important on the one hand to understand Fanon's philosophy and on the other, to draw the parallels between his and Sadra's approach more clearly.

Fanon's colonial and decolonial ontology

Fanon writes

“Colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties, it is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence.”⁸⁴

Colonialism is pure, naked violence, the result of the expansion of capital and the ever-growing need for slave labour that would extract resources and produce commodities that would bring profit to the slave-owner, the capitalist and the investor.⁸⁵ It might seem that the racial division enforced in the colonies is a by-product or an ideological tool used to justify colonialism and this might as well be true from a historical perspective, however in the colony itself both are inseparably united in the power structure, so much so that, one necessarily implies and enforces other. Fanon writes

⁸⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. 18

⁸⁵ Ibid., 23

“In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich.”⁸⁶

Exploitation is tied with discrimination and discrimination is tied with exploitation. This unity, however, does not manifest as a unity of colonizer and colonized in a single two-sided system. A rational economic and political analysis might show that the colonial system is certainly such extractive unity in which the colonizer exploits the colonized, which brings him profit and wealth. However, the colonial system does not allow for such recognition of exploitation. Thus, it creates a compartmentalized colonial reality in which the world is divided into two incompatible substances. In other words, colonial Being is Manichaeian Being.⁸⁷ It should be clarified that Fanon himself does not use the term ‘colonial Being’, it is a term that I introduce to refer to Fanon’s description of the totality of experiences of colonial reality. The first substance in that colonial and Manichaeian Being is that of the settler, the white colonizer, and is the substance of the pure good, of civilization, progress, enlightenment, culture, law. This substance is materially manifested by the colonial quarters with paved roads, luxurious houses, administrative facilities, universities, streetlamps, electricity, wealth and abundance.⁸⁸ The second substance is the opposite of the first, it is the substance of the colonized and it is the substance of evil, darkness, savagery and crime. It is materially manifested by the shacks, the dirty muddy paths, the military checkpoints, by lack and disease.⁸⁹ While the world of the colonizer is characterized by presence and is positive, the world of the colonized is characterized by absence and is negative.

Colonial Being is a contradiction. It includes two substances that are incommensurable, and it establishes the existence of one while denying the existence of the other. Yet it cannot subsist without the functioning of the latter for the benefit of the former. It is important to note that Fanon does not claim that the Manichaeian world is a mere illusion and that there is an objectively true account behind its veil. Rather, he claims that the Manichaeian is indeed the reality of the colonial world, because it appears as such for the immediate experience of the colonized. The contradiction of Colonial Being does not undermine its reality, but on the contrary, it enforces it. The colonized works for the colonizer, digs his mines, labours on the field or in the factory, but at the same time he is seen (by the colonizer) and sees himself as absent from all those processes. It is as if the colonial

⁸⁶ Ibid., 12

⁸⁷ Ibid., 21

⁸⁸ Ibid., 24

⁸⁹ Ibid., 25

world has built itself alone, the colonized native is excluded from the discourse and even when he is physically visible, he is denied recognition.

Colonial Being is a spectrum, its one end is exploitation and racialized hierarchy, and the other is genocide. Fanon writes that when the Manichaeian division is taken to its logical conclusion it results in the total dehumanization of the colonized.⁹⁰ This initially happens on the level of speech:

“In plain talk, he [the colonized subject] is reduced to the state of an animal. And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonized, he uses zoological terms”.⁹¹

The colonized natives become hordes and swarms to be exterminated. When the rhetoric materializes and the colonizer drops the mask of the ‘benevolent civilizer’ and unleashes the most atrocious violence of colonialism against the colonized, the latter are forced to respond because their already dehumanized lives are reduced to the simple question of total annihilation or resistance. This moment Fanon calls *the point of no return*.⁹²

This is the moment in which the aim of the anti-colonial armed struggle becomes full liberation and overthrow of the colonial regime.

The Manichaeian logic does not reach its conclusion only in the actions of the colonizer, it is also constitutes the world of the colonized, as it is the logic of colonial Being. Thus, the Manichaeian division, taken to the extreme by the colonizer, is reflected in the anticolonial struggle of the colonized: if according to the Manichaeian logic the colonized is full negation and pure evil, then for the colonized the colonizer becomes pure evil as well.⁹³ As Fanon puts it:

“Since they have decided to respond with violence, they admit the consequences. Their one demand is that they are not asked to keep accounts for others as well. To the expression: “All natives are the same,” the colonized reply: “All colonists are the same.”⁹⁴

However, there is categorical difference between the violence of the colonizer and the violence of the colonized. While the former is an extension of the already established colonial system with the

⁹⁰ Ibid., 8

⁹¹ Ibid., 7

⁹² Ibid., 48

⁹³ Ibid., 50

⁹⁴ Ibid., 49

goal of destroying resistance and keeping the status quo, the latter is transformative- it gathers the revolutionary masses in a new community; it breaks the established rigid power structures; it liberates the colonized subject and allows him or her to construct their own humanity, and ultimately to transcend their own positionality, their own body and even their own subjecthood. In order to understand how this happens however, Fanon's inquiry into the individual experience of the colonized needs to be discussed.

Colonial Being and Phenomenology

From the very beginning Fanon is clear that while he somewhat recognizes phylogeny and ontogeny as adequate approaches that can give us insight about the human condition, he is not convinced by the conclusions to which those approaches arrive.⁹⁵ According to him, the condition of the colonized Black man is not only a question of phylogeny and ontogeny, but also of sociogeny.⁹⁶ The reality of the Black man is inherently colonial and moreover, the Black man and Blackness as well are created by colonialism. The Black man, as an existent (to use Sartrean language) within colonial Being is the personification of the negative part of the Manichaean reality described above. He is objectively *other*, in the sense that while in a relationship between equals every subject is the I for himself and the other for the other, the Black man's colonial Being presupposes him to be *other* for the other as well as for himself. Thus, the Black man is conditioned to be the *other* in relation to himself.

Fanon expresses this experience in the following way:

“I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects.”⁹⁷

This is the experience of being totally objectified and denied any meaningful relation with the world. This denial comes to be from the basic logic of colonialism, if the colonized are used as objects, they *become* objects. The colonized Black man cannot relate to the world, because he is alienated by the world, but neither can he relate to his own being. He is fragmented and multiplied:

⁹⁵ ‘Phylogeny’ and ‘ontogeny’ refer to the broader scientific and philosophical discourses at Fanon’s time that attempted to explain the human condition and behaviour through biological and historico-philosophic approaches respectively. Sociogeny refers to the idea that the human condition is the result of the way societal hierarchies and institutions are structured.

⁹⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. 13

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78

“But just as I get to the other slope I stumble, and the Other fixes me with his gaze, his gestures and attitude, the same way you fix a preparation with a dye. I lose my temper, demand an explanation... Nothing doing. I explode. Here are the fragments put together by another me.”⁹⁸

The gaze of the white colonizer is destructive as it does not recognize the colonized Black, but on an immediate perceptual level sees him as lesser and uncultured, savage and naive. This is visible from the way the interaction happens. Even outside of the owner-worker and settler-native relationship between the colonized and the colonizer where exploitation and racism are most apparent, the lack of recognition is ever-present. For example, on the level of language, even when a Black person speaks literary French, he is answered in pidgin as to a child or someone that is intellectually incapable of understanding.⁹⁹ This use of linguistic infantilism and linguistic primitivism is the only way of communication that seems possible for the colonizer; to talk to the colonized in the everyday language one uses is absurd, it goes against the Manichaeian logic and in fact destroys the Manichaeian binary.¹⁰⁰

Another aspect of the interaction between the Black man and the white, and therefore between the colonizer and the colonized is the absolute presence of the Black man's identity, history and coloniality in the eyes of the colonizer. According to Fanon, it is because the Black identity is a creation of colonial Being, that it always stays colonial. The white man has a body schema, while the Black man has an *epidermal racial schema*.¹⁰¹ The epidermal racial schema is simply the Black experience of the body as racialized. While the white man experiences his body immediately, as something own and intuitive, the Black man experiences it through the colonial gaze, as something immediately noticeable, with the ‘wrong colour’, as something not allowed to be in certain places and not allowed to do certain things, or in other words, as being full of prohibitions. Most importantly, the body becomes not something experienced as a unity, but a disconnected multitude:

“In the train, it was a question of being aware of my body, no longer in the third person but in triple. In the train, instead of one seat, they left me two or three. I was no longer enjoying myself. I was unable to discover the feverish coordinates of the world. I existed in triple: I was taking up room. I

⁹⁸ Ibid., 78

⁹⁹ Ibid., 67

¹⁰⁰ Stawarska and Ring, “Black Speaking Subjects”, 68–73.

¹⁰¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. 80

approached the Other... and the Other, evasive, hostile, but not opaque, transparent and absent, vanished. Nausea.”¹⁰²

The racial epidermal schema does not cover only bodily experience but the overall experience of being Black that translates into the white perception of a Black body. In order to justify itself colonialism created its own historical mythology. When creating the colonized, it also created its history. According to it, the native peoples never entered history, or if they did, they got stuck in a particular historical epoch and because of that, they were undeveloped and did not know what is best for them, were unaware of basic morality and did not have the ‘genius’ to produce works of art. Suddenly they mass practiced cannibalism and were still carrying the burden of slavery. This fabricated history is an inherent part of the racial epidermal schema, it is what appears to the white colonizer when he encounters a colonized Black man. Slavery, cannibalism, savagery for the colonizer, appear on the skin of the Black man. As Fanon writes:

“I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders.”¹⁰³

The basic interaction, even outside of colonizer-colonized relations, becomes an interaction between the white *individual* and the collective Black person that represents his whole race, its whole history and culture. Thus, the colonized Black man is again a multitude and never a self.

The denial of individuality and for the colonized is a denial of unity of the self. This can be linked with Sadra’s notions of unity-in-multiplicity and multiplicity-in-unity. As discussed, in Sadra’s ontology, unity and multiplicity imply each other and there is a constant movement from unity to diversity through the principle of difference and from multiplicity to unity through the principle of ‘*ishq*. Being is individuated and the individuated Being strives for unity. In the case of colonial Being however, the colonized are denied this unity, as on a the most basic level, their existence is constructed as lacking by the very premises of the colonial system. Thus, in Sadra’s ontology the colonized would be someone who is forcefully restricted to a lower mode of Being and who’s Being is made to be stagnant and frozen.

¹⁰² Ibid., 52

¹⁰³ Ibid., 80

Colonial Being then, according to Sadra's philosophy is something unnatural and even perverse, because it violates the very principles of Being. On an ontological level it creates a barrier between the soul and the principle of *'ishq*, which is an inherent part of the soul's Being. Moreover, colonial Being breaks the soul into unconnected multiplicities and thus degrades it by pulling it to lesser intensity of Being. The soul loses its essential attribute (*'ishq*), its natural movement towards unity, the possibility of achieving unity and this ultimately means that it loses the very things that make it a soul. In other words, the soul of the colonized is being destroyed within the colonial Being.

The colonial Being and the experience of the colonized described by Fanon, is the opposite of Sadra's metaphysical ontology. While according to Sadra the Being of existents presupposes their evolution towards a higher intensity of Being which eventually results in full unity, the ontology of colonial Being presupposes that the mere existence of the colonized necessarily implies their destruction. While simple Being for Sadra is unity and unity is anterior and therefore more intense than diversity, radical difference is the foundation of colonial Being. Its modes of Being are broadly speaking two- that of the colonizer and that of the colonized and those modes are not connected in a unity, but are fundamentally different. Sadra's ontology is ontology of life, the ontology of colonial Being is ontology of death.

The contradiction here is two-fold. First, as Fanon also argues, the reality of colonial Being is contradictory, because it is based on the total alienation and exclusion of the most important element for its functioning- the exploited colonized. Colonial Being is a social construction that creates the reality of both the colonizer and the colonized. Second, another contradiction becomes apparent when the notion of colonial Being is read through Sadra's ontology. For Sadra the Manichean division of colonial Being would simply be impossible, because of the incommensurability of two radically different substances. Radical difference simply cannot exist in a single reality. As said above, posteriority and therefore simplicity and unity are a more intense mode of Being than their opposites and while this seems to be in a sense true for the system of colonial Being, where the colonizer and therefore the 'good substance' is associated with unity, this is not extended for the whole system. Sadra's ontology is dependent on its universality, as universality comes necessarily by its premises. Thus, there is a stark difference between the divine order that Sadra describes as reality itself and the order of colonial Being. Colonial Being understood through Sadrian ontology then, is not only unnatural but also contradicts reality.

Chapter 3: Justice and Politics

Mulla Sadra's Politics

Throughout his life Sadra did not hold public positions in the state hierarchy and did not openly engage with the politics of the Safavid state. This does not mean, however, that he was apolitical. Quite the contrary, he wrote on politics and had particularly strong political opinions. In order to understand Sadra's politics, one should first understand how he understands justice on a conceptual level and how he applies this concept on the level of particulars.

For Sadra justice is a secondary intelligible, i.e., a mental existent.¹⁰⁴ It is not primary (extra-mental) existent because it does not have an independent objective reality, but it is not merely an uttered word as it refers to the divine law. For Sadra justice in all of its forms is derived from divine law (*Shari'a*). Divine law for Sadra is the structure of Being, the way Being is. Thus, it is uncovered with the intensification of Being and knowledge. The more one understands Being, the more he understands divine law. For example, the evolution of the Being of existents from a lesser mode of Being to a higher and the intensification of the soul's Being in the four journeys is divine law. At the same time, the journeys of the soul are knowledge of the divine law. This is why, the sage who has journeyed in Truth with Truth then returns to creation with authority over social and political matters. In essence, he comes back with the divine law that guides society into right track.

In order to be applicable to the world however, divine law needs to be particularized so that it fits the concrete conditions it is applied to. This particularization happens in two ways, depending on the meaning of divine law. The first meaning is the one described above, divine law is simply the way Being is ordered. Thus, the individuation of Being through the principle of difference is the realization of divine law. The second meaning is the divine law in a practical sense, as a principle that tells the people how they ought to behave. Sadra divides practical matters into three categories: ethics (concerning the individual), home management and economics (concerning the family) and politics (concerning society).¹⁰⁵ Those three categories are interconnected and ultimately the practices in one affect the other two. This is so, because of the inherent intersubjectivity of the humans. Sadra writes: "The human being as individual is not a sufficient creation to survive, because its archetype is not created as only one man, rather it is created for many, therefore the species of

¹⁰⁴ Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 150

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 150

man can survive only if it lives with others in a civilization and society”.¹⁰⁶ In another place Sadra writes

“Man is a civil being by nature; his life is not organized without civilization and cooperation in a community, because the human species is not just one individual instance, and as an individual he cannot exist without living with others.”¹⁰⁷

The Being of humans is social and intersubjective. It is following the structure of Being as it is unity-in-multiplicity and multiplicity-in-unity. Humans excel only in a societal context and this is visible in the idea of the four journeys. In the first journey the soul embarks from an already existing context through which it has transformed from mere mortal to psychic soul. The last two journeys suggest a return to the same social context or community, and this is meant to be the highest deed of the soul. The particular relations between various individual members of society are multiplicity-in-unity, while the society as a whole is a unity-in-multiplicity. Given Sadra's position that unity is always prior to multiplicity, this may seem to suggest that the individual is fundamentally less important than the community or the collective. However, this binary opposition does not make sense in Sadra's philosophy.

It is the individual and not society that achieves the highest unity with simple Being. Hypothetically there could be a society of sages with each of them achieving this intensity of Being, but even in this case, there would simply be many instances of individuals achieving unity, because society does not exist as a concrete extra-mental reality as the human does. It is the basic mode of Being of humans and it is expressed in their material and spiritual relations with each other, but it is not a concrete particular existent like the individual. Thus, the reference to the inherent social Being of humans as unity-in-multiplicity and multiplicity-in-unity, is meant to show that although society is indeed a unity-in-multiplicity as it is a unity of the individuals and their material and spiritual relations, it still serves the purpose of uplifting the individual, so that he may ascent higher in his Being. Sadra himself supports this claim:

“A perfect society is like a healthy body whose organs and parts cooperate with each other to assist the citizens on the path to happiness.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Sadra as quoted in Toussi, Sayed Khalil. *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 123

¹⁰⁷ Sadra as quoted in Toussi, Sayed Khalil. *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 124

¹⁰⁸ Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 148

It is important to clarify however, that although the individual is concrete and particular, this does not mean that it is an isolated subject, like for example, Descartes' thinking subject. On the contrary, it is, as said inherently intersubjective, as it is shaped by upbringing and society, so society should not be understood as a sum of isolated individuals, but as the totality of all intersubjective relations. The right conduct of those intersubjective relations expressed by politics then, results in the ultimate happiness of the individuals, which in Sadra's view is the ascension towards unity.

In order for a society to function properly then, the divine law needs to be applied correctly in the spheres of the individual (ethics), the family (home management and economics) and society (politics). For the purpose of this dissertation, I will focus on the application of divine law in politics. Sadra's own definition of politics is exactly the application of divine law in the level of society.¹⁰⁹

Divine law

Before examining law is applied to the functioning of society according to Sadra, the difference between politics and divine law needs to be cleared. Divine law, as noted earlier, is both the way Being is ordered and the way it ought to be ordered. It is a description of reality and a normative ruling on its functioning. Divine law is most universal and is in essence, the Being of simple Being. This means that it is identical with Being (and therefore knowledge) and it is unchanging and an ultimate reality. If it is to be applied to concrete and particular relations between humans however, it needs to be individuated which means that it needs to descend through the principle of difference. Thus politics, when rightly applied and practiced, is the lesser mode of Being of divine law. While divine law is absolute and universal, politics is particular and dependent on the concrete circumstances.¹¹⁰ This does not mean that politics is relativistic, because there are principles in divine law that serve as the foundation of political action. For example, the priority of unity is one such principle and this means that the right political action is that which brings the most unity and the most benefits for society as a whole and not only for given individuals, which is also evident from the quote above. When politics gets divorced from divine law, its application becomes tyrannic and even leads to anarchy and the total disintegration of society, which in turn is evil because it goes against the divine order (or divine Being) of things and prioritizes division above unity. This will play a huge role in the following discussion on Fanon.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 148

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 63

Sadra's Political Opinions

Before discussing the relevance of Sadrian politics to the decolonial discourse of Fanon, Sadra's political critique of his contemporary times needs to be discussed, in order to illustrate how Sadra thought about politics on a more concrete level. Although he had knowledge over matters of jurisprudence he never engaged directly in politics. On the other hand, he was deeply critical of the political establishment of his time.¹¹¹ Later around the time of the Islamic revolution in Iran, intellectuals supporting and leading the revolution have interpreted Sadra as legitimizing the political authority of the Islamic jurists.¹¹² Some contemporary scholars, such as Sayeh Meisami, have argued that Sadra's overall philosophy allows for such interpretation. As evidence for this claim Meisami provides the following passage from *al-Shawahid al-rububiyya*:

“[After the Prophet], God preserved the rule of the bringers of good news and the imams who are immune to errors, and the authority of the jurists.”¹¹³

It is certainly true that Sadra saw the position of the jurist as politically legitimate and as possessing authority over certain matters, and moreover, Meisami is correct in claiming that although the position of Sadra might not have been that jurists have the same authority as the imams or the saints and sages that have perfected their knowledge and Being, his political philosophy seems to be allowing for an interpretation that views the authority of jurists as justified in itself.

That being said, it seems that Sadra's own position was more nuanced and far from such interpretation. In short, it could be said that in Sadra's view about political authority there are four categories of human authority: 1) the authority of the Prophet; 2) the authority of the imams; 3) the authority of the sages 4) the authority of the jurists. Those authorities are legitimized in different ways, for example the authority of the Prophet is legitimate because of the direct and most intense revelation he received from God, as his chosen messenger. The authority of the imams has a similar justification, as they are the chosen successors of the Prophet and leaders of the community of believers. The authority of the sages comes from their high knowledge of the intellectual existents and their completion of the four journeys, while the authority of the jurists comes from their ability to interpret the law for concrete cases. This itself shows that the jurist certainly does not possess the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 176

¹¹² As, for example does Murtaza Muttahari in Muṭahharī, Murtaẓā. *Divine Justice: (Adil e Ilāhī)*.

¹¹³ Sadra as quoted in Meisami, *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Hamid al-Din Kirmani and Mulla Sadra*. 158

same level of authority as the other figures- he is confined to the particular and thus limited in his knowledge. Moreover, the figure of the philosopher sage is the one who possesses real authority over political matters in the absence of the Prophet and the imam. The jurist seems to have authority over ethical and familial matters, but not over society as a whole.

This of course can change, if the class of the jurists is composed of philosophers and sages, which was the case, as Sadra writes in the *Asfar*, in the early Islamic community.¹¹⁴ However, since then the position of the jurists has been corrupted. Overall there are several problems with the idea of jurists' authority over society: 1) the jurist by definition looks over the legal matters between individuals and families, his position itself limits him to a lesser totality than society; 2) the jurist, because of the nature of his work, is concerned with the outer interpretation of the divine law; 3) the jurists, particularly in Sadra's time, have used their position for personal enrichment and fame and were not serving the community.¹¹⁵

The ulama of Sadra's time, was getting closer with the ruling Safavids and were gaining more political power. They legitimized the Safavid rule in exchange for privileges and the maintenance of the social hierarchy, which benefited them politically and materially. This in turn meant that they were willing to compromise on matters of faith in order to justify the ruling elite's actions. Sadra saw that as a show of ignorance and greed, and as the use of the word of God for personal gains.¹¹⁶ Because of that, he was particularly harsh in his criticism of the jurists and the ulama as a whole. He painted them as ignorant hypocrites that justified tyrannical rule. For Sadra outside of the special case of the Prophet and the imams only intellectual knowledge can justify political authority.

Fanon and Justice

While Fanon has not written specifically on justice, I claim that the notion is visible and plays a great role in his works. The main opposition through which Fanon understands justice and injustice is the dichotomy affirmation-denial/negation. This relates to the ability of the colonizer to affirm himself within the boundaries of the Manichaeian colonial Being, while denying that to the colonized, who is left as an 'object among objects' and as alienated from others and from himself.

Fanon writes:

¹¹⁴ *Asfar*, 1:80

¹¹⁵ Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 161

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 162

“There is a zone of non-being, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge. In most cases, the Black man cannot take advantage of this descent into a veritable hell.”¹¹⁷

The zone of non-being is a state of reality that is beyond all determination. Note that here Fanon uses the term *being* in the sense of essence, and not existence. Therefore, the zone of non-being is the zone of non-essence. There are two types of essences in the Manichaean colonial world- that of the colonizer and of the colonized. The essence of the colonized is savagery, negation and subordination. In the case of the Black man or any person of colour, their literal body is identical with that essence, which is also the epidermal-racial schema.

When writing about the zone of non-being Fanon refers to the possibility of disintegrating this essence and having the freedom to determine oneself, according to one's will and action. Colonial Being obviously denies this freedom and creates the whole identity of the colonized. The descent into the zone of non-being is a way to overcome oneself, to shed the body and anything essential for one's being in the colonial world and a transformation towards freedom.

A parallel with Sadra could be drawn here on the question of the zone of non-being. For Sadra essence is a real mental category, but its existence is what defines Being because it is Being. In that sense, concerning simple Being, essence and Being are the same, because the essence of Being is its Being. Therefore, the intensification of knowledge for the sage philosopher means the erasure of any distinction between essence and Being until the sage is united with Being. This is very similar to Fanon's idea of descent into non-being as the first step towards liberation. It is important to note that while Sadra sees this transformation as present in all existence as part of the evolution of Being, he still posits the philosopher sages as the ones that could achieve full unity. Fanon on the other hand views this as a collective effort which would be achieved with the total destruction of the colonial system.

In this and many other ways it seems that Fanon's account on the descent into the zone of non-being is the opposite of Sadra's. This may appear so, however I will show that those differences are meaningful and compatible in the sense that they 1) share a similar goal and 2) express a similar discourse of liberation. As said above, for Sadra, while movement towards unity is universal, full unity is only achievable by the sage philosophers, and for Fanon, the ultimate goal is the universal descent into the zone of non-being so that a new authentic subject might emerge.

¹¹⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. 11

According to Sadra, authority and power are tied to knowledge and closeness to unity and therefore the sage should have the authority to guide and reform society. Fanon on the other hand, reverses this hierarchy. While colonial Being is Manichaeian and thus divided into the good substance (colonizer) and the bad (colonized), the second has its own internal divisions. Fanon describes three categories of colonized: the colonized intellectual, the colonized proletariat and the colonized rural masses.¹¹⁸ Here it is not the intellectual that has the authority or even the potential to better society.

The colonial intellectual according to Fanon has two sides. On the one hand it serves the colonial system by reproducing its structures and ideology.¹¹⁹ There is in fact no other for the colonized intellectual to exist- he is created in the colonial university which has monopoly over knowledge with the purpose of reproducing colonialism. He has accepted the basic premise of the Manichaeian reality and the only way in which he can partially escape it, is by defying the system and becoming a revolutionary. This is the other side of the colonized intellectual. Usually, such individuals lead the nationalist anti-colonial movements for liberation and use their knowledge and skills to counter the colonial system.¹²⁰ Their escape from the colonial way of thinking is partial because they are still inclined to accept some of the basic premises of the colonial system, such as the idea that the colonized do not possess the tools for establishing a fully independent society and thus, they will need the assistance of the former colonizer once independent. The colonized intellectual has the potential to descend into the zone of non-being and achieve full liberation but is not willing to do so, because he still partially conforms to the essence given to him by the colonizer.

The colonized proletariat does not possess by itself a revolutionary potential according to Fanon. It is too small and divided in the sense that it is partially accepted into the colonial system, so contrary to the European proletariat from the 19th and early 20th century which according to Marx had “nothing to lose but its chains”, the colonized proletariat according to Fanon had “everything to lose”.¹²¹

The last group is the most numerous in any colonial society and is the lumpenproletariat which Fanon also calls the rural masses. The lumpenproletariat is a broad category- it includes the most disenfranchised, the beggars, the ones reduced to bare life, the criminals, the rural workers and peasants, as well as the village communities.¹²² This group has the most potential for violent

¹¹⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. 105

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 107

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 115

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 132

¹²² *Ibid.*, 121

resistance and overthrow of the colonial regime because of the following reasons. First, while it is part of colonial Being and aware its Manichaeism, it nevertheless has preserved some of the traditional structures of its native society which exist not only parallel to but sometimes simultaneously in opposition to the colonial systems.¹²³ Second, it is the most ready for decisive action and violence group as it faces the most brutal oppression from the colonizer. Third, while it is lacking revolutionary and class consciousness and is divided to tribes and gangs that often fight each other, this violence could be channelled for the purposes of anticolonial struggle during which solidarity could be built and new authentic subjectivity could be established.

So according to Fanon in any anticolonial revolutionary war there are two parallel movements- that lead by the nationalist colonized intellectuals and that led by the rural masses. This parallel movement can either succumb to the ideology of the colonized intellectuals or culminate in the total liberation achieved by the lumpenproletariat.¹²⁴

As mentioned, it seems that Fanon and Sadra offer two different accounts on liberation, however the truth is actually the opposite. One should keep in mind that the colonial Being, the Manichaeism world described by Fanon is the polar opposite of Sadra's account of the ordering of Being, as discussed above. At the same time however, Sadra and Fanon have in common the strife for transcendence. Transcendence of essence and oppression. It is precisely because the colonial Being is ordered as radically opposite to Sadra's Being, that different methods of achieving this transcendence are required. Sadra's sage follows Being's evolution and becomes what he is supposed to be in the unity with Being. Fanon's colonized subject is denied the possibility of Sadra's Being and his relation to it is severed. Because of that the colonized subject needs to first forcefully achieve his liberation and destroy the colonial Being that prohibits him from experiencing the fullness of existence. Sadra's sage is good, because throughout his intellectual journey, his soul becomes better by unifying with knowledge. Fanon's colonized intellectual more or less reproduces the Manichaeism system and is thus the opposite of Sadra's sage. It could be said that in Fanon's colonial world there is no place for sages and their role is taken by the oppressed rural masses whose goal is not to achieve full unity with Being but to create the possibility for transcendence.

¹²³ Ibid., 116

¹²⁴ Ibid., 125

Chapter 4: Liberation

Mulla Sadra's eschatology and imamology

Central to all branches of Shia Islam is the authority of the figure of the Imam. According to Shia tradition the first Imam was Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661) and his role was to lead the Muslim community, after the death of Muhammad in 632, as he was appointed by God. His role however was fulfilled only later, because of disagreements, conflict and intrigue within the Muslim community. He was murdered by the orders of Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan (d. 680), who usurped the position of caliph and persecuted Ali's sons and successors, Hasan (d. 670) and Husayn (d. 680). After their deaths, according to the Twelver Shia tradition which Sadra followed, the role of the Imam was carried by their spiritual successors, which were divinely ordained. The following eight imams all were persecuted during their lifetimes and met a violent end. The twelfth Imam, Muhammad ibn Hasan, called al-Mahdi (the guided) has entered into Occultation (hiding) and will return during the Last days to lead again the Muslim community as a just ruler.¹²⁵

As it could be seen, the belief in the return of the Imam is closely tied with Shia eschatology. It is the culmination of the corporeal world and the bridge towards the afterlife. Before that time however, the Muslim community is not left alone but led by representatives that excel in knowledge and piety and are worthy enough to succeed the Imam.¹²⁶ This does not mean that they are equal to the Imam, as his position is divinely ordained and he is immutable, only second to the Prophet himself. This historically has created disputes over the question of who should take the place of the Imam, the criteria for such person and the extent of authority that he should hold. Some, like Suhrawardi, have argued that some historical rulers have received divine wisdom and have therefore become worthy of leading the community of believers.¹²⁷ Others have pointed towards the ulama and the jurists as a collective authority made of the most learned scholars and judges.

Sadra himself referred to the representatives of the Imam as “saint, perfect man, king, jurist”.¹²⁸ As it had been shown in the previous chapter Sadra does not take the mere position of the judge as sufficient for the leadership of society and this is also the case with the other listed titles, because for him authority can only stem from unity with knowledge and Being that is achieved by the perfect

¹²⁵ Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam*. 31

¹²⁶ Ibid., 31

¹²⁷ Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 186

¹²⁸ Ibid., 173

sage. The mere titles of ‘saint’, ‘king’ or ‘jurist’ do not correspond to real political authority by themselves, only the ones that have intensified their Being possess the power to guide society. Moreover, as Toussi has noted, Sadra frequently uses those titles (especially ‘king’ and ‘judge’) metaphorically, in order to emphasize and exalt the greatness of the philosopher sage.¹²⁹ So, it can be established that according to Sadra, the objective criterion for legitimate authority is the perfection of one's Being.

More however needs to be said about the connection between the representative sage and the Imam, because those figures are deeply interrelated in Shia as well as in Sadrian eschatology. According to Shia tradition, there always is an Imam in the world, even if no one is there to follow him and there must always be a representative that has the authority to act on the Imam's behalf.¹³⁰ The Imam is chosen by God, impeccable and has perfect knowledge over the deepest aspects of reality. He is in essence, the chosen leader of the whole Muslim community, the representative of God after the death of Muhammad. For this reason, every sage needs to have a connection with the Imam:

“There are two Paths, one in this world and one in the other world. As for the Path that is in this world, it is the Imam who must be obeyed: whoever truly knows him in this world and strictly follows his guidance will also pass over that Path [to] the other world.”¹³¹

To know the Imam is to enrich oneself through reason and contemplation by going through the psychic transformations until the highest stage of the intellectual human is achieved.¹³² This also equals to “submitting to the Imam” and this is precisely what gives the sage the authority to guide society.¹³³

Mulla Sadra' Eschatology as a discourse for Ultimate Liberation

In Sadra's ontology Being is dynamic, ever-present and the most universal. It contains a principle of unity, as it is simple in its most pure state, and a lesser principle of difference, which explains why it is modulated. As noted earlier, the movement from more to less intensity of Being happens in time, while the movement from less to more intensity goes beyond time at the point of the separation of

¹²⁹ Ibid., 187

¹³⁰ Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam*. 29

¹³¹ *al-Hikmat al-'Arshiya*. 192

¹³² Ibid., 193

¹³³ Ibid., 195

the soul from the corporeal body.

Sadra views history through the same framework. His understanding of it is eschatological as it is based on the idea that there will be a historical end point, which will also be the ending of the created world and its ultimate return to pure Being. The *End of the World* signifies the ultimate realization of unity and the culmination of constant the evolution of the lesser modes of Being towards the higher. The end times are marked by the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam (Mahdi) from his Occultation. The role of the Imam will be the establishment of an ideal society, and as he is infallible that would be the most ideal possible society in which justice will prevail and people will live in the best possible way.¹³⁴ This will culminate in the Gathering of all the souls “capable of imagination and memory” and “the non-intellective powers of the soul” and their Return to “That from Which they began”.¹³⁵ This essentially includes the personal resurrection of all the souls that have developed the imaginative faculty and the non-personal gathering of all the other souls, which results in the total unity of Being.

This, for Sadra, is the moment of full liberation, when the evolutionary movement of everything has reached its end and have become the same as Being. It is in that sense, the completion of Divine law and the highest form of justice. If the coming of the Imam is the moment in which political unity and therefore justice and liberation from oppression is realized, the End of the World is the point in which justice is realized beyond the political, as a direct command from God. This is the moment of total liberation, because through the ascent the soul is finally liberated from the lesser intensity of its Being.

As said, this total liberation will occur only once the last Imam returns from his Occultation. Until then however, the best way to guide society is through the leadership of the sage. Contrary to the Imam, the sage is not infallible and must always be careful to avoid deception. The sage might achieve the highest level of perfection possible for ordinary humans, but that does not come even close to the perfection of the Imam. This entails that the society led by the sages will not be the ideal society of the Imam. Nevertheless, it is their duty to guide society in the best possible way, to elevate people from oppression and to provide for the well-being of everyone. The society led by the sages is always less perfect than the one led by the Imam and because of that is only an intermediary stage between tyranny and the perfect society. Its aim is to alleviate society from injustice and oppression and to cultivate justice, thus preparing society for the coming of the Imam and the ultimate liberation of the End of the World.

¹³⁴ Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. 165

¹³⁵ *al-Hikmat al-'Arshiya*. 246-247

Decolonial Liberation

In his works Fanon outlines several aspects of a decolonial struggle. Those include the struggle for national independence, the creation of a new national consciousness and culture, the disestablishment of colonial institutions and the overcoming of the Manichaeian colonial logic. According to Fanon, decolonization always requires violence. He begins one of his most famous works with the words: “National liberation, national reawakening, restoration of the nation to the people or Commonwealth, whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonization is always a violent event”.¹³⁶ The rigid reality of colonial Being, that has become the sole reality for the colonized can only be questioned by violence. The Manichaeian logic behind it is not susceptible to discussion or debate, it is simply reality itself and it posits the Being of the colonized to be wretched by essence.

Decolonization is the ontological dismantling of colonial Being and this requires a radical change on a material level, on the very way society and labour are organized.¹³⁷

“Decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one ‘species’ of mankind by another”

in the sense that the colonizer's role as a ruler is overtaken by the revolting colonized masses.¹³⁸ The movement of the colonized is not caused by something outside of the colonial system but by the Manichaeian ontology it is based on. When the point of no return is reached, the ‘bad’ side of the Manichaeian system engages in a struggle of life and death with its opposite in order to secure its survival. It is precisely in this struggle in which the very existence of the colonized is put into question, that the possibility of an actual descent into the zone of non-being appears. With the destruction of the colonial system the colonized does not simply establish a postcolonial nation or return to the perceived precolonial past. The first is the colonized intellectual's dream- to still accept the Manichaeianism of colonial Being, while altering the way it functions and creating a mere illusion of freedom. In this case, the colonizer is not literally present in the liberated nation, but his institutions, the global system of racism and exploitation, and other components of colonial Being are. This is a mere compromise with the colonizer. The second alternative is impossible, as colonialism has changed every aspect of precolonial societies in such a way that every attempt to

¹³⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1

¹³⁷ Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*. 24

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 1

establish a new precolonial society is doomed to succumb to the colonial fantasy of precolonial history. There is also another problem with this and it is that the liberated people will be stuck at the Manichaeian division introduced by colonialism with the insistence that their real essence is the perceived precolonial one. This is an extension of the previous division and does not allow the anti-essentialist movement through the zone of non-being for true liberation.

Fanon claims that there is only one way forward towards real liberation and it is through the transformation of the colonized subject decisively beyond the Manichaeian binary and beyond colonial Being. It requires a movement beyond all essence that culminates in the establishment of a new subject that is a free individual and whose skin colour, ancestral history and cultural background do not determine his existence. This new subject is capable of creating himself through his own actions and conscience. As Fanon expressed it eloquently:

“In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself”; “I have not the right to put down roots. I have not the right to admit the slightest patch of being (essence) into my existence. I have not the right to become mired by the determinations of the past. I am not a slave to slavery that dehumanized my ancestors”; “I, a man of colour, want but one thing: May man never be instrumentalized. May the subjugation of man by man cease. May I be allowed to discover and desire man whenever he may be. The black man is not. No more than the white man.”¹³⁹

The end of colonial Being means the end of Blackness as well as of whiteness. It means the destruction of every exploitative system, the supersession of history.

In the last part I want to tie Sadra's discourse of liberation to Fanon's. As was the case with the discussion on justice, here too Sadra's account differs from Fanon's on the grounds of leading-to-liberation figures. For Sadra's Shia eschatology the Return of the Imam is crucial because only he can establish the ultimately just society which will be the most liberated from oppression, before the final liberation at the End of the World and the return of every Being to God. In Fanon's philosophy there is no such figure and his account is not so much eschatological in the religious sense. The role of the sage is taken by the rural masses on the one hand and the colonized intellectuals that form two parallel movements during the anti-colonial struggle after which this division needs to be overcome, so that a truly decolonized society could be created.

At the same time, although Fanon's account could not be called eschatological in a religious sense, it

¹³⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. 160

still contains elements of eschatology in its teleological view of the new subject arising from a successful decolonial struggle. Of course, historical or even phenomenological teleology does not necessarily have to be eschatological. What is meant here however, is that there are certain patterns in thinking about the *telos* that appear both in Sadra and Fanon. In both cases the *telos* is a point of radical transformation. It is the supersession of every mode of Being and the realization of unity and ultimate liberation. Politically the *telos* transcends every way of social organization and even politics itself and it is in that sense, transpolitical. In Sadra's philosophy politics (*siyasa*) is the particularized mode of divine law, i.e., it is the way in which divine law could be applied to individual humans and human societies. Politics then, is correctly applied by the sages and reaches its most perfect form in the ideal society established by the Imam. The Gathering of the souls (and all existents) at the End of the World marks the transition from the political to divine law. Unity of Being becomes realized in divine law, so all particularities are transcended and therefore, politics is transcended as well.

In Fanon's philosophy the political struggle of decolonization is also an anti-essentialist ontological struggle against colonial Being. This struggle starts with the logical conclusion of Manichaeism—the incompatibility between the two substances becomes apparent and the life-or-death struggle ensues. This gives the chance to the colonized to overthrow the colonial regime but the fight does not end here. In order to go further the whole system of coloniality needs to be destroyed which means that national independence is not enough. The international system should be based on non-exploitative relations. Only then the Manichaean binary could collapse, which would lead to the abolition of the colonial identities of Blackness and whiteness. This signifies a move beyond the political and the historical, because it means an overcoming of the historical tensions and battles. The world becomes a place for the flourishing of the individual that is not determined by essence, but that has the ability to shape his own self.

A point of tension between the two concepts of liberation might be the question of elitism. According to Sadra only certain individuals might be able to achieve what is needed for a legitimate political authority. Given that the Imam is divinely ordained and a representation of divine law, he is an exceptional case because he will arrive at the End Times and rule by supreme and infallible wisdom. What I want to focus on however, is the figure of the sage that has the duty and authority to guide society until the Imam's arrival. The best possible society until then, seems to be the one guided by philosopher sages and although there is a room for regulation here, because the sages are not infallible in their knowledge and can consult one another, this still means that the organization of society is far from democratic and is concentrated in the hands of the few. That being said, it makes perfect sense in Sadra's ontology, because if Being is the most universal and is modulated, has an

extra-mental reality and knowledge of it increases one's intensity of Being because it means higher unity, then it naturally follows that the ones with the highest intensity of Being should be the ones guiding society. They are after all, able to uncover a reality and law that is beyond the perception of everyone else.

On the other hand elitism is absent from Fanon's ontopolitical discourse. The reason for this is that for him there is no underlying metaphysical reality that can be uncovered through the intellectual practices of sages. The development of the decolonial revolution is tied to the logical and material conclusion of colonialism which always ends either in the total annihilation of the colonized or in a triumph over the colonizers. The development of new subjectivity is dependent solely on the struggle of the colonized. Because of that, there is no need for the figure of the sage present in Sadra's discourse.

The last important aspect of convergence between Sadra and Fanon is on the radical nature of liberation. In both cases the path towards liberation and liberation itself have radical ontological consequences. In the case of Sadra the rule of the sages is the opposite of tyranny. Thus, the sage must confront tyranny and affect or change the oppressive social order in such a way that it conforms to divine law. This itself entails a radical restructuring of society so that justice is established. The Return of the Imam is even more radical event, because he is able to restructure society in a way that is made truly known only to him by God. This entails the subversion of already existing institutions, hierarchies, etc., so that they conform to the deepest possible meaning of divine law in the human context. The final Gathering of the existents and their Return to God is the event that overthrows all social order and radically restructures Being. It establishes a direct relation between God and every existent that has at least imaginative faculty, so that absolute justice could be served and the ultimate unity could happen. In a similar way both Fanon's concepts of revolutionary struggle and ultimate liberation entail a radical restructuring of society and Being. By themselves those actions constitute a questioning and dismantling of reality itself- colonial Being. This is also a battle against essence, so Fanon's revolutionary and philosophical aim is the transcendence of any essentialist ontology in favour of existence determined by the autonomous subject.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was two-fold- to provide a decolonial reading of Mulla Sadra's philosophy through Frantz Fanon and a Sadrian insight into Fanon. Both aims have been accomplished through the same process as the decolonial reading of Sadra implies that his philosophy is conceptually open to an interpretation through a contemporary decolonial lens.

The first part of the analysis focused on the parallel reading of Sadra and Fanon in order to establish a ground for comparison. It has been shown that although differing in their approaches, both philosophers focus on Being- Sadra sees metaphysically as reality itself and Fanon through the immediate phenomenological experience of the colonized. While there are additional differences that follow from this, it is undeniable that for both Being is the only reality that is and matters. This sets the ground for further comparison and the engagement of Sadra with Fanon and vice versa.

It has been demonstrated that both accounts have a clear political dimension that is expressed as ontopolitics, i.e., the politics follow from the respective ontological account and the ontological account follows from the politics in an interconnected way, so that neither is definitively primary to the other but each implies the other. The Sadrian modulation of Being and the idea of the dynamic and evolutionary nature of Being imply the need for the establishment of a just society in accordance with the nature of Being. In other words, if Being is more-or-less intense and if the principle of unity is prior to the principle of difference, then both the individual and society should strive towards the more intense mode of Being. Note that Sadra does not make a strict distinction between the descriptive and the normative- one ought to strive to better oneself by intensifying his or her Being and establishing a just society precisely because it is the most natural course of events which culminates with the End of the World. In Fanon's philosophy the politics are visible from the very beginning- the essentialist colonial Being is the reality of the colonized and it is limiting by definition. The colonized must establish a reality that allows them to break this oppression and experience reality (or to exist) as full subjects unbound to essentializing categories and functions. Fanon's ontopolitics follow from the immediate experience of subjugation and oppression. In both Sadra and Fanon, the fulfilment of existence is tied to the process of establishing of a new and just society. According to both the human individual is fundamentally intersubjective and the fulfilment of one can be achieved through the engagement with the process of creating a just and liberating society.

Sadra and Fanon also agree on the transpolitical nature of the culmination point of this process.

The ontopolitical *telos* is a radical overcoming of politics and establishing a reality in which ultimate liberation is achieved. For Sadra, this is exemplified by the diminishing importance of politics in the face of divine law which also means that the particular gives way to the universal and lesser intensity of Being gives way to more intense Being. The total overcoming of politics is necessary, because Sadra views politics as the organization of human society before the End of the World. He does not see humanity as an end in itself, but rather as a mode of Being that evolves towards unity with pure Being. Politics is useful as long as the human condition remains and once that condition is superseded it gives way to divine law, which is also the realization of ultimate justice. The ultimate liberation of Fanon is also transpolitical because it means the abolition of colonial and capitalist relations, which in turn entails the end of exploitative wage and slave labour, segregation, racism and the colonial-colonized dynamic. In a sense, this view of ultimate liberation (which is to happen after national liberation) is very similar to what Marx and Engels envisioned as the end point of history in which the productive forces are developed in such a way that everything is distributed according to the need in a classless, stateless and moneyless society. This for Fanon is the triumph of the individual freed from all oppression and essentialization. Thus, it is also the end of politics as inter- and intrasocietal conflicts would not exist as scarcity, class, race and the state are eliminated.

Another parallel between the ontopolitics of Sadra and Fanon is the understanding of the political as a process in constant development. Sadra's view of that development could be understood as consisting of three stages: tyranny, a society led by a legitimate authority (sages) and the perfect society led by the Imam. This can be juxtaposed with a similar trinity that is observed in Fanon's work: colonialism, anti-colonial struggle for national liberation and the continued struggle for decolonization in the independent state. This process reaches its end when Being is fully realised- in Sadra's philosophy it is realised in the unity with pure Being after the Gathering of the souls and in Fanon's, it is realised with the establishment of a world without essentialized identities and oppression, where the individual is free to realize itself through access to the whole of Being. In both cases, the realized Being is transpolitical.

The clear parallels between Sadra and Fanon's ontopolitics allow for the reading of each author through the other. When Fanon's depiction of colonial Being and its Manichaean ontology is read from a Sadrian perspective it becomes clear that it is not only pure tyranny but also the very opposite of how Being is actually structured. From Sadrian perspective it is illogical and false for Being to be composed of two radically opposing substances and it follows that the social order that creates this Being to be oppressive and ignorant. It is not only the result of oppressive politics, but it is politics in its lowest level- the complete opposite of divine law. Due to this it seems that from Sadrian perspective colonial Being is politics of evil and as such is exactly what society ought not to be. As

Sadra already emphasizes the need for political change through the involvement of the sage in society, it appears that he would be in agreement with Fanon about the need for radical structural changes and the destruction of the oppressive system. Moreover, this would be beneficial for the whole of society and it would be in accordance with the divine law and the natural evolution of Being towards unity. Because of that it would also be a step towards the realization of Being in full unity. It is in this sense that Sadra's sage could be seen as a revolutionary, not only metaphorically, but also in the real contemporary sense of a fighter against (neo-)colonial systems. Thus, Sadra's metaphysical ontology is relevant to contemporary political struggles and can also serve as a theoretical framework for revolutionary theory and action.

This is important because it demonstrates the radical potential of Sadra's transcendent politics in service of establishing free society. It also means that Sadra's approach to understanding reality, or in other words his philosophical method, can be used to address and analyze the contemporary (neo)colonial condition. Moreover, it also means that what is understood as 'traditional philosophy/theosophy/theology' can be read in a way that does not necessarily support traditionally established institutions and thus, is not actually a theory that advocates for a return to a traditional past. After all, Sadra, while recognizing the supreme virtues of the early Islamic community, was very critical of contemporary and historical institutions and ways of organizing society in the Islamic world. Sadra's evolutionary understanding of the *tashkik* of Being allows him to have an evolutionary understanding of history, which however should not be mistaken for a radical progressivist view of history in which history moves from less to more developed. Rather it seems that his understanding of history is similar to his understanding of Being- a good and just society implies unity, while the opposite implies division. In this sense, the early Islamic community symbolizes unity, while the historical movement away from it implies division. Then, the role of the sage is to introduce political unity, which at its ultimate form is achieved by the Imam. Thus, Sadra does not advocate for a return to specific traditional institutions that were established after the death of Ali and the end of the early Islamic community, but his 'traditionalism' lies in his recognition of the early Islamic society as a model for a just society. Therefore, Sadra neither upholds traditionally established (post-early Islamic) institutions and organizations of society, nor does he claim that history is necessarily a movement from less to more societal development. Rather his view of history leaves space for its reimagining and reorganizing by the sages, while referring to a model society from the past. This lines up with Fanon's view of decolonization, as he did not see it as a return to a precolonial past, but as a process of liberation and radical reconstruction of society. This, once more, shows that Sadra's ontopolitics are open for application in decolonial theory.

One important difference between Sadra and Fanon which cannot be overlooked is the question of authority. While for Fanon the act of liberation is done by the colonized masses, Sadra is clear that political authority is possessed by the sage, i.e., the person whose intellect is enlightened by the intensification of his Being. As the sages are not infallible, the good rule would require a council of sages that are aware of the concrete problems of society and act together to solve them. A virtuous society for Sadra, then is a society in which the sages consult with each other about policies and with the people for the concrete societal problems. The sages themselves however are not elected, but this is not needed as their knowledge is what gives them authority. Intellectuals certainly do play a role in Fanon's vision, for example in his view that there should be an alliance between the rural masses and the colonized intellectuals, however this does not translate to the idea that there is a figure in which authority could be concentrated. The reason this difference is important is that it seems that Sadra's politics do not introduce a democratic society, which is important for decolonial theory. This tension needs to be addressed, however there is no indication that Sadra's theory could be read as supporting democracy as understood today. On the other hand it can be used to question contemporary understanding of democracy and this could lead us beyond the contemporary discourses on democracy.

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