

Explication of the Relationship between Individual and Collective Identity in the Verse "Whoever Kills a Soul..." (al-Mā'idah:٣٢) With Emphasis on the Foundations of Transcendent Philosophy

Aziz Alizadeh Salteh

(Corresponding Author): Department of Theology and Islamic Studies, Khoy Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khoy, Iran.

Email: alizadehsalteh@iau.ac.ir

ORCID: ٠٠٠٠-٠٠٠٢-٧٢٥٠-٤٠٤٣

Parivash Alizadeh

PhD student in Nahjul-Balagha Sciences and Education, South Tehran Branch, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

Email: palizadehptf@gmail.com

ORCID: ٠٠٠٩-٠٠٠٠-١٤٥٥-٤٤٢٤

Abstract

The verse, "...Whoever kills a soul, unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land, it is as though he had killed all mankind...", (al-Mā'idah:٣٢) articulates a profound relationship between the sanctity of individual life and the integrity of humanity as a whole. Utilizing a descriptive-analytical methodology and engaging with the philosophical works of the *Mulla Sadra* School, this study aims to elucidate this relationship based on the principles of Transcendent Philosophy. The central research question concerns how, within the framework of Transcendent Philosophy, the act of killing or reviving a single individual can be equated with the killing or revival of all people. The importance of this inquiry lies in offering a philosophical interpretation of a central Qur'anic verse and providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between the individual and society. The working

hypothesis posits that, according to *Mulla Sadra's* philosophy, human individuals are, from one perspective, manifestations and instantiations of a unified existential reality. Conversely, from another perspective, individuals are manifestations and theophanies of the Perfect Human reflected in various forms and degrees. The findings demonstrate that, within the Sadrian framework, human individuals represent manifestations of the specific reality of the human species and varying degrees of the Perfect Human. As a result, their actions, insofar as they pertain to this shared reality, generate effects that extend beyond the individual level. Consequently, the killing or revival of any individual exerts an ontological impact on the human species as a whole and on the manifestation of the Perfect Human, such that acts of evil or good influence the entirety of that specific reality as well as the Perfect Human. Thus, Transcendent Philosophy offers a comprehensive ontological interpretation of the verse, underscoring the absolute sanctity of human life and the essential interconnectedness between the individual and society.

Keywords: Individual and Collective Identity, Transcendent Philosophy, Surah al-Mā'idah:٣٢, Gradation of Being, Human Species.

Introduction

In verse ٣٢ of Surah *al-Mā'idah*, following the statement of the law of retaliatory punishment, the Qur'an states: "...Whoever kills a soul, unless for a soul or for corruption in the land, it is as though he had killed all mankind..." (al-Mā'idah:٣٢) This expression constitutes one of the Qur'an's most profound statements concerning human dignity and the sanctity of human life, such that the killing of one human being is regarded as equivalent to the killing of all human beings, and the revival of one human being as equivalent to the revival of all humanity. This formulation raises a fundamental question for Qur'anic exegetes and Islamic

thinkers: Is this expression merely a moral and rhetorical hyperbole intended to emphasize the sanctity of human life, or does it point to an ontological reality and a fundamental interconnectedness among human individuals? This issue assumes even greater significance when considered in relation to individual and collective human identity. If human individuals were merely independent and separate entities, providing a philosophical explanation for this equivalence would be difficult; however, if a genuine unity exists among them, the verse would point to a reality extending beyond a merely ethical recommendation.

Among Qur'anic exegetes, various views have been proposed concerning this verse. Some exegetes, including *Ṭabarī*, *Zamakhsharī*, and *Fakhr Rāzī*, have focused primarily on its exegetical, lexical, and rhetorical dimensions. Some have regarded it as addressing the sanctity of human life within Jewish law and as illustrating the scope of Islamic law. In contrast, others have emphasized its ethical and rhetorical dimensions, treating the killing of one human being as tantamount to committing a crime against all humanity. Among these scholars, Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, by proposing the theory of a "Single Specific Reality," has sought to provide a deeper and more ontological explanation of the meaning of the verse (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, ١٩٥٤ AD/١٣٧٤ AH: ٥, ٥١٥-٥١٧).

Nevertheless, the potential of this perspective, particularly in light of the anthropological and ontological foundations of Transcendent Philosophy, has not yet been examined independently and systematically. Since Transcendent Philosophy, through principles such as the primacy of existence, the gradation of existence, substantial motion, and the specific reality of the human species, provides a philosophical framework for explaining the relationship between the individual and the species, this study seeks to explicate the relationship between individual and collective identity in this verse on the basis of the foundations of Transcendent Philosophy. Accordingly, the central research question is: 'How can

the anthropological foundations of Transcendent Philosophy explain the relationship between individual and collective identity in the verse "Whoever kills a soul..." (al-Mā'idah:٣٢)?'

The research hypothesis is that, according to the foundations of Transcendent Philosophy, human individuals are manifestations of a single existential reality of the human species. Therefore, the killing of one soul, in addition to its moral reprehensibility, constitutes an assault upon the unified reality of humanity, and it is in this respect that it can be regarded as "As though he had killed all mankind." On the other hand, the individual and the collective represent two degrees of a single existential reality: "The individual is a particular manifestation of the collective reality of humanity, and their action, whether directed toward the revival or the taking of life, affects this entire existential system."

This study utilizes a descriptive-analytical approach grounded in library research. Data were collected from the philosophical works of *Mulla Sadra*, Qur'anic commentaries, and pertinent scholarly studies, and were analyzed using rational and philosophical methods. It is important to clarify that the present study does not aim to provide a literal exegesis of the verse. Instead, it leverages the philosophical resources of Transcendent Philosophy to present an ontological interpretation of the verse's meaning. The philosophical principles of *Sadr al-Din Shirazi* serve as the theoretical framework for a deeper analysis of the verse; it is not asserted that all conclusions are directly derivable from the verse's explicit wording.

In recent years, several studies have also been conducted in this field. In "The Pyramid of Being," written by Mahdi Haeiri Yazdi and published by the Institute for Cultural Studies and Research in (١٩٨٢ AD/١٣٦١ SH), the relationship between the individual and the natural universal is examined and described in terms of a unite relationship; with reference to the verse in question, an assault upon one individual is regarded as equivalent to an assault upon the totality of humanity. The

article "Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Innovative Theory Concerning the Distinction between the Metaphysical Soul and the Soul Resulting from Intensification...", by Hasanzadeh and Kuchanani, published in *Hikmat-e Sadra'i*, no. ۱۸ (۲۰۲۱ AD/۱۴۰۰ SH), examines and critiques Mulla Sadra's theory in explaining the descending arc of the human being and analyzes Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's innovative and original position on this issue. The article "An Examination of the Rhetorical and Educational Subtleties of Verse ۳۲ of Surah *al-Mā'idah* in Preventing Intentional Homicide," by Salari and Beygzadeh, published in *Qur'anic Studies*, serial no. ۲۶ (۲۰۱۶ AD/۱۳۹۵ SH), examines the rhetorical and educational subtleties of verse ۳۲ of Surah *al-Mā'idah*, which addresses the reprehensibility of intentional homicide and its punishment. The authors argue that by stating that killing an innocent person is equivalent to killing all human beings, the verse conveys severe psychological and social consequences for the murderer and thereby contributes to the prevention of intentional homicide. The article "The Relationship between the Degrees of the Human Being and the Degrees of Being from Mulla Sadra's Perspective," by Shojari and Mohammad Alizadeh, published in *Quarterly Journal of Religious Anthropology*, no. ۲۷, states that Mulla Sadra considers both existence and the human being to be simple realities possessing degrees according to gradation, and that the degrees of the human soul are related to its perceptions and to the degrees of its existence. The article "Foundations of Human Dignity from Mulla Sadra's Perspective," by Dortaj and Mohammad Rezaei, published in *Quarterly Journal of Philosophy of Religion*, ۱۳(۴), ۲۰۱۶ AD/۱۳۹۵ SH, maintains that, from Mulla Sadra's perspective, human dignity is an ontological and gradational reality rooted in the human being's primordial nature and divine creation (intrinsic dignity) and that, through rational and spiritual development, it rises to higher degrees of spiritual perfection (acquired dignity).

A review of previous studies shows that each of these works has examined certain dimensions of the issue; however, none has independently and systematically explained the relationship between individual and collective identity in the verse "Whoever kills a soul..." on the basis of the ontological and anthropological foundations of Transcendent Philosophy, with particular emphasis on the views of Sadr al-Din Shirazi. Accordingly, the innovation of the present study lies in adopting an ontological approach and directly applying fundamental principles of Transcendent Philosophy, including the gradation of existence, the substantial motion of the soul, and the specific reality of the human species, to the analysis of this verse. It seeks to provide a philosophical framework for explaining the relationship between individual and collective identity and the ontological consequences of killing and reviving a human soul.

١. Concepts and Terminology

A rigorous discussion of the relationship between individual and collective identity in the verse "Whoever kills a soul..." necessitates clarification of several foundational concepts. Divergent interpretations of this verse often stem from varying understandings of terms such as identity, individual, specific reality, and human unity. Therefore, prior to the main analysis, these concepts are examined from lexical, philosophical, and, where relevant, exegetical perspectives.

١,١. Identity

The term "Identity" in Arabic is derived from the pronoun *Huwa* (he) and, lexically, refers to the reality and essence of a thing, namely, that by virtue of which a thing is "It." (Ma'luf, ١٩٨٨ AD/١٣٦٧ SH: ٨٧٥; Amid, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٣٧٥ SH: ١٢١٢) Lexicographers have defined identity as the reality of each thing and that which distinguishes it from what is other than it. In Islamic philosophical sources, identity has also frequently been used as equivalent to individuation and external

actuality; in this sense, the identity of every existent is identical with its mode of actual existence, rather than merely its mental concept (cf. Mulla Sadra, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ٩, ٧٣).

In Transcendent Philosophy, in light of the principle of the primacy of existence, the identity of every existent is identical with its existence, because existence is what possesses ontological primacy. In contrast, quiddity is regarded merely as the delimitation and mental validity of existence. Accordingly, human identity, before being dependent upon conceptual characteristics, ultimately pertains to the existential degree of the human being (cf. Mulla Sadra, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ١, ٥٠-٥٣). On this basis, identity in the present study is understood as the existential reality of the human being, a reality that, on the one hand, manifests itself in individual individuation and, on the other, bears a real relationship to the specific reality of the human being.

١,٢. **Individual**

Lexically, individual means unique, alone, and separate (Ibn Manẓūr, ١٩٨٧ AD/١٤٠٨ AH: ٤, ١٠٦٨; Maʿluf, ١٩٨٨ AD/١٣٦٧ SH: ٥٧٤; Amid, ١٩٩٦ AD/١٣٧٥ SH: ٩٠٨). In Islamic philosophy, an individual refers to a particular and individuated existent that possesses external existence and is distinguished from other members of the same species (cf. Mulla Sadra, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ١, ٢٤٨-٢٤٩, n.). In logic, an individual is an external instance of the natural universal; however, in Transcendent Philosophy, the individual is not merely an instance of a universal concept, but a particular degree of existence whose individuation derives from its mode of existence (ibid.).

Within the framework of Transcendent Philosophy, while human individuals differ in terms of existential individuation, this distinction does not entail absolute existential separation. Instead, each individual represents a particular degree of the

specific reality of the human being. Thus, in this article, the term 'individual' refers not simply to an independent social person, but to an individuated degree of human reality.

۱,۳. **Collective Identity**

The expression "Collective Identity" in contemporary literature generally refers, in the social sciences, to the set of shared characteristics, beliefs, and values of a society (cf. Jenkins, ۲۰۰۲ AD/۱۳۸۱ SH: ۷). However, this term does not carry a sociological meaning in the present study. By collective identity, we mean the real unity of human individuals at the level of the specific reality of the human being. This unity does not originate in an arbitrary or contractual commonality; rather, it is rooted in the existential reality of the human being.

Accordingly, in this article, collective identity denotes that human individuals, while maintaining personal identities and diverse characteristics, participate in the unified reality of humanity. This existential commonality forms the foundation for analyzing the relationship between the individual and the collective in the verse "Whoever kills a soul..."

۱,۴. **Specific Reality**

The term "Species" lexically means a class or category of things that share essential characteristics (Ibn Manzūr, ۱۹۸۷ AD/۱۴۰۸ AH: ۷۴۴; Ma'luf, ۱۹۸۸ AD/۱۳۶۷ SH: ۸۴۷; Amid, ۱۹۹۶ AD/۱۳۷۵ SH: ۱۱۷۵). In logic, the species is one of the Five Universals and is predicated of multiple individuals possessing a common reality (Ibn Sina, ۱۹۹۶ AD/۱۳۷۵ SH: ۱, ۸۰; Khansari, ۱۹۸۹ AD/۱۳۶۸ SH: ۹۹; Montazeri Moqaddam, ۲۰۱۷ AD/۱۳۹۶ SH: ۱۳۴).

In Transcendent Philosophy, however, the specific reality is not merely a logical and mental concept. On the basis of *Mulla Sadra's* ontological principles, it has a real ground of abstraction, and individuals are manifestations and determinations

of that reality (cf. Mulla Sadra, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ٩, ٧٣). On this basis, the specific reality of the human being is not merely an abstract designation; rather, it expresses a real unity among human individuals, a unity that, while acknowledging the multiplicity of persons, reflects their commonality in existential reality.

This understanding provides an appropriate philosophical basis. This conceptualization offers a suitable philosophical foundation for interpreting the verse "Whoever kills a soul..." If individuals are understood as degrees of a single human reality, then harm inflicted upon any individual constitutes harm to the shared reality of humanity.

١,٥. Perfect Human

In Islamic mysticism and Transcendent Philosophy, the Perfect Human refers to a degree of existential perfection that reflects all the Divine Names and Attributes to the extent possible for a human being and constitutes the most complete manifestation of the reality of humanity (cf. Ashtiyani, ١٩٩١ AD/١٣٧٠ SH: ٢١٩). Thus, the Perfect Human refers to the highest degree of the actualization of humanity, rather than to the fundamental specific reality itself.

١,٦. Specific, Gradational, and Mystical Unity

A distinction must be made among "Specific Unity," "Gradational Unity," and "Mystical Unity." Specific unity refers to the sharing of individuals in the reality of humanity; gradational unity concerns the degrees of existence within the ontological order; and mystical unity, based on the doctrine of the unity of being, regards all multiplicities as manifestations of a single reality (cf. Haeiri Yazdi, ١٩٨٢ AD/١٣٦١ SH: ١٧٣ ff.). Each of these levels can be employed within its proper context, but they should not be conflated.

۲. Explication of the Relationship between Individual and Collective Identity in the Verse "Whoever Kills a Soul..." (al-Mā'idah:۳۲)

۲.۱. Lexical and Exegetical Analysis of the Verse

Verse ۳۲ of Surah *al-Mā'idah*, following the discussion of the laws governing homicide, emphasizes the sanctity of human life and establishes that killing one innocent human being is equivalent to killing all human beings, while saving one human being is equivalent to saving all humanity. The word "*Nafs*" in this verse refers to a person and the human self, while "*al-Nas jami'an*" encompasses all human beings (cf. Qarashī, ۱۹۹۲ AD/۱۳۷۱ SH: ۷, ۹۵; Ṭurayhī, ۱۹۵۵ AD/۱۳۷۵ AH: ۳, ۲۵۴).

The central issue in interpreting the verse is explaining the meaning of the simile in the expression "It is as though he had killed all mankind." Exegetes have offered two principal approaches to this comparison. Some have understood it as referring to the magnitude of the sin of killing a human being and the severity of its reprehensibility. In this view, an assault upon the life of one human being, because it violates the sanctity of human life, is ethically and legally regarded as equivalent to an assault upon all human beings (cf. Sabzevari, ۱۹۸۵ AD/۱۹۸۵ AD/۱۴۰۶ AH AH: ۲, ۴۵۵; Qarashī, ۱۹۹۶ AD/۱۳۷۵ SH: ۳, ۵۸).

By contrast, some exegetes, including Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, have regarded this expression as grounded in the unity of the human reality. In this interpretation, all human beings share in the reality of humanity, and an assault upon one individual is, in reality, an assault upon the very principle of humanity (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۵۴ AD/۱۳۷۴ AH: ۵, ۵۱۷-۵۱۸). Sadeqi Tehrani likewise emphasizes this meaning, regarding the killing of one human being as tantamount to the destruction of humanity and their revival as the revival of this shared reality (Sadeqi Tehrani, ۱۹۸۵ AD/۱۴۰۶ AH: ۸, ۳۰۲).

The phrase "Unless for a soul or for corruption in the land" identifies two legitimate exceptions to the prohibition against taking life. The first is killing as retaliatory punishment, which is legislated in the verses concerning retaliatory punishment (al-Baqarah: ١٧٨-١٧٩); the second is the punishment of those who cause corruption in the land, which is addressed in the following verse of Surah al-Mā'idah: ٣٣). Thus, the verse concerns wrongful and unjustified killings and does not encompass cases that the Divine Lawgiver has recognized as exceptions (cf. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٥٤ AD/١٣٧٤ AH: ٥, ٥١٦; Ālūsī, ١٩٩٤ AD/١٤١٥ AH: ٣, ٢٨٨; Ḥaqqī Burūsawī, n.d.: ٢, ٣٨٤).

٢,٢. Exegetical Perspectives

The verse "Whoever kills a soul..." has attracted the attention of exegetes from various exegetical, jurisprudential, ethical, and theological perspectives. However, since the central concern of the present study is to explain the relationship between individual and collective identity in this verse, not all of its exegetical dimensions will be examined. Accordingly, this section focuses only on those interpretations that contribute, in some way, to explaining the relationship among the individual, the human species, and the reality of humanity. On this basis, the principal exegetical approaches can be broadly classified into two categories: The "Ethical-Rhetorical Interpretation" and the "Interpretation based on the unity of the human species."

Exegetes have generally proposed two fundamental approaches to explaining the meaning of the verse:

١) Ethical-Rhetorical Interpretation

According to this view, the verse employs rhetorical amplification to demonstrate the gravity of the sin of taking a human life. From this perspective, killing one human being means violating the sanctity of human life and opening the way to

violence in society. It is therefore expressed as though all human beings had been killed. Likewise, saving one human being is presented as equivalent to saving all human beings because it preserves the value of human life (Kashani, n.d.: ٣, ٢٢٧-٢٢٨).

Among exegetes adopting this approach, different explanations can be found. Some, such as *Ṭabarī*, *Suddī*, *Ḥasan*, and *Ibn Zayd*, have understood the intended meaning as equality in the magnitude of the sin or in deserving punishment (*Ṭabarī*, ١٩٩١ AD/١٤١٢ AH: ٦, ١٢٨; *Ṭūsī*, n.d.: ٣, ٥٠٢; *Ṭabrisī*, ١٩٥٢ AD/١٣٧٢ AH: ٣, ٢٨٩; *Thaʿlabī*, ٢٠٠١ AD/١٤٢٢ AH: ٤, ٥٤). Others, such as *Qatādah* and *Ḍaḥḥāk*, have emphasized that anyone who regards the killing of innocent people as permissible endangers the security of human society and is therefore equivalent, in this respect, to the killer of all human beings (*ibid.*). Sadeqi Tehrani likewise regards this comparison as referring to the status of humanity and its intrinsic value, rather than merely constituting a verbal analogy (Sadeqi Tehrani, ١٩٨٥ AD/١٤٠٦ AH: ٨, ٣٠٢).

٢) Interpretation Based on the Unity of the Human Species

According to this approach, the verse points beyond a merely ethical emphasis to the common reality shared by all human beings. *Zamakhsharī*, emphasizing the intrinsic dignity of the human being, maintains that the sanctity of every individual in the sight of God is equivalent to the sanctity of all human beings. Therefore, violating the sanctity of one individual constitutes a violation of the sanctity of the human species as a whole (*Zamakhsharī*, ١٩٨٦ AD/١٤٠٧ AH: ١, ٦٢٧). *Mughnīyah* likewise understands the verse as indicating that, from the Islamic perspective, the human being possesses an independent status and dignity, and that an assault upon an individual constitutes an assault upon humanity, just as an act of benevolence toward one person is regarded as benevolence toward all human beings

(Mughnīyah, ٢٠٠٣ AD/١٤٢٤ AH: ٣, ٤٨). The commentaries *Fī Zilāl al-Qurʿan* and *al-Manār* likewise emphasize this meaning (Quṭb, ٢٠٠٤ AD/١٤٢٥ AH: ٢, ٨٧٨; Rashīd Riḍā, ١٩٩٣ AD/١٤١٤ AH: ٦, ٣٤٩).

Allamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī explains this view on the basis of the "Unity of the human species." In his view, all human beings share in the reality of humanity. Accordingly, killing one individual is, in reality, an assault upon the human species and the destruction of part of the Divine purpose concerning the perpetuation of the human race. On this basis, wrongful killing constitutes a form of opposition to the Lordly order and the Divine will concern the preservation of humanity (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, ١٩٥٤ AD/١٣٧٤ AH: ٥, ٥١٦-٥١٧).

This interpretation has also provided a basis for philosophical readings. Some thinkers, drawing upon the verse, have regarded the relationship between the individual and the human species as a unitive relationship, such that the reality of humanity is present in the individual and in the species in the same sense. From this perspective, killing an individual human being is, in reality, an assault upon the very reality that is actualized in all human individuals (cf. Haeiri Yazdi, ١٩٨٢ AD/١٣٦١ SH: ٢٢٠).

٢,٣. Evaluation and Critique of the Exegetical Views

The exegetical views proposed concerning the verse "Whoever kills a soul..." can be classified into two principal approaches: "The ethical-rhetorical and the ontological. Each of these approaches has its own strengths and limitations."

The ethical-rhetorical approach has the advantage of being fully compatible with the apparent meaning of the verse and of explaining the gravity of the sin of killing a human being without requiring complex philosophical premises. Nevertheless, this approach does not provide a clear explanation of the reason why the killing of one individual is compared with the killing of all human beings, and it leaves the

actual relationship between the individual and the collective unexplained. In other words, on the basis of this approach, it is difficult to account for the distinction, found in some narrations, between the killing of a believer and the killing of a disbeliever. Furthermore, from a philosophical perspective, if there were no existential connection among individuals, the comparison between killing one individual and killing all human beings would lack a genuine basis of comparison, which would be difficult to reconcile with Divine wisdom. Moreover, figures such as Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī have rightly demonstrated that "As Though" in this verse belongs to the type of *ka'anna* used in comparison and points to a real unity rather than merely a verbal analogy.

By contrast, the ontological approach seeks to provide a deeper basis for this comparison on the grounds of a shared human reality. In this interpretation, the relationship between the individual and the collective is not merely a conventional or social relationship but is rooted in a common human reality. This approach, however, also faces certain objections. The most important objection is that accepting such an interpretation depends upon accepting certain philosophical foundations, such as the primacy of existence, the gradation of existence, and the mode of realization of the specific reality, foundations that are not accepted by all Islamic thinkers. Moreover, some theologians and scholars of Jurisprudence principles maintain that the verse is intended to establish an ethical and legislative ruling and that ontological conclusion should not be derived from it. This objection becomes stronger if the philosophical interpretation is presented as the sole meaning of the verse. However, if the Sadrian analysis is understood as a philosophical reading of the verse, rather than as its exclusive interpretation, it not only does not conflict with the apparent meaning of the verse but can also reveal deeper dimensions of its content. Accordingly, the present article does not regard

the ontological interpretation as the only possible interpretation, but rather as one philosophically defensible reading of the verse.

٢,٤. The Relationship between the Individual and the Collective in the Apparent Meaning of the Verse

In summary, the verse indicates a close relationship between the individual and the collective. While each human individual possesses a unique identity, the verse illustrates that this identity is also an instance of a broader reality, collective humanity, such that harm to any part results in harm to the whole. This is the precise aspect for which Transcendent Philosophy offers an ontological foundation.

٣. The Foundations of Transcendent Philosophy

In the preceding section, the verse "Whoever kills a soul..." was examined from lexical, exegetical, and Qur'anic perspectives, and the views of exegetes concerning the relationship between the individual and the collective in this verse were analyzed and evaluated. The foregoing analysis demonstrated that the ethical-social interpretation provides an acceptable explanation of the gravity of the verses.

٣,١. The Primacy of Existence and the Gradation of Its Degrees

Mulla Sadra maintains that the authentic reality is "Existence," and that existents constitute different degrees of a single reality (*Mulla Sadra*, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ١, ٣٨; *ibid.*: ١٨٦-١٨٦; *ibid.*, ٢٠٠٣ AD/١٣٨٢ SH: ١٣٤-١٣٨; see also Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ٣, ٣٧ ff.; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, n.d.: ٩-٢٠; Ebrahimi Dinani, ١٩٩٣ AD/١٣٧٢ SH: ٣, ٦٧-٨٠). This "Gradation" means that existence possesses different degrees in terms of intensity, weakness, perfection, and deficiency. From the pinnacle of perfection, the Absolute Being, God Almighty, to the lowest degree of deficiency,

prime matter, there exist continuous hierarchies (Mulla Sadra, ۱۹۸۹ AD/۱۳۶۸ SH: ۱, ۵۰-۵۳). This also means that all existents possess unity from one perspective and multiplicity from another: "Their unity lies in the principle of their existence. In contrast, their multiplicity lies in their degrees and determinations."

On the basis of this principle, unity and multiplicity in the order of being are not mutually exclusive or disconnected realities; rather, they constitute different degrees of a single reality. This foundation provides an appropriate philosophical basis for explaining the relationship between individual and collective identity in the verse "Whoever kills a soul..." If human individuals are degrees and determinations of a single existential reality, then the relationship among them cannot be merely conventional or conceptual; rather, it is rooted in an existential connection. Accordingly, this principle constitutes one of the philosophical foundations for the view that an assault upon an individual human being can be regarded as an assault upon the shared reality of humanity.

۳.۲. The Reality of the Human Soul

In Sadrian philosophy, the human soul is a single reality that possesses degrees and is, at the same time, subject to transformation. According to the principle that the soul is "Corporeal in origination and spiritual in subsistence," the soul is initially dependent upon the body and the material world at the beginning of its emergence, but its developmental journey leads it toward complete immateriality (Mulla Sadra, ۱۹۶۳ AD/۱۳۸۳ AH: ۹, ۱۱-۱۵; Mulla Sadra, ۱۹۸۹ AD/۱۳۶۸ SH: ۸, ۳۲۰; *ibid.*, ۲۰۰۱ AD/۱۳۸۰ SH: ۴۱۸-۴۱۹; *ibid.*, ۲۰۰۳ AD/۱۳۸۲ SH: ۳۰۹-۳۱۰; see also Sabzevari, ۱۹۸۳ AD/۱۳۶۲ SH: ۲۶۷; Hasan Zadeh Amoli, ۱۹۹۲ AD/۱۳۷۱ SH: ۲۲۷).

Moreover, according to the principle of substantial motion formulated by *Mulla Sadra*, the soul is intrinsically in motion and transforming. This transformation is

not accidental but occurs within the very essence and substance of the soul. Through this motion, the soul ascends from one degree to a higher and more perfect degree of existence (Mulla Sadra, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ٨, ١٢-١٥). This movement carries the soul from the animal degree to the vegetal degree, then to the higher human degree, and ultimately toward complete immateriality. This foundation demonstrates that the human being is an existent possessing different degrees of being and the capacity for transcendence, and this plays an important role in understanding the position of the individual within the reality of humanity.

٣,٣. **The Human Species and Specific Identity**

Mulla Sadra does not regard "Species" merely as a mental concept abstracted by the mind from individuals. Rather, he maintains that every species possesses a "Specific Reality" or "Specific Existence" that is realized externally, and that individuals are manifestations and determinations of that reality. "The specific reality, externally, is the same universal existential reality of which individuals are aspects and degrees." (Mulla Sadra, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ٩, ٧٣)

This means that all human individuals share in a single and common reality, namely "Humanity." Individuals are not mutually disconnected multiplicities; rather, they are degrees and aspects of a single specific reality. This unity is neither numerical unity, as in the case of a single individual, nor conceptual unity, as in the case of a universal concept; rather, it is an existential unity. This principle constitutes the basis for explaining the unity of the human species in the verse.

٣,٤. **The Mode of Actualization of the Specific Reality and Its Relationship to Individuals**

One of the important issues in explaining the relationship between the individual and the collective concerns how the specific reality is actualized externally. In Islamic philosophy, various views have been proposed concerning the relationship

between the natural universal and its individuals. Some have regarded the natural universal as merely a mental concept that has no realization in the external world apart from its individual instances. By contrast, Sadr al-Din Shirazi, on the basis of the primacy and gradation of existence, does not regard the relationship between the species and its individuals as merely a conceptual relationship of commonality. According to the foundations of Transcendent Philosophy, although human individuals possess multiple and distinct personal existences, this multiplicity does not prevent them from sharing in the single reality of humanity. In Sadrian terms, the specific reality of the human being manifests itself in multiple individuals, and individuals are determinations and aspects of that reality. Accordingly, the relationship between the individual and the species cannot be regarded merely as a relationship between two completely unrelated entities. This unity, however, does not mean denying the distinctions among individuals or negating their independent personalities. Rather, it means that, despite their multiplicity, individuals possess a form of unity insofar as they share in the reality of humanity (cf. Mulla Sadra, ۱۹۸۹ AD/۱۳۶۸ SH: ۲, ۷-۸).

A point that must be emphasized here is that individuals' sharing in the specific reality, by itself, is not sufficient to establish the claim that harm to one individual directly constitutes harm to the entire human reality. What makes such an interpretation possible within the framework of Transcendent Philosophy is the fact that the human individual is not merely a separate instance of the species; rather, the individual constitutes a degree of the manifestation and actualization of the human reality. From this perspective, an assault upon an individual human being is not merely the destruction of a particular existent; it is the destruction of one of the determinations and manifestations of the human reality and, in a sense, of the human being itself. Thus, an assault upon individual human beings is an assault upon the specific reality and humanity.

On this basis, it becomes possible to understand why the Qur'anic verse compares the killing of one soul with the killing of all human beings. This comparison is not merely a literary exaggeration; rather, it can also point to the real interconnectedness of human individuals within the specific reality, although such an explanation depends upon accepting the particular foundations of Transcendent Philosophy. This principle explains why individuals are not merely scattered and separate persons, but manifestations of a single reality.

۳,۵. The Existential Relationship between the Individual and the Collective

In light of the foregoing discussion, the relationship between the individual and the collective (species) in *Mulla Sadra's* thought is the relationship between the particular and the universal, or between the entity and its attribute. The human individual is an instance and manifestation of the universal reality of the "Human Species." Thus, although every individual possesses an independent identity, owing to the intensity or weakness of their existence, each is simultaneously existentially connected with all other individuals through their shared specific reality. This connection is what may be termed "Collective Identity" or "Specific Unity." This principle follows from the preceding discussion and directly informs the interpretation of the verse.

۳,۶. A Sadrian Explication of the Relationship between Individual and Collective Identity in the Verse "Whoever Kills a Soul..."

۳,۶,۱. The Relationship between the Individual and the Collective in the Verse Based on a Horizontal Relationship

According to this premise, although individuals are numerous and distinct, they share in the common reality of humanity. The verse indicates that this shared human reality possesses such authenticity and significance that harming or

benefiting one individual has implications for the entirety of this human reality, all human beings. From this perspective, all human beings constitute a meaningful and valuable whole, of which the individual is a part, and the individual's action produces consequences extending throughout the whole. This issue will be examined in greater detail below.

A) Explaining the Simile "Ka'annamā" in Light of the Real Unity of Existence

At first glance, the use of the term "*Ka'annamā*" (as though, as if) in the verse "*Fa ka'annamā qatala al-nasa jamī'an*" (then it is as though he had killed all mankind) appears to signify merely a simile. However, in light of *Mulla Sadra's* philosophy and his understanding of the degrees of existence and the interconnectedness of realities, this simile acquires greater depth and extends beyond a merely superficial resemblance.

In *Mulla Sadra's* philosophy, the universe possesses different degrees of existence, and these degrees are not merely formal or outward distinctions; rather, they possess an inner and profound reality. Similes in the Qur'an and narrations often express an inner reality and a profound interconnectedness rather than merely indicating an outward similarity.

The "*Ka'annamā*" in this context expresses a unity within multiplicity or a sharing in a common reality. The killing of one soul, because of the fundamental interconnectedness of individuals within the specific reality of the human species, means that, insofar as it harms the universal reality and the existential order, the act is in reality equivalent to killing all people. On the other hand, as stated in the discussion of the gradation of existence, being possesses degrees of greater and lesser intensity. Wrongful killing is a sin that profoundly diminishes the existential degree of the murderer and inflicts deep harm upon the human reality. Here,

"*Ka'annamā*" also indicates the severity of the reprehensibility and enormity of the sin of killing an innocent person. The sin is so grave and destructive that its effects can be regarded as extending, as it were, to the point of killing all human beings. In other words, the adverse effects and consequences of this act are considered, in spiritual and legal terms, equivalent and commensurate with the destruction of all humanity.

Furthermore, the human being, in the course of substantial motion, is continually developing and ascending toward perfection. Every action, whether good or evil, affects this process of becoming. Wrongful killing severely disrupts this developmental movement, distances the individual from the path of felicity, and "*Ka'annamā*" indicates that the act of wrongful killing is so destructive that it affects the entire process of humanity's becoming, as though preventing others from attaining their destined perfection. In this sense, the act amounts to standing in opposition to humanity's overall movement toward God.

The relationship between "*Ka'annamā*" and "*Bi ghayri nafsin aw fasādin fi al-arḍ*" (unless for a soul or for corruption in the land) can be understood as follows: if the killing occurs within the framework of *retaliatory punishment* or in response to corruption in the land, then this comparison does not apply in the same sense. This it indicates that "*Ka'annamā*" is not merely a superficial simile but is contingent upon the reality of the act and its legal criterion. When an act constitutes wrongful killing, the reality of that act becomes aligned, insofar as it harms the universal human reality, with the reality of killing all people.

Some eminent scholars, taking this issue into account, have understood "*Ka'annamā*" not as a simple simile but as an indirect expression cast in the form of a simile, and have maintained that understanding it in this manner resolves a number of objections raised by some scholars concerning the meaning of the verse (cf. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٥٤ AD/١٣٧٤ AH: ٥, ٥١٨).

In sum, "*Ka'annamā*" in this verse goes beyond a merely formal comparison and expresses the real unity and profound interconnectedness among human beings within the specific reality of the human species. The term reveals the severity of the reprehensibility of wrongful killing. It demonstrates that, because such an act harms the fundamental basis of human existence, it is as though all humanity has been targeted.

B) A Specific/Existential Interpretation of the Expression "*al-Nās Jamī'an*"

In light of *Mulla Sadra's* philosophy, the expression "All people" no longer refers merely to all individuals in a quantitative sense; rather, it points to the reality of the human species as a whole, in all its aspects and degrees. When the verse states "Killing all people," it means that the person who is killed is not merely an isolated and disconnected "I," but a manifestation of the universal reality of "Humanity." Therefore, harming this manifestation constitutes an assault upon and injury to the universal reality itself.

C) Individuals as Degrees of a Single Specific Reality

As stated above, *Mulla Sadra* regards human individuals as "Degrees" of a single specific reality. This means that all human beings share in the fundamental reality of "Humanity," while each manifests that humanity with a particular degree of existence and perfection. This gradation of existence allows individuals to be multiple without this multiplicity entailing complete separation and disconnection. Rather, a form of "Unity in multiplicity" is established.

From this perspective, the killing of one soul is analogous to breaking one mirror among a multitude of mirrors, all of which reflect a single image. Although the breakage damages that particular mirror, it also distorts the overall image, because

each mirror represents the universal reality of that image. As Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī states:

"If someone intends harm against one of human beings, it is as though he has intended harm against all of them, because he has intended harm against humanity, which is one in all of them. This is like water: When it is divided among countless vessels, if someone drinks from one of those vessels, he has drunk water and emptied that particular vessel insofar as it contains water; what is contained in the other vessels, insofar as it is water, is not something additional to the contents of that vessel. Thus, the person who has consumed the contents of one vessel is as though he has consumed the contents of all the vessels." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٥٤ AD/١٣٧٤ AH: ٥, ٥١٨)

D) Killing an Individual as an Assault upon the Specific Reality of Humanity

When an individual is killed, they are not only deprived of individual life; the "Sanctity of the human species" is also violated, because that individual was one of the manifestations and bearers of the reality of "Humanity." Their killing constitutes the negation of part of the concrete actualization of that universal reality.

Accordingly, it can be argued that, in *Mulla Sadra's* perspective, "Collective Identity," or "Humanity," establishes an "Existential Relationally" among individuals. Each individual acquires meaning both in terms of their independent existence (although dependent upon the body) and in terms of their existential connection with the whole. Thus, harm to any individual disrupts this existential connection and inflicts damage upon the entirety of the "Specific Reality" in which all individuals participate. This harm is so significant that the Qur'an describes it as "It is as though he had killed all mankind."

In light of the Sadrian account, killing one soul is not merely the deprivation of life from an individual; it is the destruction of one of the manifestations of "Humanity." In addition to constituting a grave injustice against the victim, the act also damages the "Specific Unity" of human beings. It is as though the act constitutes an affront to the very concept of "Being Human." This "Affront to Humanity" is the dimension corresponding to "Killing All People," which, from an ontological perspective, makes the act profoundly destructive.

This evil does not affect only the victim and their family; rather, it inflicts harm upon the entire body of human society. Conversely, the statement, "And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved all mankind," (al-Mā'idah:٣٢) indicates that saving a life, or reviving a human being, whether from death, moral decline, poverty, or ignorance, is not merely an individual act. It is the very act of "Reviving Humanity," because every human being who is saved is one of the bearers of the reality of "Humanity" who has been rescued from destruction. Saving that person strengthens and revives the universal specific reality that all human beings share. Such an act is a clear manifestation of the realization of existential goodness and perfection within the human world.

It should be noted, however, that this does not apply in the case of retaliatory punishment for a life or the punishment of one who causes "Corruption in the land," because intentional killing itself constitutes a violation of this order and a disruption of existential equilibrium. An individual, who commits murder, by depriving another person of life, has placed himself outside the sphere of the specific human reality and at a lower existential level. Retaliatory punishment, therefore, is not merely an act of retaliation; rather, it restores the original order and rectifies the disruption created within the specific reality. In fact, through the implementation of retaliatory punishment, the disrupted order is reestablished, and

the murderer receives the punishment for an act that had separated him from the human reality.

The expression "Unless for a soul" constitutes a condition for the applicability of the comparison. As noted above, the phrase "*Bi Ghayri Nafsin*" indicates an exception. The "Soul" referred to here is a life other than that of a person who is subject to retaliatory punishment. Thus, the verse states that whoever kills a human being other than one who is legally liable to retaliatory punishment is as though he had killed all people. This condition itself demonstrates that when killing takes place within the framework of law and justice (retaliatory punishment), it is no longer subject to the general ruling and comparison of "Killing all people."

Preserving human dignity within the framework of justice constitutes the philosophy of retaliatory punishment in Islam, because it serves to preserve the dignity and intrinsic value of human life through the administration of justice. When a murderer receives the punishment for their act, both the rights of the victim and those of the victim's family are restored, while society is cleansed of the effects of injustice. This act serves to preserve the specific reality of humanity and prevent the recurrence of corruption.

The second exception, namely "*Fasad fī al-Ard*," likewise falls within this framework. The execution of one who causes "*Fasad fī al-Ard*," is an act undertaken to preserve the well-being of society as a whole and prevent the spread of corruption, with the aim of restoring order and soundness to the specific human reality. Accordingly, within the framework of Transcendent Philosophy, retaliatory punishment does not conflict with the sanctity of human life; rather, it is itself a manifestation of the implementation of Divine justice and the restoration of existential order. This act is carried out with the aim of preserving the soundness and perfection of the specific reality of humanity and preventing the spread of

corruption. Therefore, it is excluded from the general ruling of the verse, which regards killing as tantamount to killing all humanity.

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes concerning the reason for this exception:

"As for His statement, "Whoever kills a soul, unless for a soul or for corruption in the land, it is as though he had killed all mankind," the phrase "*Bi Ghayri Nafsin*" excludes two types of killing. The first is killing as retaliatory punishment, concerning which the noble verse, "Prescribed for you is retaliatory punishment concerning those killed," (al-Baqarah:١٧٨) establishes the obligation of such killing and indicates that killing as retaliatory punishment, as well as every other form of retaliatory punishment, is not only not equivalent to killing all people, but is rather a means of preserving the life of society. The second is killing on account of corruption in the land, which is discussed in the following verse, where He states: "Indeed, the recompense of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive throughout the land to spread corruption..." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٥٤ AD/١٣٧٤ AH: ٥, ٥١٦).

Therefore, from the perspective of *Mulla Sadra* and Transcendent Philosophy, verse ٣٢ of Surah *al-Mā'idah*, by emphasizing the profound existential interconnectedness of human beings and the sanctity of the specific human reality, strongly underscores the reprehensibility of wrongful killing. At the same time, by mentioning the exceptions of retaliatory punishment and "*Fasād fī al-Arḍ*," it indicates that these punishments are, in fact, means of restoring existential order, administering justice, and preserving the well-being and dignity of the universal human reality. Retaliatory punishment and the punishment of one who causes "*Fasād fī al-Arḍ*," do not violate the verse; rather, they serve its underlying objectives, namely the preservation and elevation of the human reality.

۳,۶,۲. Explication of the Relationship between Individual and Collective in the Verse Based on the Vertical Relationship

Thus far, the relationship between the individual and the collective has been explained on the basis of the specific reality of humanity. This section examines the same issue from the perspective of the vertical relationship among the degrees of existence and the theory of the Perfect Human. This analysis is less a presentation of an independent theory explicitly formulated in the works of Sadr al-Din Shirazi than an elaboration and synthesis of certain foundations of Transcendent Philosophy, such as the gradation of existence, the degrees of being, the Perfect Human, and collective existence, in interpreting the verse.

Indications of the possibility of such a reading can also be found in the works of some contemporary thinkers, particularly Mehdi Haeiri Yazdi. In "The Pyramid of Being," while discussing the relationship among human beings at the horizontal levels of existence and its connection with the verse "Whoever kills a soul...", he explicitly states that explaining the unity of human beings with one another and with the source of existence requires an independent and detailed exposition (Haeiri Yazdi, ۱۹۸۲ AD/۱۳۶۱ SH: ۲۲۴). The present study may therefore be regarded as an attempt to philosophically elaborate this perspective on the basis of the broader set of foundations of Transcendent Philosophy.

It should also be emphasized that what is presented here constitutes a philosophical and mystical development of the implications of the verse and should not be equated with the verse's direct exegetical meaning. Accordingly, the arguments in this section should be understood within the framework of a philosophical-mystical interpretation of the verse, rather than as an attempt to establish its direct literal meaning. With this qualification, the key principles of *Mulla Sadra's* theory relevant to this discussion are as follows:

- ١) **Unity of Being:** *Mulla Sadra* maintains that being is a single reality and that multiplicity is derivative and phenomenal. In other words, all existents are manifestations and theophanies of a single reality, namely being.
- ٢) **Gradation of Being:** Being possesses degrees of intensity and weakness. The closer existent is to the source of being, the more perfect and intense its existence; the farther it is from that source, the weaker and more deficient it is.
- ٣) **The Perfect Human:** The Perfect Human is an existent who, by virtue of his proximity to the source of being, possesses all existential perfections and serves as a comprehensive mirror of the Divine Names and Attributes. He possesses collective existence and encompasses within himself, in its fullness, a degree of the One Reality.
- ٤) **Collective Existence:** *Mulla Sadra* maintains that collective realities, such as the Universal Intellect, the Universal Soul, and even the human species, possess an independent and authentic mode of existence, under whose shadow and radiance individuals subsist. He states, "The intellect is all things." He then quotes Plotinus from the *Theologia*, who states that all things are from the intellect and that the intellect is all things (*Mulla Sadra*, ٢٠٠٣ AD/١٣٨٢ SH: ٢٥٥).

Verse ٣٢ of Surah *al-Mā'idah* states that whoever kills a soul, except in retribution for a life taken or for corruption in the land, it is as though he had killed all people, and whoever gives it life, it is as though he had given life to all people. The verse thus emphasizes the profound and fundamental relationship between the individual and the collective.

Now, this verse can be explicated in light of *Mulla Sadra's* principles as follows: According to *Mulla Sadra's* theory, every human being is a manifestation of the

Perfect Human. The Perfect Human, in turn, is a manifestation of collective existence that occupies a higher degree. Therefore, every individual is a manifestation and expression of the collective reality and, ultimately, a manifestation of the Perfect Human. The individual, considered in isolation, does not possess a completely independent and self-sufficient existence; rather, the individual is a part that acquires meaning within the whole. When an individual takes the life of another person, he has, in reality, destroyed a manifestation of the collective reality and humanity, because every individual is a manifestation of the Perfect Human and collective existence. The killing of an individual is therefore regarded as an injury to the entire existential system and as a degradation of its collective degree.

In other words, because every individual, in some manner, bears humanity within himself, depriving that individual of life is equivalent to depriving humanity as a whole of life at the degree in which that individual served as its manifestation. Conversely, when an individual gives life to another person, he has, in reality, strengthened and perfected a manifestation of the collective reality and humanity. Reviving a soul means strengthening and perfecting that degree of humanity embodied by the individual; this strengthening extends to the collective as a whole and contributes to the elevation of its existential degree. Such revival returns not only to the individual but also to the entirety of collective existence and, ultimately, to the Perfect Human, who encompasses all existential dimensions.

Accordingly, on the basis of *Mulla Sadra's* theory, the verse expresses the truth that the individual and the collective are not two entities entirely separate from one another; rather, they are two degrees of a single existential reality. The individual is a particular manifestation of the collective reality and of the Perfect Human, and his actions, whether directed toward revival or taking life, affect the entire existential system. Depriving an individual of life means depriving a part of the

collective reality of life and diminishing the manifestations of the collective's existential perfection, while reviving an individual means strengthening and perfecting that part of the manifestations of the collective reality and elevating the collective's existential degree. This explication reveals the depth of individual responsibility toward society and the inseparable bond between the parts and the whole.

Mulla Sadra, referring to *Ibn 'Arabī*'s statement concerning the Perfect Human, states: "The realized Shaykh, the author of *al-Futūḥāt*, has said ... when he sought to explain that the Perfect Human is a creature of God created in the form of the All-Merciful ... universality was granted only to the Perfect Human, the bearer of the Divine secret, and everything other than God is a part of the whole of the human being ..." (Mulla Sadra, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ٨, ١٤٠)

Hajji Sabzevari, in his commentary on the *Asfār*, interprets the expression "The whole of the human being" as referring to the reality of the Perfect Human. In this sense, all degrees of the universe of being fall within the scope of the existential amplitude of the Perfect Human. In his formulation, this interpretation rests on the principle that "The simple reality is all things," according to which an existent that possesses a higher degree of being also possesses, in a nobler manner, the perfections of the lower degrees (Mulla Sadra, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH: ٨, ١٤٠: Sabzavari's commentary).

He considers this point to correspond with what is reported concerning the impeccable Imams in *Ziyārat al-Jāmi'ah*:

"...Your names are among the names, your bodies are among the bodies, your spirits are among the spirits, and your souls are among the souls..." (Qummī, ١٩٦٥ AD/١٣٨٥ AH: ٩٠٦)

Accordingly, since every human being is a manifestation of the Perfect Human, and the Perfect Human himself is a manifestation of collective existence situated at

a higher degree, every individual is a manifestation and expression of the collective reality and, ultimately, of the Perfect Human. It is at this point that an assault upon, or assistance toward the perfection of, an individual can be understood as an assault upon, or assistance toward, the complete manifestation of humanity.

On this basis, the statements of those who regard the prophets, Imams, and the Friends of God as instances of the verse may perhaps be better understood. Some exegetical works refer to the foregoing meanings in their interpretation of this verse. For example, a report attributed to *Ibn 'Abbās* states:

"Whoever kills a prophet or a just Imam, it is as though he has killed all people; and whoever strengthens the arm of a prophet or a just Imam, it is as though he has given life to all people." (Meybudi, ١٩٥١ AD/١٣٧١ AH: ٣, ١٠١; Ṭabrisī, ١٩٥٢ AD/١٣٧٢ AH: ٣, ٢٨٩; Suyūṭī, ١٩٨٣ AD/١٤٠٤ AH: ٢, ٢٧٧)

Elsewhere, it is stated:

"...Regarding its interpretation ... *'Ikrimah* narrated from *'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbās* that what is meant is that whoever kills a prophet or an Imam is as though he has killed all people, because the sustenance and order of creation depend upon the prophet ... and whoever supports a prophet or a just Imam, strengthens his position, and supports a prophet or a just Imam until he is able to restrain [evil], is as though he has given life to the entire world, because the people of the world live through the prophet and Imam, and when there is no prophet or Imam, they are as though dead." (Abu al-Futūḥ Rāzī, ١٩٨٧ AD/١٤٠٨ AH: ٦, ٣٥٠)

These interpretations may perhaps be explained by the fact that the prophets, Imams, and Friends of God are complete and perfect manifestations of the Perfect Human. Killing them, or contributing to their preservation and continued life, therefore constitutes either irreparable harm to the complete manifestation of true humanity or the preservation of that manifestation; the more comprehensive and

prominent the manifestation, the greater the consequences of attention to it or neglect of it.

٤. Comparison of the Transcendent-Philosophy-Based Explication with Other Interpretive Approaches to the Verse "Whoever Kills a Soul..."

A comparison between the explication presented on the basis of the foundations of Transcendent Philosophy and the views of other Muslim exegetes and thinkers demonstrates that the two approaches share certain commonalities while also differing in their underlying premises. Their principal point of agreement is that both regard the verse "Whoever kills a soul..." as addressing the magnitude and sanctity of human life and do not confine it merely to a legislative or penal ruling. Both approaches also establish a certain relationship between the individual and human society. Their principal difference, however, lies in the basis on which this relationship is explained.

Most exegetes, including *Ṭabarī*, *Zamakhsharī*, *Fakhr Rāzī*, *Meybudi*, and *Abul Futūḥ Rāzī*, explain the equivalence between killing one human being and killing all human beings in terms of its ethical, social, and educational consequences, or in terms of the role of prophets and the Friends of God in guiding society. By contrast, the explication based on the foundations of Transcendent Philosophy analyzes this equivalence through principles such as the primacy of existence, the gradation of being, specific reality, and the degrees of existence. Through this approach, the relationship between the individual and the collective is elevated from the level of conventional and social relations to the level of an existential relationship.

In this context, Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, by proposing the theory of the unity of the human species, has come closer than other exegetes to this philosophical reading. The difference, however, is that the present explication also draws upon the

capacities of other foundations of Transcendent Philosophy, including the specific reality and, at a higher level, the theory of the Perfect Human, in analyzing the relationship between the individual and the collective. From this perspective, killing an individual is not merely the elimination of a person; rather, it is regarded as an assault upon one of the degrees in which the human reality is actualized.

Accordingly, the fundamental difference between this explication and most exegetical views does not lie in the principle of the sanctity of human life, but in the philosophical basis used to explain it. Whereas most exegetes have emphasized the ethical, social, and legislative consequences of killing and reviving a human being, the explication based on the foundations of Transcendent Philosophy seeks to explain this equivalence on the basis of the unity of the human reality and the existential interconnectedness of individuals. In this way, it offers a broader ontological horizon for understanding the verse.

Conclusion

The present study sought to explicate the relationship between individual and collective identity in the noble verse, "Whoever kills a soul, it is as though he had killed all mankind," on the basis of the anthropological and ontological foundations of Transcendent Philosophy. An examination of exegetical perspectives demonstrated that, alongside ethical and rhetorical interpretations, an ontological reading of the verse can also be proposed, one grounded in the real interconnectedness of human individuals at the level of human reality.

According to Sadrian principles, human individuals are not merely separate and independent existents; rather, they participate in a shared reality called humanity. From this perspective, despite their multiplicity and personal distinctions, individuals constitute different degrees and dimensions of a single specific reality. Accordingly, an assault upon an individual can, insofar as that individual is a

manifestation and degree of the human reality, be regarded as an assault upon that same shared reality.

Within this framework, the expression "*Fa Ka'annamā Qatala al-Nāsa Jamī'an*" acquires, in addition to its ethical significance, the potential for an ontological interpretation. Moreover, in light of the principles of the gradation of being and the degrees of human perfection in Transcendent Philosophy, the relationship between the individual and the collective need not be restricted merely to specific commonality. From this perspective, all human individuals are manifestations and theophanies of different degrees of the human reality, which finds its highest manifestation in the Perfect Human. Accordingly, the life, development, or harm experienced by each individual can be analyzed in relation to the entire system of human reality, because every individual possesses within himself a share and manifestation of that reality.

Therefore, in Transcendent Philosophy, the relationship between the individual and the collective is not merely a social or conventional relation; rather, it is rooted in the existential structure of the human being. Accordingly, the verse under discussion may be understood as referring to a profound connection between the sanctity of the individual human being and the shared reality of humanity. In a Sadrian reading, this connection can be explicated both at the level of the specific reality and, at a broader horizon, through the various degrees in which the complete human reality is manifested.

References

The Holy Qur'an.

Abū al-Futuh Rāzī, H. (١٩٨٧ AD/١٤٠٨ AH). *Rawḍ al-Jinān wa Rūḥ al-Jinān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. (Nasih, M; Yahhaqi, M. Eds). Mashhad: Astan Quds.

Ālūsī, M. (١٩٩٤ AD/١٤١٥ AH). *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-'Azīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī*. ('Atiyyah, A. Ed). Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

- Amid, H. (۱۹۹۶ AD/۱۳۷۰ SH). *Amid Dictionary*. Tehran: Amir Kabir.
- Ashtiyani, J. (۱۹۹۱ AD/۱۳۷۰ SH). *Commentary on Qaysari's Introduction to the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. Tehran: Amir Kabir.
- Ebrahimi Dinani, Gh. (۱۹۹۳ AD/۱۳۷۲ SH). *General Philosophical Principles in Islamic Philosophy*. Tehran: Research Institute.
- Haeiri Yazdi, M. (۱۹۸۲ AD/۱۳۶۱ SH). *The Pyramid of Being*. Tehran: Institute for Cultural Studies and Research.
- Ḥaqqī Brūsawī, I. (n.d.). *Tafsir Rūḥ al-Bayān*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Hasanzadeh Amoli, H. (۱۹۹۲ AD/۱۳۷۱). *‘Uyūn Masā’il al-Nafs*. Tehran: Sepehr.
- Ibn Kathīr, I. (۱۹۹۸ AD/۱۴۱۹ AH). *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Aẓīm*. (Shams al-Din, M. Ed). Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Publications of Muhammad ‘Ali Baydun.
- Ibn Manzūr. (۱۹۸۷ AD/۱۴۰۸ AH). *Lisān al-‘Arab al-Muḥīṭ*. (al-‘Alayili, A. Intro). Beirut: Dar al-Jil and Dar Lisan al-‘Arab.
- Ibn Sina, A. (۱۹۹۶ AD/۱۳۷۰ SH). *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*. Qom: Nashr al-Balaghah.
- Jenkins, R. (۲۰۰۲ AD/۱۳۸۱ SH). *Social Identity*. (Yarahmadi, T. Trans). Tehran: Shirazeh.
- Kashani, F. (n.d.). *Manhaj al-Ṣādiqīn fī Ilzām al-Mukhālifīn*. Tehran: Islamiyyah Book Store.
- Khansari, M. (۱۹۸۹ AD/۱۳۶۸ SH). *Formal Logic*. Tehran: Agah.
- Ma‘luf, L. (۱۹۸۸ AD/۱۳۶۷ SH). *al-Munjid fī al-Lughah*. Tehran: Meraj.
- Meybudi, A. (۱۹۹۲ AD/۱۳۷۱ SH). *Kashf al-Asrār wa ‘Uddat al-Abrār* (known as the *Tafsir of Khajjah ‘Abd Allah Ansari*). Tehran: Amir Kabir.
- Montazeri Moqaddam, M. (۲۰۱۷ AD/۱۳۹۶ SH). *The Science of Logic* (۲ & ۳). Qom: Center for Management of Islamic Seminaries.
- Mughnīyah, M. (۲۰۰۳ AD/۱۴۲۴ AH). *al-Tafsir al-Kāshif*. Qom: Dar al-Kitab al-Islami.
- Qarashi Banabi, A. (۱۹۹۲ AD/۱۳۷۱ SH). *Qāmūs Qur’an*. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
- Qarashi Banabi, A. (۱۹۹۶ AD/۱۳۷۰ SH). *Tafsir Aḥsan al-Ḥadīth*. Tehran: Be’tah Foundation.
- Qummī, A. (۱۹۶۰ AD/۱۳۸۰ AH). *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*. (Ilahi Qomshaei, M. Trans). Tehran: Osveh.
- Qutb, S. (۲۰۰۴ AD/۱۴۲۰ AH). *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’an*. Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Rashīd Riḍā, M. (۱۹۹۳ AD/۱۴۱۴ AH). *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Ḥakīm (al-Manār)*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifah.
- Sabzevari, H. (۱۹۸۳ AD/۱۳۶۲ SH). *Asrār al-Ḥikam*. (Sha‘rani, A. Intro). Tehran: Ketabforushi-ye Islamiyyah.

- Sabzevari, M. (١٩٨٥ AD/١٤٠٦ AH). *al-Jadīd fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-Majīd*. Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf lil-Matbu'at.
- Sadeqi Tehrani, M. (١٩٨٥ AD/١٤٠٦ AH). *al-Furqān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah*. Qom: Islamic Culture.
- Shirazi, S. (Mulla Sadra). (١٩٨٩ AD/١٣٦٨ SH). *al-Hikmah al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Aṣfār al-'Aqlīyyah al-Arba'ah*. Qom: Manshurat Mustafa.
- Shirazi, S. (Mulla Sadra). (٢٠٠١ AD/١٣٨٠ SH). *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād*. (Ashtiyani, J. Intro). Qom: Office of Islamic Propagation.
- Shirazi, S. (Mulla Sadra). (٢٠٠٣ AD/١٣٨٢ SH). *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbīyyah fī al-Manāhij al-Sulūkīyyah*. (Ashtiyani, J. Intro). Qom: Boostan Ketab.
- Suyūṭī, A. (١٩٨٣ AD/١٤٠٤ AH). *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*. Qom: Public Library of Ayatollah al-'Uzma Mar'ashi Najafi.
- Ṭabarī, M. (١٩٩١ AD/١٤١٢ AH). *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an (Tafsīr Ṭabarī)*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah.
- Ṭabāṭabā'ī, M. (١٩٤٨ AD/١٣٦٨ AH). *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*. (Motahhari, M. Foot). Tehran: Sadra.
- Ṭabāṭabā'ī, M. (١٩٥٤ AD/١٣٧٤ AH). *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. (Musavi Hamadani, M. Trans). Qom: Islamic Publications Office.
- Ṭabāṭabā'ī, M. (n.d.). *Nihāyat al-Hikmah*. Qom: Islamic Publishing Institute.
- Ṭabrisī, F. (١٩٥٢ AD/١٣٧٢ AH). *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. (Rasuli, H; Yazdi, F. Ed). Tehran: Naser Khosro.
- Tha'labī, A. (٢٠٠١ AD/١٤٢٢ AH). *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān (Tafsīr Tha'labī)*. (Ibn 'Āshūr, A. Res). Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi.
- Ṭurayhī, F. (١٩٥٥ AD/١٣٧٥ AH). *Majma' al-Baḥrayn*. (Husayni Ashkewari, A. Ed). Tehran: Murtazavi.
- Ṭūsī, M. (n.d.). *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. ('Amili, A. Ed). Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi.
- Zamakhsharī, M. (١٩٨٦ AD/١٤٠٧ AH). *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl*. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi.