

**‘ALLĀMAH ṬABĀṬABĀ’Ī’S
VIEW ON NAFS AL-AMR:
AN ONTOLOGICAL BASIS
FOR THE CORRESPONDENCE
OF PROPOSITION**

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Abstract: One of the most prevalent critics of correspondence theory of truth is the scope it contains. The objection is that the proponents of this theory could solely apply their theory of truth to some limited domain—which has something to correspond to—like science, but they would fail for other domain— which has no something to correspond to— like morality. In this study, I aim to defend the theory of correspondence by considering the concept of *nafs al-amr* advanced by ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī as a basis to which every proposition reaches its correspondence. As a realist, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī whose view holds the fundamentality of existence, excludes everything other than existence. Hence, in his epistemology every proposition would correspond to reality if and only if it refers to the existence. He notices that human concepts which will eventually form a proposition unveil some different parts of reality. They occasionally indicate something external, like table, something internal, like logical concepts, even something non-existential, like nothingness. The concept of *nafs al-amr* as subsistence in general includes the subsistence of every concept and serves as an ontological basis to which a proposition gets its correspondence.

Keywords: *nafs al-amr*, correspondence, proposition, *i’tibari*, and existence

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v20i1.795>

Introduction

IN GENERAL, Islamic philosophers typically define truth as the conformity of proposition with reality.¹ Thus, they hold the correspondence theory of truth. Their conclusion is drawn from their close examination on the very problem of knowledge which in fact lies in the gap between the knower (*‘ālim*) and the known (*ma‘lūm*). Our acquired knowledge (*‘ilm al-ḥusūlī*) of any external object, fire, for an instance, is knowledge through mediation. When we know the fire, it is not the fire itself which directly comes to our mind, because if it is so, it will burn us right away when we perceive it. However, what comes to us is simply its conceptual form which we have abstracted from the external reality. Thus, what we call knowledge is, here, the very conceptual form of the object which tells the thing it refers in the external reality. If we go back to definition of knowledge, we would not wonder that knowledge, according to Islamic philosophers’ common view, in this sense is defined as the presence of the form (*sūrah*) of the object to our mind.² To this kind of knowledge, our mind can immediately realize three different main points which are the knower (*‘ālim*), the known (*ma‘lūm*), and the conceptual form (*‘ilm*). Therefore, in both our conceptual and propositional knowledge, it is clear that we would not immediately know the object itself, but we know it through a mediation which is our mind. In addition, this kind of knowledge would necessitate a distance between the knower and the known. Finally, we can draw from this that the main problem of knowledge is the conformity with the reality. This is why most of Islamic philosophers hold that the truth is the correspondence of proposition to reality.

Nonetheless, the correspondence theory of truth cannot easily be separated from its critical objections raised by many

¹Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *The Theory of Knowledge: An Islamic Perspective* (Kuala Lumpur: Amir Research and Cultural Centre, 2011), 152-153.

²What is meant by the knowledge here is acquired knowledge, or knowledge by mediation. See Gulam Ridā al-Fayyādī, *al-Madkhal ila Naẓariyyat al-Ma‘rifah Durusun Tambḥidīyyatun* (Qum: Markāz al-Sirāz Liltāīfi wa al-Ḥakīki, 2013), 54.

philosophers and scholars.³ One of the most common objections deals with the scope it embraces. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī said that this definition is only true in some cases, but not in all cases.⁴ The correspondence could be only applied if the proposition has reality outside ourselves, so we have something to correspond to. In this case, people can directly affirm the correspondence of proposition whose subject and predicate can be accessed through our sense perception such as “the ball is round” or “the fire is hot”. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to reach the correspondence for some other kinds of proposition which we could not immediately access by our sense perception, like ethical, legal, and metaphysical propositions. In metaphysic, we would frequently find the propositions like “the soul is eternal”, or “intellect is an immaterial substance”. In ethic, we would often find the propositions like “to be a murderer is bad” or “to help other people is good”. In this way, it would be hard for us to identify the correspondence of such propositions, for example how can we assure the correspondence of the eternality of soul? And how do we justify that it corresponds to reality? Besides, there are many types of propositions which are respectively in need of different considerations in determining that each of them is in accordance with reality.

The correspondence theory of truth, as we have mentioned above, is theory stating that proposition is true if and only if it has its conformity with reality. Thus, if the proposition has no

³In *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, there are three kinds of objection. The first, the correspondence theory has limited scope, so it cannot embrace every domain of science. The second, it is too obvious because we frequently use it in our daily life as an idiomatic one so that it doesn't deserve the label of “theory” because there is not theoretical weight behind it. The third, it is too obscure about the idea of the resemblance relation to the reality. See the correspondence theory of truth, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth-correspondence/#5>. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī mentioned that the objection to this definition of truth is that it cannot include every proposition that human has such as logical propositions and non-existential propositions. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Durūsun Falsafīyyatun fi Sharḥ al-Manẓumah*, (Lebanon: Shams al-Mashreq For The Culturān Services, 1994), 197.

⁴Muṭahharī, *The Theory*, 153.

something to correspond to because its subject and predicate refer nothing to external reality, like in logic “being contradictory is logical error” or “having no cause causes no effect”, the correspondence theory would be useless in this case for it cannot be applied to a proposition which has no an ontological basis for its correspondence. This is why the correspondence theory is true in some cases, but not for all cases.

However, if we still insist on sticking to this theory while the problem is remaining unsolved, there will be the following epistemological consequences:

1. Some of our propositions cannot be corresponded to reality.
2. Some of our knowledge cannot be completely justified for justification in terms of correspondence theory requires something to correspond to, but since there are some proposition refers nothing to reality, the justification would not be needed.
3. If we define knowledge as justified true belief, our knowledge of some propositions which have no an ontological basis is actually not knowledge since we cannot justify them.

To cope with this problem, the need of an ontological basis which can embrace every proposition that human mind has is necessary. In other words, we need something which is capable of showing an ontological status of a proposition so that we can demonstrate its correspondence.

In Islamic philosophy, the idea of the ontological basis for correspondence of proposition is called as *nafs al-amr*. There are some different views on what *nafs al-amr* is and among the philosophers who devote themselves to deal with it are Naṣr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, ‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī, Sabzawari, and ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī.⁵ Nevertheless, I would just like to discuss ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s view on *nafs al-amr*. I consider two reasons why I take his view on *nafs al-amr*. First, he is a philosopher whose writings bridge the gap between the new philosophical ideas,

⁵Sayyid Kamāl Haydarī, *Madkhal ilā Manāḥij al-Ma’rifah ‘Inda al-Islāmiyyin*, (Qum: Dār Farāqīd, 1426 H), 101-155.

and the old one.⁶ Second, he represented the most recent view on *nafs al-amr* and criticized the previous one, like al-Ṭūsī's view.

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī explains *nafs al-amr* in his two works which are *bidāyat al-ḥikmah* and *nihāyat al-ḥikmah* and he elaborates his view on it in a very brief way. So, any further elaboration is taken from its commentaries on those two works. However, from the simple searching through journals and books on internet within the scope of Indonesian, English, and Arabic sources, I have not found any sources or work which specifically and particularly discuss about *nafs al-amr* in ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s perspective. Nonetheless, there are some works which generally view on *nafs al-amr* such as *an introduction to contemporary Islamic philosophy* written by Mohammad Fana’i Eshkevari. This work describes general picture of philosophers’ life and thought and ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī is one of them. *Nafs al-amr* is discussed under the topic of truth and it only says that what renders propositions factual is called *nafs al-amr*.

At any rate, before we deal with ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s view on *nafs al-amr*, it is really necessary to briefly expound his ontological view because it is in harmony with his epistemology.⁷ In other words, his view on ontology gives a very significant impact on his epistemological framework. Here, I would at least elaborate his two notions on ontology –which is closely related to the discussion of *nafs al-amr*– that are the fundamentality of existence and external and mental existence. Then, finally I would elucidate the concept of *nafs al-amr* in ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s view.

The Fundamentality of Existence

This discussion is initially started in Islamic philosophical discourse. It is common view among the students of Islamic philosophy that the view of fundamentality of existence is frequently attributed to Peripatetic and the view of fundamentality of essence or quiddity is usually ascribed to

⁶Ali Akbar Rashad, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Transcendent Philosophy Islam-West Philosophical Dialogue* (Tehran: SIPRIN Publication, 1999), 84.

⁷Mohammad Fannai Eshkevari, *An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy*, (London: MIU Press, 2012), 58.

Illuminationist (*Isbrāqīyyūn*).⁸ Nonetheless, Mullā Ṣadrā is the first philosopher who theoretically deals with it and puts it in the beginning of ontological discussion.⁹ He is the one attributing the fundamentality of existence to Peripatetic and The fundamentality of quiddity to Illuminationist. Hence, before Mullā Ṣadrā, the intensive discourse on it would not be found.

The aim of this discussion is to determine which one is to be fundamental reality. In this case, there are some of terminologies which are in need to clarify such as fundamentality (*aṣālah*), derivative (*i'tibari*), existence (*wujūd*), and quiddity (*māhiyah*). M.T Misbah Yazdi says that fundamentality literally means being a root, which is used in philosophical term as the opposite of derivative.¹⁰ 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Rifā'ī explain that fundamentality means something real and objective in external reality which essentially gives an external effect while the derivative means the opposite that has no essentially external effect. Existence is here grasped as objective reality while quiddity is the answer of the question of what it is, like human, table, chair and so forth. So, if we say the fundamentality of existence, it means that the existence is the fundamental, real, and objective reality which has essentially external effect. Yet, if we conclusively say that it is derivative, it means that it is not real, something imaginary and has no essentially external effect.

The question of which one is actually to be fundamental reality between existence and quiddity is basically originated from the things we abstract from the external reality. When we perceive one thing outside ourselves, we will abstract two different kinds of concept, namely existence and quiddity. For example, when we perceive table, we will abstract its quiddity that is table, and its existence that it exists. Then we raise a question which one is to be fundamental reality? Is it existence or quiddity? The answer of this question will finally determine

⁸ 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Rifā'ī, *Durusun Fī Falsafah al-Islāmīyyah Sharḥun Tawdīkīh li Kitābi Bidāyah al-Ḥikmah* (Teheran: al-Huda, 2000), 168.

⁹ M.T. Misbah Yazdi, *Philosophical Instructions An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Institutes of Global Cultural Studies (IGCS) Binghamton University), 213.

¹⁰ Ibid., 215-216.

what framework that we will use to see the reality.¹¹ However, we should not forget that the reality we will construct, in this case, is through the consideration of existence and quiddity.

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī uses various arguments to prove that existence is the one which is absolutely fundamental reality, but I think there is no need to mention all of them here. So, it is sufficient for me to provide only two arguments to prove that existence is fundamental.

The first argument: quiddity exists in two modes of existence which are external and mental. When it exists externally, it possess a certain effect or quality, like fire which burns thing to the ground, but when it exists mentally, it doesn’t possess such quality, like fire which doesn’t burn in our mind. If quiddity is fundamental, it should have no differences in effect and property whether it exists externally or mentally since the fundamental means having some real effect or property. If the quiddity is not the fundamental, so the fundamentality belongs to existence which has no any differences whether it exists externally or mentally.¹²

The second argument: quiddity is the source of multiplicity and differences. Quiddity is, as what have been clearly mentioned above, the answer of the question “what is it?” and every time when we question it, it will definitely have different answer, such as what is it? It is table or color or human or book or anything. Each of them is individually different. However, when we form an assertion or a judgment, we will unite between two different quiddities, such as the book is white. The book is conceptually and essentially different from the white. The book has its own meaning either does the white. If the quiddity is fundamental and existence is derivative, we will not be able to form a judgment since judgment or assertion inevitably entails the unity between the subject and the predicate either conceptually or factually. The proposition of “the book is white” is possible because it is in reality united in terms of existence. Thus, the fundamentality of quiddity causes the total differences

¹¹‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Bidāyah al-Hikmah* (Qum: Intishārāt Dār al-Fikr), 19.

¹²Ibid., 20-21.

among things, so there is no any unity in the reality. However, what we actually find in the reality is not the case. There is absolutely unity in the reality and the unity is in the existence. When we say the book is white, it is because we know the fact that the existence of book and white are united. Therefore, what becomes the fundamental reality is existence.

It is clear that from the two arguments above, the fundamentality belongs to existence. It means that reality will be translated in terms of existence. In other words, the reality is nothing but existence. Thus when we say reality, it simply means existence.

The Mental existence

The discussion of mental existence is included in one of the category of existence. We can closely look at the existence through some different considerations. Every consideration we make will convey some different part of reality. For example, if we look at the existence in terms of its need to a cause, we can, as a result, divide existence into necessary (*wājib*) and contingent (*mumkin*). However, if we think of the existence in terms of time, we can consequently divide existence into priority (*taqaddum*) and posteriority (*ta'akhur*). This categorization relies intimately on which aspect of existence we consider. One of this categorization is mental and external existence. This type of categorization is considered through the presence of effect in existence. In other words, we can identify two different states of existence that are existence which has some effect and existence which has no some effect. The former is external existence and the latter is mental existence.

The discussion of mental existence deals with two problems that are ontological and epistemological problems. Its ontological problem lies in the very mental existence which is part of reality which has no effect while its epistemological problem lies exactly in the content of mental existence which is our knowledge which tells something about external object. 'Abd al-Jabār al-Rifā'ī explains that some philosophers affirm the idea of mental existence, while some others negate it. Those who affirm the idea of mental existence, they have two kinds of

form, the first is a view stating that mental existence is the very quiddities coming into our mind, and the second is a view stating that mental existence is only the mirror, or the shadow of quiddities.¹³ Those who deny the mental existence, they have another concept on how we view our knowledge. They hold that knowledge is a kind of relation (*idāfah*) between the knower and the known. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī himself strongly believes in the mental existence and argues that the mental existence is nothing but the quiddity itself.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is not necessary for me to come in such details. Hence, it is sufficient to mention two things that are the proof of mental existence and the view which states that mental existence is quiddity itself which comes through our mind.

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī says that Islamic philosophers hold that the nature of our knowledge of external object is the quiddity of the object in mental existence.¹⁵ So, our knowledge in mental existence is nothing but quiddity itself which tells the reality it refers. When perceive a stone before us, we will have the concept of stone. The stone in external reality carries some effects like heaviness, solidness, size and so forth, while the stone in mental existence carries no such effects. Thus, the stone as a quiddity has two different kinds of existential status, which are its external existence which has some effects and its mental existence which has no effect. What is meant by mental existence according to philosophers, here, is the quiddity of things which exists in mental existence, such as the quiddity of stone in our mind.¹⁶

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī provides three following arguments to prove the mental existence:

1. In propositional knowledge, we make an affirmative judgment regarding things in reality. A judgment simply

¹³Abd Jabbār al-Rifā'ī, *Mabādi al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah*, al-Juz' al-Awwal (Bayrūt: Dār al-Hadī, 2001), 279-280.

¹⁴Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Bidāyah al-Hikmah*, 28-29.

¹⁵Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Sharḥ al-Manẓūmah Muḥāḍarāh* (Irāq: Muassasah al-Irāqīyyah), 53.

¹⁶'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Nihāyah al-Hikmah al-Mujallad al-Awwal* (Qum: Muassasah Amūzashī, 2000), 145.

means to posit some attribute or property to a thing, like “the book is red”. In such proposition, we attribute “red” to “book”. To posit something is possible only if the subject and the predicate exist, such as book as a material object and red as a color. Nonetheless, we have an affirmative judgment whose subject doesn’t exist in external reality, like in logic “the law of non-contradiction is different from the law of contrary” or “the sea of milk is an illusion”. The affirmation is inevitably impossible to non-existence because we couldn’t be possible to posit anything to non-existence. The subject of the sea of milk or the law of non-contradiction doesn’t exist in reality. Hence, it must exist somewhere else and it exists in mental existence.

2. Concept is divided into two universal and particular. Universal concept is a concept which can be applied to many instances like the concept of flower which we can apply to jasmine, rose, and lotus while particular concept is a concept which can be only applied to a single instance, like the concept of “java” which refers to a province in Indonesia. Universal concept doesn’t exist in external reality, like flowers all we can find in external reality is just rose or jasmine. However, the universality as it is doesn’t exist in external reality because it only contains particular or individual entity. In addition, we have no doubt about the existence of such concept. Hence, it must exist somewhere else and it exists in mental existence.
3. The third argument related to the concept of simplicity. We can see that an entity in external reality consists of complex elements, like wall consisting of brick, paint, semen, and so on. Nevertheless, our reason can separate such complex components to be a simple thing, such as “whiteness”, and “solidness”. This kind of existence doesn’t exist in external reality, but it exists in mental existence.

By providing the above proofs, now we are at least able to affirm the mental existence. It also has been clearly said that those who hold the affirmation of mental existence can have different view on how we look at it. Some believe in the theory of mirror, a view stating that our knowledge is the mirror of

quiddity while some others believe that what comes through our mind is the quiddity itself.

The view of the mirror or the shadow of quiddity is frequently attributed to some old thinkers (*qudama*). Sabzawari in his *Ta'liq* towards *Asfar al-Arba'ah* and al-Lāhijī in *Shawāriq al-Ilham* attribute this view on them.¹⁷ This view maintains that what we get from perceiving an entity in external reality is the mirror of quiddity, not the vey quiddity. This mirror functions to reflect something it refers in external reality, like the portrait of horse which refers to the external horse. Kamāl Haydarī explains that their reason to be sure of this view is because they argue that when we know something, it is impossible to get the existence of the known to our mind.¹⁸

Nonetheless, this mirror theory is refuted by 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī for it will lead us to skepticism.¹⁹ Surely, to know doesn't mean that the very existence of the known comes to our mind because it is intuitively refuted. To put it in other way, when we perceive the table right before our eyes, it is not the existence of table that comes to our mind, but it is the concept of table. The concept of table is the quiddity of table for the quiddity is the answer of the question what it is. So, the only way we know things in external object—in terms of acquired knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥusūli*)—is to be aware of its quiddity. However, if we refuse it, there is nothing left than we get into skepticism.²⁰

Finally, we can conclude a few things here. First, if we consider existence in terms of effect, we can divide it into two categories, namely external and mental existence. External existence is an existence which carries some effects in it while mental existence is an existence which doesn't carry some

¹⁷Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Nihāyah al-Hikmah*, 61.

¹⁸Kamāl Haydarī, *Madkhal Ila Manābij al-Ma'rifaḥ 'Inda al-Islāmiyyah*, (Qum: Dār Farāqud, 1426 H). 31 -32.

¹⁹Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Bidāyah al-Hikmah*, 29.

²⁰Ṭabāṭabā'ī as a realist he believes that there is reality which exists outside of mind and man can achieve knowledge of it. Hence, He rejected skepticism a few times especially in his notable works, namely *Miẓan volume I* and *Uṣul Falsafah wa al-Manhaj al-wāqī'ī*.

effects in it. Second, our acquired knowledge of external reality is got through its quiddity and theory of mirror is refuted.

Nafs al-Amr

We have previously laid the existence as the basis of reality that when we say anything about reality, it simply means existence. In addition, the existence can be considered through some different categories and one of them is the category of external and mental existence. External existence is the existence which carries some effect in it while mental existence is the existence which carries no effect. Now, we will be coming in the main discussion of this paper which is *nafs al-amr* where every concept or proposition gets its correspondence.

Nafs al-amr is a concept which is used to get some factuality of every proposition in reality. Thus, when we say a particular proposition is correct, it means it corresponds to *nafs al-amr*. Muhammad Legenhausen translated *nafs al-amr* into English to be “the case in itself” while Ali Qara’i in the translation of *bidayat al-hikmah* translated it into English to be “the domain of factuality”.²¹ Both of them actually refer to the reality in which every proposition refers to. As for the reality it refers, there are some different views among Islamic philosophers. Among them are Naṣr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, Sabzawari, and ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī.

Naṣr al-Dīn Ṭūsī identified *nafs al-amr* with an immaterial intellect (*‘aql mujarrad*) or active intellect (*‘aql fa’āl*).²² This intellect is not grasped as our faculty of soul which can think and perceive universal concepts, but it is a peculiar intellect from which concept or intelligible is originated. In other words, it is a source of intelligible. So, in this sense, when we say that a single proposition corresponds to *nafs al-amr*, what it simply means is that it is in conformity with the active intellect.

Nonetheless, Ṭūsī’s view on *nafs al-amr* gets its critical objection from ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī. He said that it is also a

²¹See Yazdi, *Philosophical Instructions*, 158-159 and *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics* (London: ICAS Press, 2003). 14-15

²² Sayyid Kamāl Haydarī, *Madkhal Ila Manābij al-Ma’rifah ‘Inda al-Islāmiyyah*, (Qum: Dār Farāqud, 1426 H), 102.

judgment which is in need of correspondence.²³ To put it in other way, a judgment stating that proposition is true if it corresponds to active intellect also necessitates another correspondence. How can we assure that a particular proposition corresponds to active intellect? If we say that it is another active intellect, then the same question keeps going and it will be infinite regress.

On the other hand, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains that what is actually called as *nafs al-amr* is subsistence (*thubūt*) in general which encompasses the subsistence of existence, quiddity, and derivative (*i'tibār*) concepts.²⁴ Here, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, by providing such definition of *nafs al-amr*, broadens the meaning of extension (*misdaq*) or reality where human concepts refer to. He is aware that the root of the problem lies, in this case, in the meaning of reality itself. If we have strictly narrow sense of reality, for instance reality of outside our mind, our conceptual knowledge will lose its value because it has no basis for its subsistence. Conversely, if we look at that the reality itself includes mental and external, correspondence theory will have its basis. In fact, his notion of subsistence in general can embrace all the concept that human has even non-existential concept. Now, we will see how this kind of subsistence can include such concepts.

We know that after determining the fundamentality of existence, there is nothing, but existence. It is a basis of the subsistence of every entity and completely covers all of them. Thus, it subsists by itself. As for quiddities, they reach its subsistence through existence for they cannot independently exist whether in mental or external reality, except through it. Now, how do derivative concepts get its subsistence? Actually it carries some different meanings. To grasp this concept, Kamāl Haydarī divides universal concept into two kinds which are whatish concept which is well known as the first concept and derivative concept which is best known as the secondary

²³Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Bidāyat al-Hikmah*, 21.

²⁴Ibid., 20.

concept.²⁵ The latter is also divided into two kinds which are logical and philosophical. This conceptual division is considerably made by looking at the process we get through and its references to the reality they signify. The first concept is the first concept which we immediately acquire through our mind when we look at a single entity in external reality. This concept refers to some independent entity outside our mind, like, book, pen, guitar, and so on. The logical concept is the second concept which we abstract from the first such as universality abstracted from the concept of book which can be applied to many instances. The reality it refers only lies in human mind. The philosophical concept is also the second concept which we get from the comparison between two concepts such as the concept of cause and effect abstracted from the relation between the concept of book and its author. This kind of concept is occurred in the mind, but we attribute it to external object as a property, like the property of effect for the book. Here, what it means about the subsistence which includes derivative concepts is the second concepts which are logical and philosophical. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Rifā‘ī also mentioned some other meanings of derivative as the following:²⁶

1. Derivative is occasionally used in the opposite of fundamentality, like what we have discussed above in the fundamentality of existence. In this case, derivative means reality which carries no effect in it.
2. In the second sense, derivative means abstracted concepts from external reality. It doesn’t exist independently in the external reality, but the abstracting source in which we acquire these concepts is in external reality.
3. Derivative can also be used to describe concepts things which abstracted to fill human needs both individually and communally. The concept of ethic like good and bad and any social concept are included in this category.

²⁵ Sayyid Kamāl Haydarī, *Sharḥ Bidāyah al-Ḥikmah li al-‘Allāmah al-Faylasūf al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā‘ī* (Qum: Dār Farāqīd, 2010), 272.

²⁶ Al-Rifā‘ī, *Durusun fi Falsafah*, 643-644.

Human concepts which are constructed by human mind can variously touch some different parts of reality. That is why our mind divides it into many categories to classify these concepts according to properties they have. Sometimes, it describes external reality, but it can also signify something in human mind. These concepts must stand in the path of existence to have its subsistence, so we can conceptually trace back its ontological basis. However, we have pointed it out that the reality is existence, so the measure to determine the subsistence of such concepts is the existence. In addition, we have seen the division of concepts and how it obtains its subsistence. Now, we will be seeing this in terms of proposition.

In this case, 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Rifā'ī divides proposition based on the existence of its subject and predicate into three parts:²⁷

1. External Proposition (*ḵbārījīyyah*): proposition whose subject and predicate indicate the existence of external reality, such as “the table is red” and “human is walking”. The table and human as the subject are the instances of external reality and so are the predicate of red and walking.
2. Mental proposition (*dhibniyyah*): proposition which its subject refers to something in our mind, while its predicate can refer to both external and mental existence, such as “human is species” and “universal concept is either accidental or essential”. “Human” as the subject is external existent, but “universal concept” is mental existent, while both “species” and “universal concept” as the predicate are mental existents.
3. True proposition (*ṣādiqah*): proposition which has no correspondence both in external and mental reality, such as “the absence of cause causes no effect” and “non-existence is the contradictory of existence”. “The absence of the cause” as the subject corresponds nothing to reality, so does the predicate.

In external proposition, the subsistence of proposition obtains its subsistence in the external existence, so probably we can easily affirm it because its ontological status is clear. What

²⁷Ibid., 208-209.

we need is just to see whether or not the predicate truly belongs the subject, but where to correspond to is obviously plain. In mental proposition, we need to analyze our logical structure of thinking because it tells something about mental reality. However, how can we carry out the correspondence theory to true proposition which has no reference either in mental and external? ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī says that this kind of proposition obtains its subsistence following the real existence (*al-manjūd al-ḥaqīqiyah*).²⁸ This kind of subsistence is called as *al-thubūt bi tab’*. It is an attribution by mediation such as the attribution of substantial movement which allows the attribution of accidental movement. In other words, the attribution of movement to accidents follows the attribution of movement to substance. Thus, the non-existential proposition like “the absence of cause causes no effect” gets its subsistence following to its existential proposition, “every cause necessitates effect”. In this case, we call that such proposition corresponds to *nafs al-amr*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of *nafs al-amr* serves as an ontological basis for propositions. When a particular proposition is true, it means that it corresponds to *nafs al-amr*. *Nafs al-amr* is, according to ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, a subsistence in general which embraces various ontological states of concept and proposition. It allows every human concept obtain its value to be in conformity with reality. The subsistence of a particular proposition depends on its relation to what it refers. It has been clearly mentioned about the categorization of concept and proposition. The universal concept is divided into two kinds which are whatish, and derivative concept which in turn is also divided into two kinds which are logical and philosophical. While proposition is divided into three parts which are external, mental, and true proposition. Each of them touches different parts of reality. Any proposition is subsisted as true if its reference is based on existence. For true proposition which

²⁸Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Nihāyah al-Hikmah*, 69.

signifies non-existential thing, it has its subsistence through its basis on existential proposition.

Nafs al-amr which is defined as subsistence in general which covers the subsistence of existence, quiddity, and derivative concepts broadens the meaning of fact or reality. Hence, it will embrace any ontological state of proposition so that theory of correspondence will have its basis for any kind of proposition.

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