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Articles

William C. Chittick

On the Teleology of Perception

S. M. Khamenei

Sense Perception

Oliver Leaman

Mulla Sadra, Perception and Knowledge by Presence

M. Araki

The Nature and Stages of Perception in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy

Cécile Bonmariage

How is it possible to see Ghouls (Ghûl) in the Desert?

G. E. Dinani

Unification of Intelligent and Intelligible

I. Kalin

Knowledge as Appropriation vs. Knowledge as Reprehension

S. Pazouki

Sufi Knowledge in Mulla Sadra

E. Wolf-Gazo

Berkeley, Whitehead, Sadra: From Sense Impressions to Intuition

On the Teleology of Perception

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Abstract

Mulla Sadra's primary philosophical project is to map out the path of achieving the soul's perfection. His several well-known contributions to the philosophical vocabulary, such as the "systematic Ambiguity" (tashkik) of existence and "substantial motion," were all developed to explain how the soul enters into this world through corporealization and departs from it by way spiritualization. His remarkably detailed investigations of the modalities of afterworldly experience simply illustrate his desire to explain the full range of possibilities that are open to the human soul. In order to grasp the role of perception in his overall project, it is necessary to understand the end toward which perception is directed and the nature of its final fruition. The soul perceives by nature, so much so that perception enters into its very definition. In and of themselves, however, the varieties of perception possessed by the animal soul do

not suffice for the achievement of human perfection, though perception remains an essential attribute of the soul. Human efforts to cleanse perception of distortion play a key role in the soul's unfolding. The most important concept here is probably *tajrid*, "disengagement", which designates the act of freeing perception from its entrancement by embodied and materialised forms and training it to focus on the forms in themselves, that is, the forms in their intellectual existence, where they are innately disengaged and "separate" (*mufariq*) from every trace of material existence. The final goal is the transmutation of perception through the full development of the acquired intellect. Then the soul will be able to perceive the forms for what they truly are on all planes of existence, including the endless worlds of the afterlife.

In modern philosophy, the word perception typically designates physical sensation. Earlier philosophers often dealt with the concept in much broader terms, as would be expected from the original meaning of Latin word *percipio*. So also the Muslim philosophers spoke of perception—using the Arabic word *idrâk*—in an exceedingly broad sense. For them, perception denotes apprehension and obtaining knowledge by any agent, from animals to God, and on any level, from physical sensation to intellectual vision.

In the philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ, the concept of perception plays a crucial role both in the explanation of the nature of existence and in the analysis of the goal of human life. This follows naturally from the fact that his philosophy is oriented toward "psychology" in the pre-modern sense. In other words, he attempts to provide an overview of the human self in all its ramifications and to map out the way for the self to achieve the highest of its own possibilities, possibilities that are rooted in its ability to perceive.

Perception

At the end of the first of the four books of the *Asfâr*, Sadrâ provides definitions for some thirty words that are employed in discussing the modalities of knowledge (*`ilm*). He lists "perception" as the first of these words. In defining it, he begins with its literal sense. As any Arabic dictionary will tell us, it has a variety of meanings, such as attaining, reaching, arriving, catching, grasping, comprehending, and discerning. Sadrâ writes,

Idrâk is encounter [*liqâ'*] and arrival [*wusûl*]. When the intellectual potency arrives at the quiddity of the intelligible and attains it, this is its perception in this respect. In philosophy, the meaning intended by the word coincides with the literal meaning. Or rather, true perception and encounter is only this encounter, that is, perception by knowledge. As for bodily encounter, it is not really an encounter. (*Asfâr* 3:507, 323.31)¹

Before going any further, we need to allude to some of the issues raised by this definition. Like all Muslim philosophers, Sadrâ analyzes the human self in terms of faculties. However, the Arabic word for "faculty" is *quwwa*, which is also the word for "potentiality" as contrasted with "actuality." Given that every faculty is at the same time a potentiality, *quwwa* can better be translated as "potency." Its dual meaning is especially important in Sadrâ's writings, because his analysis of the human soul depends precisely on seeing it as a grand potentiality that encompasses every other potentiality designated by the names of the faculties.

In this definition of perception, Sadrâ means by the "intellectual potency" the power and potential of the self to know something. When this power reaches an object, it moves from potentiality to actuality. The degree of actuality that it achieves is one of the most basic issues that needs to be addressed.

In the definition, Sadrâ says that through perception the intellectual potency arrives at the "quiddity" (or "whatness") of a thing. In other words, when perception takes place, we come to know "what" the object of perception is. The fact that perception entails knowing a thing's quiddity is emphasized in the second word that Sadrâ defines in his list of technical terms—shu`ûr or "awareness." Awareness, he says, is to perceive something without "achieving fixity" (istithbât), that is, without ascertaining the thing's whatness.² He adds, "Awareness is the first level of the arrival of knowledge at the intellectual potency. It is, as it were, a shaky perception. That is why it is not said about God that He is 'aware' of a thing" (3:508, 323.34), though it is said about Him that He "perceives" things.

The thing that is perceived is an "intelligible," that is, an object known to intelligence. The intelligible is called the "form" (sûra) of the thing, in the Aristotelian sense of the word form. Hence it is contrasted with the thing's "matter" (mâdda), which is unintelligible in itself. The only things we can truly perceive and know are forms, not matter.

Finally, in this definition Sadrâ insists that true idrâk—that is true attainment, reaching, arrival, and encounter—pertains to knowledge and not to the body. This reminds us that real perception of things can only take place if an intelligent agent encounters an intelligible object. Every bodily attainment can only be fleeting and evanescent. So also, any modality of perception that is in any way sullied by the body's materiality will be deficient in certain basic ways, because the form will be obscured both by the means of perception and by the existential situation within which it is perceived.

Levels of Perception

In the same list of important terms, Sadrâ provides another definition that can help us understand the final goal of perception. This term is dhihn or "mind." He writes, "The mind is the soul's potency to acquire knowledges that have not yet been attained" (3:515, 325.35).

In keeping with the general Graeco-Islamic view of things, Sadrâ understands the human soul or self to have many powers and faculties and many corresponding levels of actualization, beginning with the plant and animal levels. The soul actualizes itself by perceiving what it has the potential to perceive. The soul's goal in its existence is to move from potential knowing to actual knowing. When its potential knowledge becomes fully actual, it is no longer called a "soul" but rather an "intellect," or an "intellect in act." In Sadrâ's view, then, the human soul's potential to achieve actual knowledge is called the "mind."

The mind comes to know things through perception. "Perception" is simply the name given to the act whereby the soul comes to know, whatever the object may be. If we look at perception from the side of the perceiver, it has four basic varieties. In each case, the mind encounters the "form" of a thing—that is, its quiddity or intelligible reality—not its matter. However, the circumstances are different in each sort of encounter. These circumstances pertain both to the instrument that perceives and to the modality of the perceptible's existence.

The first level of perception is sense-perception (hiss). At this level the perceived form exists in matter, and the perceiver finds the form in modes of material embodiment. These modes are basically the Aristotelian accidents, such as quantity, quality, time, place, and situation. In its external existence as a thing, the form is inseparable from such accidental attributes, and it is precisely these attributes that allow us to perceive it with the senses. As for the matter through which the form exists, it can never be perceived in itself, because it represents the furthest and darkest reaches of existence, a realm that remains almost entirely unintelligible.

The second level of perception is imagination (khayâl, takhayyul), which is the perception of a sensory thing, along with all its characteristics and qualities, in the same way that it is perceived by the senses. Unlike sense-perception, however, imagination perceives the thing whether or not the thing's matter is present to the senses.

The third level is wahm. The medievals translated this Arabic word as "estimatio," but modern scholars have reached no consensus as to what exactly it means and how it can be appropriately rendered into English. I translate it as "sense-intuition" in order to suggest its intermediary status between intellect and the senses. According to Sadrâ, it is the perception of an intelligible meaning while attributing the meaning to a particular, sensory thing. In sense-intuition, the soul perceives the universal, but within a particular, rather than in the universal itself.

The highest level is intellection (ta`aqqul), which is the perception of something in respect of its quiddity alone, not in respect of anything else.³

What distinguishes the levels of perception boils down to the degree of "disengagement" (tajarrud), a term of fundamental importance in Sadrâ's writings. Tajarrud is another word concerning whose translation modern scholars have not agreed. Most commonly, it has been translated as "abstraction," a word that thoroughly obscures its basic meaning.⁴ A "disengaged" thing is not only free and quit of matter, but it also dwells in a domain of intensified existence and consciousness. In Islamic philosophy in general, few concepts have been more significant than "disengagement" for describing the ultimate goal of the human quest for perfection. In the purest sense, disengagement is an attribute of God, the Necessary Existence in itself, since the Necessary Existence has no attachment to or dependence upon anything other than itself. More specifically, disengagement is the attribute of the intellect that is able to see things as they actually are, that is, without their entanglement in the obscurities of imagination and sense-perception.⁵ It is also the essential attribute of the forms or quiddities that the intellect perceives.

According to Sadrâ, the four levels of perception need to be differentiated in terms of the degree of disengagement reached by the perceptibles.

The first level, that of sense-perception, can be understood in terms of three conditions (shart) that determine its nature: First, the matter is present at the instrument of perception, which is to say that the soul perceives the thing externally in its material embodiment. Second, the thing's form is concealed by the perceived qualities and characteristics. Third, the perceived thing is a particular, not a universal.

On the second level—imagination—the perceptibles are disengaged from the first of the three conditions, material embodiment, because there is no need for the external presence of the thing.

On the third level, sense-intuition's perceptibles are disengaged both from material embodiment and from the object's specific qualities and characteristics.

On the final level, the intelligibles are disengaged from all three conditions, because the intellect perceives only universals.⁶

Sadrâ concludes his discussion of the levels of perception by saying that the four levels can be reduced to three, because imagination and sense-intuition both pertain to the intermediary domain between intellect and the senses.⁷

Levels of Existence

The three basic levels of perception—sense-perception, imagination, and intellection—correspond exactly with the three worlds that are found in the external realm. These are the world of bodies, the world of imagination, and the world of intellect. Discussion of levels of perception is inseparable from discussion of levels of existence. If there were only one level of existence, there would be only one sort of perception. And indeed, this is precisely the view of much of modern philosophy. Reducing perception to sensation follows from the elimination of the imaginal and spiritual domains from serious consideration.

In talk of levels of existence, what is meant by "existence" is possible existence, or formal and delimited existence, not Necessary Existence. Existence in itself—Arabic *wujûd*—is the ultimate reality of all things, and, as such, it lies beyond the worlds and beyond the levels. In itself, existence remains forever unattainable, imperceptible, and unknowable. However, it deploys itself in degrees of strength and weakness. We come to know it indirectly by perceiving it in various conditioned modalities. The higher the realm of existence, the more it is disengaged from matter and from the conditions and characteristics of things. Correspondingly, the perception that pertains to the higher levels is more intense and more direct.

Each level of existence is typically called a "world" (*`âlam*), and the sum total of the levels is known simply as "the world," or, as we can also translate it, "the cosmos" or "the universe." Discussion of worlds is plainly a discussion of knowledge and perception. In Arabic, this point is brought home by the word *`âlam* itself. It derives from the same root as the word for knowledge, *`ilm*. The lexicographers tell us that its primary designation of "world" is "that by means of which one knows." Thus, the "world" as a whole is a realm that is defined and designated by the fact that it can be an object of knowledge. So also, each world or level within the whole is defined by the type of perception that makes it the object of knowledge. The fact that there are three basic modes of perception derives from the fact there are three basic knowable realms.

One of Sadrâ's more detailed exposition of the worlds comes in a chapter of the *Asfâr* called "On the divisions of the sciences," that is, the "knowledges," or the modalities of knowing. There he explains that the reality of knowledge goes back to "formal existence," which is the realm of existence within which forms appear to perception. He then says that formal existence has three divisions—complete, sufficient, and deficient. Complete existence is the realm of the intelligible forms and the disengaged intellects. Sufficient existence is the realm of souls, also called "the world of imagination." Deficient existence is the domain of the sensory forms, which are "the forms that endure through matter and are attached to it" (3:501, 322.10).

Having described the three levels of formal existence, Sadrâ then speaks of a fourth level, that of bodily matter, which undergoes transformation and renewal at every instant. Because bodily matter is immersed in nonexistence, possibility, contingency, and darkness, it is unknowable, even if it is called by the name "existence." As examples Sadrâ cites time and movement.⁸

In explaining the differentiation among these four domains, Sadrâ tells us that they differ in terms of the intensity and weakness of their existence. The stronger a thing's modality of existence, the more disengaged it is from the transient world of matter. The more disengaged it is, the more intelligible it is, because it is more purely itself. Each of the realms lower than the world of completeness and intellect is immersed to some degree in the muddiness and obscurity brought about by multiplicity, dispersion, separation, and confusion.⁹

Presence

The key to understanding Sadrâ's concept of perception is his concept of existence. It needs to be kept in mind that the English word existence is not an adequate translation of the Arabic *wujûd*, nor will the situation be any better if use the term "being" instead of "existence." One important dimension of the discussion of *wujûd* that is immediately lost to sight in translation is the fact that the word itself demands consciousness and perception. The literal meaning of *wujûd* is "finding" and "being found," and this meaning was much stressed in the writings of Ibn al-'Arabî and his followers, with whom Sadrâ was thoroughly familiar and from whom he often quotes.

However, it is not only the Sufi theoreticians who insisted that existence demands consciousness and awareness. Even a straight Hellenophile philosopher like Afdal al-Dîn Kâshânî (d. ca. 610/1213), who had no connection with his younger contemporary Ibn al-'Arabî and who wrote most of his works in Persian, makes use of this double significance of the word *wujûd* to divide existence into two basic realms.¹⁰ The first of these realms is "being" (*hastî*) without consciousness and awareness. The second is being along with "finding" (*yâft*). Moreover, Bâbâ Afdal uses Persian *yâft* or "finding" not only as a synonym for *wujûd* in its higher sense, but also as a synonym for perception (*idrâk*). He explains that the realm of mere being appears to us through inanimate objects, while the world of finding and perception appears in the realm of souls and intellects.

Once we remember that perception and finding are already implicit in the word *wujûd* as employed by many of the philosophers, we see that any attempt to reduce existence to mere "being there" seems obtuse. Rather, existence in the full sense is not only that which is there, but also that which finds what is there. The more intensely something is there, the more intensely it finds. The fullest degree of existence is found in the fullest degree of presence, perception, and consciousness.

In a short gloss on the meaning of perception, Sadrâ says, "Perception is the existence of the perceptible for the perceiver" (*al-idrâk 'ibâra 'an wujûd al-mudrak li'l-mudrik*).¹¹ In the light of the dual meaning of the word *wujûd*, this can also be translated as, "Perception is the perceptible's being found by the perceiver." In several similar glosses on the word, Sadrâ often replaces the word *wujûd* with the word "presence" (*hudûr*) or "witnessing" (*mushâda*),¹² both of which are terms with long histories that can throw light on how he understands the nature.¹³

"Presence" is the opposite of "absence" (*ghayba*), and it is practically a synonym of "witnessing." Sadrâ sometimes divides the universe into two basic "perceptual" (*idrâkî*) domains, that is, the world of life and knowledge, which is the realm of intellects and souls, and the world of death and ignorance, which is the realm of inanimate bodies.¹⁴ (These are of course equivalent to Bâbâ Afdal's "finding" and "being.") When Sadrâ makes this division, he is likely to employ the Koranic terms for these two realms, that is, the "absent" (*ghayb*) and the "witnessed" (*shahâda*). The "absent" is everything that we do not ordinarily perceive. The "witnessed" is everything present to our senses.

When we ask if it is possible to perceive and witness the "absent" world, the philosophers will reply that of course it is. We do so precisely by perceiving those things that the senses are unable to grasp. However, in order truly to perceive the realm of absent things, we need to strengthen our perceptual faculties and to learn how to see through the darkness of the corporeal and sensory realm into the domain that lies beyond it. The absent realm must come to exist for us and to be found by us. In other words, it must come to be present in the self and be witnessed by it.

Perception, then, is a mode of existence, or it is existence itself, which is precisely "presence"—being there and being found. Perception is the existence of the perceived object within the perceiver. It follows that in perceiving both the external and the internal worlds, the degree of perception coincides with the degree of existence. To perceive something more directly is to participate in existence more fully.

Mental Existence

When Sadrâ says that perception is for the perceptible "to exist" or "to be found" within the perceiver, he clearly does not mean that the thing exists in the same mode internally as it does externally. He explains that when the mind perceives something, it comes from potentiality to actuality, and this actuality of the mind is the presence of the thing's intelligible form in the mind. This presence is called "mental existence" (*wujûd dhihnî*), an expression that we can also translate as "mental finding." However, as long as the soul remains the soul and has not become an intellect in act, the soul's mode of perception and existence is weak, and everything that is perceived and exists within the soul is even weaker. Sadrâ writes that because of this weakness, the specific acts and traces that are ordered upon the soul and come into existence from it have the utmost weakness of existence. Or rather, the existence of the intellective and imaginal forms that come into existence from it are shadows and apparitions of the external existences that emerge from the Creator, even if the quiddity is preserved in the two existences. Hence the traces that are ordered upon the quiddity in the external realm are not ordered upon it in respect of [its existence in the soul]. . . .

This existence of a thing upon which traces are not ordered while it emerges from the soul in this modality of manifestation is named "mental" and "shadow" existence. The other, upon which traces are ordered, is named "external" and "entified" existence. (1:266, 65.27)

In short, the things perceived by sense-perception exist with a true existence in the mind, but their mental existence is a shadow of their external existence. However, as the soul gradually actualizes its potency to know the higher realms, the objects that it perceives undergo a corresponding increase in intensity. At the stage of true intellective perception, the intellect that perceives is identical in existence and consciousness with the forms that are its perceptibles.

The Potency of the Soul

Perception takes place within the soul—*nafs*—a word that means literally "self." Discussion of self or soul begins at the level of plants and extends to the highest reaches of human perfection. The human soul can be described most simply as "all the potencies" (8:221, 777.31). By this Sadrâ means that the rational soul is "the one that perceives with all the perceptions attributed to the human potencies" (*ibid.*). The human soul, in other words, is pure potency, and as such it has no actuality. The actuality of the soul comes about through perception. When the soul perceives something, the thing comes to exist

within the soul in the appropriate mode of existence, and the soul itself comes to actualize in itself the corresponding mode of mental existence.

The goal of human existence is to bring the soul's potentiality into actuality. At the beginning of its creation, the human self is empty of the knowledge of things. In contrast, other things are created with actualized knowledge of things, and this fixes them in their specific identities. Since the human soul is created knowing nothing, it has the potential to know everything. It is this characteristic alone that allows it to be transmuted into an intellect in act.

God created the human spirit empty of the realization of things within it and [empty] of the knowledge of things. . . . Had He not created the human spirit for the sake of the knowledge of things as they are, the spirit would necessarily be, at the first of its created disposition [fitra], one of those things in act, and it would not be empty of all. . . .

Although at first . . . the human spirit is a sheer potency, empty of the intelligibles, nonetheless it is proper for it to know the realities and become conjoined [ittisâl] with all of them. It follows that true knowledge [ʿirfân] of God, of His spiritual realm [malakût], and of His signs [âyat] is the final goal. . . . Knowledge is the first and the last, the origin and final goal. (3:515-16, 326.2)15

Perception actualizes a potential knowledge of the soul. Actuality demands activity, and Sadrâ tells us that those philosophers who have spoken of perception as the soul's becoming imprinted with the perceptibles have missed the real nature of perception, because perception is much closer to activity and actuality than to receptivity.

The relation of the perceived form to the knowing essence is the relation of the made thing [maj`ûl] to the maker [jâ`il], not the relation of indwelling [hulûl] or imprinting [intibâ`]. (8:251, 785.32)

Relative to its imaginal and sensory perceptibles, the soul is more similar to an innovating actor [al-fâ`il al-mubdi`] than to a receptive dwelling place [al-mahall al-qâbil]. (1:287, 70.35)

In his discussion of vision, Sadrâ provides a specific example of how the soul comes into act through perception. After rejecting the theories of the natural scientists, the mathematicians, and Suhrawardî, he writes,

Vision takes place through the configuring of a form similar to the thing, by God's power, from the side of the world of the soulish, spiritual realm. The form comes to be disengaged from the external matter and present to the perceiving soul. The form endures through the soul just as an act endures through its agent, not as something received endures through its receptacle. (8:179-80, 768.8)

Having said this, Sadrâ extends the argument, showing that vision is one instance of the general rule in perception, which is that the perceiver comes to be unified with the perceptible. This is the same principle that he demonstrated previously under the rubric of "the unification of the intellect and the intelligible" (ittihâd al-`aql wa'l-ma`qûl), which he considers one of the cornerstones of his philosophy. He is especially concerned to prove this principle because Avicenna and his followers had denied it.

What we demonstrated concerning the unification of the intellect and the intelligible applies to all sensory, imaginal, and sense-intuitive perceptions. We called attention to this issue in the discussions of the intellect and the intelligible. We said that sense-perception in an unqualified sense is not as is well

known among the generality of sages, who say that sensation disengages the very form of the sensible thing from its matter and meets it along with its surrounding accidents; and, in the same way, that imagination disengages the form with a greater disengagement¹⁶. . . . Rather, perception in an unqualified sense is obtained only from the Bestower's¹⁷ effusion of another, luminous, perceptual form through which perception and awareness are obtained. It is this form that is sensate in act and sensible in act. As for the existence of the form in matter, it is neither sense-perception nor a sensible. However, it is among those things that prepare the way for the effusion of that form. (8:81, 768.10)

Thus, the perceptible is a form that is effused upon the soul by God. Investigating Sadrâ's elucidations of the theological implications of this statement would demand another study, so here it is sufficient to understand that God's effusion of the form actualizes the soul's potential to know. In coming forth from potency to act, the soul gains a mode of mental existence that coincides with the external existence of the perceived thing. The known thing is precisely the intellectual or imaginal form, and the form's presence to the soul is its mental existence within the soul, an existence that is identical with the existence of the soul itself, since there is no plurality of existences in the soul. Rather, the soul's consciousness of the form is the same as the form's existence for the soul. In mental existence, perception and existence are one thing. It follows that, as Sadrâ frequently tells us, the perceived object is always of the same kind as the perceiver. Through touch, taste, and vision the soul perceives objects that are of the same kind as itself, for these objects are the forms of the touched, the tasted, and the seen things actualized in the soul.¹⁸

When Sadrâ says that the soul is "all the potencies," he means that the human self is an unlimited potential for knowing. The soul's good lies in its actualization of its potential, and this potential cannot be circumscribed. The soul, as Aristotle says at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, yearns for omniscience, because its potential is precisely to perceive all things.¹⁹ But all things can be found only in pure intellect, where they subsist as intellectual forms. Thus the highest stage of perception is for the soul to become an intellect. In other words, the soul comes to perceive in the fullness of its own capacity, and it comes to exist in the fullness of actual finding. Once it realizes the station of full perception and full existence, all things are present to it in act. This is to say that all things are present to the intellect in the clarity of their real, intellectual existence, not in the obscurity of their sensory and imaginal existence.

When the soul becomes an intellect, it becomes all things. Right now also, it is unified with everything that it has made present in its own essence—I mean the forms of those things, not their entities that are external to it. This does not require that the soul be compounded of those external affairs, nor of those forms. Rather, the more perfect the soul becomes, the more it becomes a gathering of things and the more it gains in the intensity of its simplicity, because the truly simple thing is all things, as has been demonstrated. (Asfâr 8:253, 786.16)

It needs to be remembered that for Sadrâ, existence is primary, and quiddity is secondary. The quiddities are what Ibn al-`Arabî calls the "fixed entities," and they are "fixed" because they never change. What changes is formal existence, which undergoes intensification and weakening. The levels of perception are differentiated by the weakness or strength of the existence to which they correspond. In Sadrâ's words, only when existence reaches the level of "the simple intellect, which is entirely disengaged from the world of bodies and quantities, does it become all the intelligibles and all the things, in a manner more excellent and more eminent than the things are in themselves" (3:373, 293.32).

At each level of perception, the soul disengages perceptible things from matter and the other conditions of the ontological levels. Even sense perception necessarily disengages the perceptibles, because the external matter does not enter into the soul. But, when the soul disengages the perceptibles, simultaneously it becomes disengaged from the conditions of the lower worlds.. The movement from sense-perception, to imagination, and then to intellection is a movement from frail existence and weak perception to strong existence and intense finding. Every time the soul actualizes its own potential through knowing, it gains in the strength of its existence, and when it becomes an intellect in act, it has gained full and everlasting existence.

Sadrâ is critical of the expositions of the earlier philosophers concerning the meaning of "disengagement." His rejection of their positions helps explain why "abstraction" is not a proper way to translate the term into English.²⁰ He writes,

The meaning of disengagement in intellection and other perception is not as is well-known—that it is the elimination of certain extraneous things [zawâ'id]. Nor is it that the soul stands still while the perceptibles are transferred from their material substrate to sensation, from sensation to imagination, and from it to the intellect. Rather, the perceiver and the perceptible become disengaged together. Together they withdraw from one existence to another existence. Together they are transferred from one configuration to another configuration and from one world to another world, until the soul becomes an intellect, an intellecter, and an intelligible in act, after it had been potential in all this. (Asfâr 3:366, 292.1)

Contrary to what was thought by some of the earlier philosophers, disengagement does not imply a rejection of the body. This is because the essential reality of the body is formal, not material. The more the soul is strengthened, the more the body's intellective form is intensified and the more its existence is consolidated. Sadrâ writes,

Among the things that are necessary to know is that here [in this world] the human is the totality of soul and body. These two, despite their diversity in waystation, are two existent things that exist through one existence. It is as if the two are one thing possessing two sides. One of the sides is altering and extinguishing, and it is like the branch. The other side is fixed and subsistent, and it is like the root. The more the soul becomes perfect in its existence, the more the body becomes limpid and subtle. It becomes more intense in conjunction with the soul, and the unification between the two becomes stronger and more intense. Finally, when intellective existence comes about, they become one thing without difference.

The affair is not as is supposed by the majority—that, when the soul's this-worldly existence alters into the afterworldly existence, the soul withdraws from the body and becomes as if naked, throwing off its clothes. This is because they suppose that the natural body—which the soul governs and acts upon freely by an essential governance and a primary free-activity—is this inanimate flesh that is thrown down after death, but it is not like this. Rather, this dead flesh is outside the substrate of free-activity and governance. It is like a heaviness and a dregs that drops down and is expelled from the act of nature, like filths and other such things. Or, it is like the hair, fur, horns, and hooves that are obtained by nature external to her essence for external purposes. This is like a house. A man builds it not because of existence, but to repel heat and cold, and for the other things without which it is impossible to live in this world. But, human life does not pervade the house. (9:98, 846.8)²¹

Conclusion

We have now discussed ten basic points that should be sufficient to clarify Sadrâ's overall depiction of how perception moves from the lowest to the highest level by a process of disengagement. These can be summarized as follows:

Perception is to gain knowledge of a thing by encountering its quiddity, which is its form or intelligible reality.

There are four basic levels on which perception occurs, though these can be reduced to three: the senses, imagination, and intellect.

The levels of perception are defined by the intensity of perception's disengagement from matter.

The three basic perceptual levels correspond exactly with the three basic worlds that make up the cosmos.

The reality of existence is inseparable from the reality of knowledge and perception, so the levels of existence are identical with the levels of perception.

The mental existence of the perceptibles is a shadow of the external existence of the things, except in intellectual perception, where intellect and the intelligibles have become one through an existence that is permanent and everlasting.

The human soul comes into existence empty of knowledge and actuality, so it has the potential to perceive all things. Perception is the soul's actuality and activity.

The more intensely the soul perceives, the more intensely it exists. The more intensely it exists, the more it takes on the attribute of the simple reality of existence that gives rise to all things.

The soul's disengagement of things through perception is at once its own disengagement through the intensification of existence and consciousness.

The soul's disengagement does not involve shucking off the body, but rather transfiguration of the body and all bodily perceptibles.

In conclusion, we can see that for Sadrâ, the final goal of perception is for the human self to see things as they really are. This can only occur when the soul actualizes its unlimited potential to know. This potential is the ability to perceive all things dwelling on all levels of formal existence. The potential can be turned into actuality through a gradual disentanglement, disengagement, and separation (*mufâraqa*) from all embodiment and materiality and a return to the intelligible reality of the soul, which is nothing but the intellect in act, or the intelligence that perceives all things as they actually are in existence itself. This does not mean that the soul will no longer have any connection with the things of the external world. Rather, it means that it will have come to perceive things clearly, wherever they may be the levels of existence. It will no longer fall into the nearsightedness of perceiving the forms as anchored to the various locations in which they become manifest to the perceiver, locations in which the forms appear through the dark glass of sense-perception and imagination. Having perceived self and all things for what they are and having found itself to be one with all things, the soul attains to its final goal.

Notes:

1-I provide page references both for the nine-volume edition of the *Asfâr* (Tabâtabâ'î edition, which began appearing in Qom in 1378/1958-59), as given on the CD-Rom "*Nûr al-Hikma 2*" (Qum: Computer Research Center of Islamic Science; and for the lithograph edition (Tehran: 1282/1865-66); in the latter case, I also provide the line number. Since the lithograph edition is only partially paginated, I follow the pagination established by M. Ibrâhîm Ayatî in *Fihrist-i abwâb wa fusûl-i kitâb-i Asfâr* (Tehran: Dânishgâh-i Tihân, 1340/1961). The latter has also been published in S. H. Nasr, *Yâd-nâma-yi Mullâ Sadrâ* (Tehran: Dânishgâh-i Tihân, 1340/1961), pp. 63-106.

2-Sadrâ does not use the term quiddity here, but he does allude to it by his use of the term *istithbât*, or "achieving fixity." This word derives from the same root as *thâbita*, "fixed," as in the term *`ayn thâbita*, the "fixed entity" made famous by Ibn al-`Arabî and often discussed by Sadrâ. In both Ibn al-`Arabî and Sadrâ the term is taken as a synonym of quiddity.

3-Asfâr 3:360-61, 290.27.

4-The basic problem with "abstraction" is that the word totally loses the sense of the intensification of existence and reality that takes place as the degree of disengagement increases. Cf. my discussion of the word in *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

5-"As for sensory perceptions, they are contaminated by ignorance. Attaining them is mixed with failure to find, for sense-perception attains only the outward side of things and the molds of the quiddities, without their realities and their inward sides." (Asfâr 3:367, 292.14)

6-Asfâr 3:361-62, 290-91.

7-Asfâr 3:362, 291.

8-For a division of the worlds into three in terms of the soul's three "perceptual configurations" (*nasha'ât idrâkiyya*), see Asfâr 9:21, 826.18. In discussing these four domains of existence, Sadrâ continues by explaining that they are four worlds, and each is one of the divisions of knowledge, because at each level the known forms pertain to a different domain of existence. Then he describes the sorts of "possible perceptibles" that pertain to each while also clarifying what he means by dividing the first three levels into complete, sufficient, and deficient: "The first sort of perceptible is 'complete' in existence and knowability. These are the intellects and the intelligibles. Because of the intensity of their existence, luminosity, and limpidness, they are quit of bodies, apparitions, and numbers. Despite their manyness and their plentifulness, they exist through one, all-gathering existence. . . . The second is the world of celestial souls, disengaged apparitions, and quantitative images. These are 'sufficient' through their essence and their intellectual origins because, by means of their conjunction with the world of divine forms that are complete in existence, their deficiencies are mended and they are affiliated with them. Third is the world of sensory souls, the lower spiritual realm [*al-malakût al-asfal*], and all forms sensible in act and perceived by the tools of awareness and the organs, which also belong to the lower spiritual realm. These are deficient in existence as long as they pertain to this world. However, they may be elevated beyond this world and become disengaged from it—as far as the world of disengaged apparitions—by following along with the human soul's climb to it. Fourth is the world of bodily matters and their forms, which are transient, disappearing, transforming, and undergoing generation and corruption." (3:502-3, 322.12)

9-In one passage, Sadrâ explains that the obscurations from which people need to disengage themselves in order to achieve the intellection of a thing are "alien accidents" (*a`râd gharîba*). He writes, "The alien accidents from which the human needs to disengage himself in intellecting a thing are not the quiddities and meanings of the things, since there is no contradiction between intellecting a thing and intellecting another attribute along with it. In the same way, the [alien accidents] from which one must disengage oneself in imagining something are not their imagined forms, since there is no contradiction between imagining something and imagining another guise [*hay'a*] along with it. Rather, the preventer of some perceptions is certain modalities of the existent things. This preventer is dark and accompanied by nonexistences that veil their own absent affairs from the perceptual means. An example is being [*kawn*]

in matter, because the situational matter necessitates the veiling of the form from perception unconditionally. So also is being in sensation and imagination; these also may prevent intellectual perception, because they also are a quantitative existence, even if the quantity [miqdâr] is disengaged from matter. But, the intelligible's existence is not quantitative existence, because it is disengaged from the two realms of being and stands beyond the two worlds." (Asfâr 3:363, 291.9)

10- Lest we think that Bâbâ Afdal's works, mostly written in Persian, were unknown to Mullâ Sadrâ, we should remember that Sadrâ translated one of them into Arabic. This is Iksîr al-`ârîfîn, a translation of Jâwidân-nâma. See the introduction to my edition and translation of Iksîr al-`ârîfîn, forthcoming.

11- 8:40, 732.31; cf. 8:165, 764.3; 8:251, 785.31.

12- For example: "Perception is the presence of the perceptible for the perceiver" (4:137, 377.6). "Perception consists of the existence of something for something else and its presence for it" (6:146, 635.11). "Perception consists of the existence of a form present at an existent thing whose existence belongs to itself" (8:163, 764.3). "Perception is nothing but the soul's regard [iltifât] toward and its witnessing the perceptible" (6:162, 573.22).

13- The discussion of "presence" in the context of perception is directly related to the issue of two sorts of knowledge often discussed in later Islamic philosophy—"presential" (hudûrî) and "obtained" (husûlî). The fact that "presence" is synonymous with "witnessing" is typically ignored in the secondary literature, and this helps obscure the connection with the whole issue of "witnessing" in the writings of Ibn al-`Arabî and his followers. For them, witnessing is synonymous with "unveiling" (kashf) and "direct seeing" (i'yân). Moreover, it is also a synonym of wujûd when this term is used to designate the highest possibilities of human perception, as in the common expression ahl al-kashf wa'l-wujûd, "the folk of unveiling and finding." On Ibn al-`Arabî's use of these terms, see my Sufi Path of Knowledge (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

14- He goes on to point out that these two designations—the absent and the witnessed— pertain to our limited, this-worldly point of view, in which the intellect has not been actualized in its full splendor. In actual fact, he says, the afterworld is more intense in its existence than is this world, and everything more intense in existence is also more intense in presence, witnessing, and manifestation. "Every stratum of the Gardens that is more intense in quittance from this cosmos and greater in disengagement from and elevation beyond matter is more intense in manifestation and greater in gathering" (6:152, 571.20).

15- One might object that the human soul is not in fact a "pure potentiality," because it is born with instincts or innate knowledge. I think Sadrâ would reply by reminding us that what we call by names such as "instincts" do not pertain to the human soul, but rather to the vegetal and animal souls. It is true that there can be no human soul without a vegetal and animal soul, but the discussion of unlimited potential pertains strictly to the human soul, not to other dimensions of human existence. The "humanness" of the human soul is precisely that point where human beings are indefinable and unfixed and, by that very fact, capable of becoming all things.

16- Compare this passage: "When the soul perceives the universal intelligibles, it witnesses them as intellectual, disengaged essences. But this is not by the soul's disengaging them and its extracting [intizâ'] their intelligible form from their sensory form—as is held by the majority of the sages. Rather, it takes place through a transferal that belongs to the soul—from the sensory, to the imaginal, to the

intelligible; and through a migration from this world to the afterworld, and then to what lies beyond it; and through a journey from the world of bodies to the world of images, then to the world of the intellects." (Asfâr 1:289-90, 71.18)

17- "Bestower" (wâhib) is one of the divine names. More usually, Sadrâ employs the phrase "Bestower of the forms" (wâhib al-suwar), and it is clearly this that he means here. This is a common philosophical designation for God, and it is equivalent to the Koranic divine name musawwir, "Form-giver."

18- Asfâr 1:387, 96.7; 8:160, 763.10; 8:253, 786.13; 8:301, 798.27.

19- The reason that the soul is potentially all things is that it is an image of existence per se. This, in philosophical terms, is the meaning of the saying, "God created Adam in His form [sûra]." Sadrâ employs some of the standard theological language in this explanation of the soul's nature: "The Author [al-bârî] is the creator of the existents, both the innovated and engendered [i.e., the spiritual and corporeal]. He created the human soul as an image [mithâl] of His Essence, His attributes, and His acts—for He is incomparable with any likeness [mithl], but not with an image. Thus He created the soul as an image of Him in essence, attributes, and acts, so that knowledge of it would be a ladder to knowledge of Him. He made the soul's essence disengaged from engendered beings, spatial confinements, and directions. He made it become the possessor of power, knowledge, desire, life, hearing, and seeing. He made it possessor of an empire similar to the empire of its Author. 'He creates what He' desires 'and chooses' [Koran 28:68] for the sake of what He desires. However, although the soul derives from the root of the spiritual realm, the world of power, and the mine of magnificence and ascendancy, it is weak in existence and endurance, because it has fallen into the levels of the descent, and it has intermediaries between it and its Author." (Asfâr 65.22, 1:265-66)

20- In criticizing the earlier philosophers on the issue of disengagement, Sadrâ no doubt wanted to avoid the severe criticism leveled against the concept by Ibn al-'Arabî. See, for example, Chittick, *Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 346-47. Compare the critique of the philosophical position quoted from Ibn al-'Arabî's disciple, Sadr al-Dîn Qûnawî, in Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 222.

21- Compare this passage: "In short, the state of the soul in the level of its disengagement is like the state of the external perceptible when it becomes a sensible thing, then an imaginalized thing, then an intelligible thing. It is said that every perception has a sort of disengagement, and that the levels of perception are disparate in respect of the levels of disengagement. The meaning of this is as we said: The disengagement of the perceptible does not consist of throwing off some of its attributes and leaving others. Rather, it consists of the alteration of the lower, more deficient existence into the higher, more eminent existence. In the same way, the human's disengagement and transferal from this world to the other is nothing but the alteration of the first configuration into a second configuration. So also, when the soul is perfected and it becomes an intellect in act, it is not that some of its potencies—like the sense-perceptual—are stripped from it and that others—like the intellective—remain. On the contrary, as the soul is perfected and its essence elevated, the other potencies are likewise perfected and elevated along with it." (Asfâr 9:99-100, 846.18)

Sense Perception

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Abstract

There are various philosophical doctrines on sense perception; including that of Mulla Sadra which is a marked one. Prior to expounding his doctrine we should get acquainted with its foundations (e.g. the connotation of the mind; categorising the perception under sense perception, imaginal perception and intellectual perception; classifying the knowledge into acquired knowledge and knowledge by presence; mental existence and mind's creativity). Though not a sensationalist, Mulla Sadra accepts direct involvement of sense in human knowledge. He regards "attention" and "awareness" as two important constituents of perception and believes that they are immaterial and include among the faculties of the soul. According to Mulla Sadra the knowledge is essentially the presence of the object (fact) for the mind. The senses (e.g. the sense of sight) project the form of the object on the nerves and material organs of body; immaterial soul, however, perceives it directly (through the knowledge by presence) and then saves it in its own memory called imagination. It will be saved there until the man attains acquired (ordinary) knowledge. The other important issue, interjected by Mulla Sadra is evolution of this perception into imaginal and, then intellectual, perceptions. It is in this point where he proves that there should be an existential union between "the perceiver and the perceived", or as he puts it, between "the intellect and the intelligence" or "the sensor and the sensed". While discussing these issues we have tried to prove the correspondence between the mind (subject) and the external world (object).

Mulla Sadra's doctrine of perception- including sense perception, imaginary perception, intellectual perception- begins from the external things and is based on what it is called "essential known".¹

Mulla Sadra regards all the stages of perception, which are a series of bodily and psychical (material and immaterial) phenomena as originated from the external material thing (object). Unlike some idealist philosophers, who regard the mental things as the main ground of perception, or rationalist philosophers, who believe in a priori knowns or Hegel who has taken the "idea" as origin, he believes in the correspondence between the mental knowledge (or the essential known) and the external object. He sees a relation between all perceptions of man and the external facts and says that our knowns and imaginations have their roots in our senses.

Sensualists maintain that in this point the sense perception reaches its end. Some of them mention awareness among the prerequisites of the truth of perception. According to Mulla Sadra, however, the reflection of the external objects on the senses is like the reflection of a picture in a mirror (or on a photographic plate); and it is too trivial to be called perception.

According to Mulla Sadra, the objects' influencing on our senses is only a part of perception; and naturally those, who like sensualists have not gone beyond the experience and sense, cannot (and should) not deny the perfect process of perception which occurs after sensing.

The man's senses (for instance the sense of sight) are too weak to reflect the external reality in the mind and, thus, produce the knowledge for us. The signals transmitted by the eye result are nothing other than a phantom (i.e. an dubious picture) and this cannot be deemed as the knowledge. According to Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the knowledge should be an explicit representative of the external reality, and the phantoms of the material objects are not so. In order to be representative, the knowledge and perception should deal with the quiddities of the external world. (The distinction between quiddity and form on the one hand and phantom, on the other hand, is that the form, if given mentally an external existence, will be same as the external thing; phantom, however, is not so).

The brain is also a processor like that of computer (for, it performs the man's commands, and is not able to do a duty out of the limits of data. It is not aware of what it does, and is not able to elaborate on the data, without being commanded); and without awareness there is no knowledge.

Therefore, though it is true that our senses are involved in perception and regarded as necessary promises for it, they are not sufficient. The material product of these senses does not constitute our perception; impressions and sensible forms in the brain cannot be automatically transmitted to the mind.²

When the senses have done their duties and the sensible forms have been gained in the nervous system and brain, it is time for the soul and mind to make- employing the important elements, i.e. intention and awareness- an immaterial phenomenon called perception or knowledge- or as Mulla Sadra puts it "illuminative form".³ According to Mulla Sadra the intention and awareness are two main parts of the knowledge and perception.

The "intention" is a psychological phenomenon and a psychical factor. Body and its material organs are not able to do it; it requires a "indivisible entity" (basit al-haqiqah) essence. None of the signals transmitted by the senses can be regarded as perception unless there is the intention of the perceiver involved. And actually, it can be seen that the man, while crossing the street, does not perceives what he sees or hears, except he pays attention to them.

Like the "intention", "awareness" also is not a material phenomenon. It is not in consistency with the matter and refers to the free-of-matter soul. For Mulla Sadra, the awareness is the presence (or recalling) of the quiddity of the external phenomenon or object or the main part of its essential aspects, in the mind. It is only the simple and immaterial soul which is deserved to be presented the self and other objects; for, the essential characteristic of the matter is its unawareness (or as Mulla Sadra says, its absence) of everything. According to the school of Mulla Sadra and his doctrine of "substantial motion" the matter is moving along a hypothetical and temporal line, and its past and future are "non-existing" and "non-existent" and ,thus, absent. Therefore, the matter is unaware of its own self; we do not mention the other things. For example, how can the retina or the cells of brain – on which is formed the picture and which are unaware even of their selves- be aware of an external fact? The awareness is, essentially, an existential and positive thing, therefore the material impressions of the brain- which consist of the existence and non- existence – cannot be regarded as the awareness and perception.

Therefore, awareness is same as the " presence" of the external object (or accidental known) in the man's mind and revealing or unveiling aspect, which Mulla Sadra regards as the prerequisites of the perception and knowledge.

As we know, this "awareness", "presence", "unveiling" are the exclusive prerequisites for the truth of every perception, and can be regarded as criteria to make distinction between the true perception of a healthy man and the false perception of a neuropath one (hallucinations), and as it is said the unveiling aspect is found only in the quiddities of external objects.

This intention and awareness of the soul is what Mulla Sadra calls the soul's " knowledge by presence" of its faculties and forms imprinted in them.

In the Islamic philosophy the knowledge is classified under two categories: acquired knowledge and knowledge by presence.

The acquired knowledge is gained mediately (i.e. through the five senses) and through mental stages. Though transmitting the quiddity of the objects to us, this knowledge cannot present the existential characteristics of them (e.g. heat, moisture...) and in the other words the acquired knowledge is an unproductive one.

The knowledge by presence is a knowledge, which reaches the inner self directly and immediately, and in the words, it is an intuitive perception. Unlike the acquired knowledge, this perception or knowledge contains the existential and external effects. Through union with it, man's (immaterial) soul penetrates it and becomes aware of the depth of its existence.

The man's knowledge by presence appears in different ways:

1-the perception of the self; the man's knowledge of the self is an intuitive perception resulted through the knowledge by presence. Even if all five senses are disabled, the man is able to perceive his own self and this is not inconsistent with the fact that he sometimes perceives his self through the acquired knowledge (e.g. through seeing or touching).

2-the man perceives all his inner faculties, mental impressions, perceptions, motivations, desires, sentiments, thoughts, mental acts, and mental ideas through the knowledge by presence (Asfar-155/6).

3-the perception of what is reflected in the five senses- which are our reporters- also is through the knowledge by presence. And they are understood and analyzed entirely in the mind and through the knowledge by presence, and the present article is aimed to indicate this point.

4-extraordinary methods for perception and acquisition of the knowledge, which is acquired through intuition, such as perceptions gained after ascetic exercises or during the sleep and dream.

In Mulla Sadra's philosophy the most important role in perception is played by the knowledge by presence. Intending to the products of its senses and becoming aware of the imprinted forms in those senses, the soul reconstructs the quiddity of the external object from them.

In addition to being able to be aware of what there proceeds in the senses, brain and its other internal faculties, the soul has creativity. Through this creativity, which is an essential aspect for it, the soul can construct any form and bring it into existence. The man's soul is said to be even capable to imagine impossible and non-existing things, and even the non-existence itself in its own mind, and maintain for them positive and negative propositions.⁴

Mulla Sadra likens the man, because of his creativity, in some ways, to God. He says the forms, brought into existence in the mind, have not been transmitted to it; but rather they have been produced in, and emanated out from, the shop of the mind. As he himself says: the forms are emanated from the mind and not transformed to it.⁵

Therefore- unlike the other Muslim philosophers- Mulla Sadra does not regard the perception as the "imprinting" of direct picture of the object in the mind, and as a passive and reflective process, but he considers it as the creation and production of the forms of objects through the mind's creativity and

activity. Unlike the Kant's categories, this creativity of the mind adds nothing to the data of sense, but it creates its counterpart in a mental (and not external) existence. It does not impose a special form or shape on its own percepts.

Thus, through reconstruction of the sensory impressions of quiddities and some secondary knowns- such as what Hume calls ideas- the mind gains acquired knowledge, and as Allamah Tabataba'i says: " it looks for "known", but it gains the knowledge".⁶

The role played by the sensible forms and the impressions of senses in the process of perception are only tools to make the soul and the mind prepared for making the acquired knowledge, i.e. creating a form and quiddity similar and corresponding to what there is in the external reality.

Having got acquainted with Mulla Sadra's doctrine of sense perception, now it is worthy to mention Mulla Sadra's other doctrine of perception. As we know Ibn-Sina and his followers regarded the "knowledge" as a "psychical quality". According to them- who followed Aristotle's doctrine- the mind or the perceptive faculty of the soul is as a tablet on which the percepts are imprinted, and –in technical terminology- supervened and saved on it. These supervened forms are as a "secondary perfection" for man and have nothing to do with his essence.⁷

Though agreed with Aristotle in classifying all things under 10 categories, and though in the first part of his philosophical career, like other philosophers he classified the knowledge under the psychical category (a sub-category of the quality) he seems to have disproved it later and thought that the knowledge could not be classified under any Aristotelian categories and it is like the "existence" a supra-categorical one.

He goes further and, mentioning the well-known doctrine of " the primacy of existence"- claims that the knowledge is a level of the levels of existence and a quality of its qualities. Therefore, unlike his predecessors, he does not regard the "knowledge" as supervening and the mind as being supervened, and even he thinks that the knowledge cannot be regarded as separate from the "knower".⁸

Mulla Sadra says the knowledge is not separate from the existence and the essence of the knower, but it is a part of her/his existence. It is why the man's existence attains perfect gradually as his knowledge and perceptions increase and his existential level upgrades, like a building which is completed through laying its bricks, that constitute that building altogether, on each other. Therefore, the knowledge and awareness are the primary, and not secondary, as Ibn- Sina and his followers think, perfection for the soul.

According to Mulla Sadra, when the man perceives something, in fact, he causes a quality to become actual and its going from secret potentiality to actuality; and actuality for the soul is as its perfection. Hence, upon every perception the man's soul becomes more perfect, and the substance of his soul- which is, according to the rule of the substantial motion, in becoming- speeds up in perfection; and in the other philosophical expression its matter receives another form.

It should be noted that there is an important distinction between the substantial motion of the soul and that of matter, and that distinction is the simplicity and indivisibility of the soul's identity (unlike the matter, which is divisible and composed of particles); and it is this simplicity of the soul and all other separates and immaterial things, which is equal with the awareness of one's self, situation, and surroundings.

Mulla Sadra's doctrine of the knowledge reaches its culmination in the rule of union of various levels: perception, perceiver, and perceived.

First- He says that the perception is nothing but the acquisition of the perceived for perceiver, and acquisition is, in fact, same as the existence, and the existence of everything is same as its self; therefore the perception and knowledge are same as the man's essential known and perceived. That is:

PERCEPTION (KNOWLEDGE) ó PERCEIVED (KNOWN)⁹

Second- as we know the perception or knowledge is same as the perceiver and knower and not separate from him, since the knowledge is same as the awareness of the self and awareness of the self is our selfness and essence. That is:

PERCEPTION (KNOWLEDGE) ó PERCEIVER¹⁰

Comparing these two equality we can obtain:

PERCEIVER ó PERCEIVED(OR ESSENTIAL KNOWN)

This doctrine of Mulla Sadra is a special case of his general doctrine of perceptions. As we have said the philosophers classified perceptions under three categories: sense perceptions, imaginary perceptions, and intellectual one. This doctrine, known as the doctrine of the union of the knowledge, knower and known, or as Mulla Sadra says: union of the intellect, intelligence and intelligible, considers the imagination and imagined as well as the intelligence, intelligible, and intellect as united as the sense, the sensor and the sensible. In the version, which speaks of intellect, the importance of this doctrine can be seen more easily.

Wherever there is a known, there is certainly a knowledge and wherever there is knowledge there is, of course, a knower. These three are correlated, and correlated ones are corresponding ones. Therefore, the knowledge, the knower, and the known are the same thing and nothing else, since they have one existence. By the perceived, " a quior a thing, which has perception " is not meant, and thus, it cannot be considered as separate from the perception and supervened on it. It is, in fact, same as the perception, since the perceived form and the perception itself are not separate from each other.

Therefore the sense and essential sensible and the sensing person or soul are altogether one reality which are regarded as three different things through mental positions and assumptions in philosophy; existentially, however, they are same and of the kind of existence and existent, existing through one existence. Mulla Sadra expresses this relation as the union between "the sensor and the sensible" and the union between "the intellect, the intelligence and intelligibles".

Here it can be understood that why as the knowledge and awareness increase man's spirit and existence develop and why the man's existence, while being stable and having an external identity, is constantly in an evolutionary motion; and why as Heraclitus says, " the fragrant of a flower cannot be smelt twice."

The rule of the union of perceiver, essential perceived and perception or union of the intelligence, intelligible, and intellect has a high place in Mulla Sadra's philosophy; and as he himself has said, he had demonstrated it at the age of 58 after long ascetics exercises and prayers. This doctrine is originally very

old and remained from the Illuminationist sages of the ancient Persia and Alexandrian philosophers, and particularly Porphyry had detailed it in his book. Ibn-Sina and his followers did not find a proof for it and thus disproved it. Mulla Sadra, however, could prove it through promises and demonstrations.

Evidently, by the "perceived" he does not mean the external object, but he intends a conception, received (or constructed) by the mind, i.e. "the essential known". Here, by the union, the union between two things, such as the union between the motion and the moving thing or the potentiality with actuality or the matter with the form, and not the union between the substance and accident, is intended.

The important issue, preoccupied many philosophers, which we have to discuss here, is the issue of correspondence between the mental concept (the subject) and the external object, or as Mulla Sadra puts it "the correspondence between the essential known and the accidental known".

The realist philosophers believe in the correspondence between the subject and the object. The other group of philosopher, however, could not find such a correspondence. These philosophers have regarded the mental concepts as separate from the external realities, or even considered the external realities as a picture of the mental concepts.

In the "Transcendent Theosophy", the correspondence between the object and the subject is regarded as the main pivot of philosophy without which there remains no issue for philosophy to discuss, and philosophy will turn to a verbal game.

As we saw, Mulla Sadra expresses the knowledge and perception as the "light" (which causes the objects to be exposed) and considers the perception and knowledge as and unveiling the external reality in the mind, and thus names it "unveiling aspect". In Mulla Sadra's school, the key for the correspondence between the subject and object and a firm link for their real relation is the union of the quiddities of "the essential known" and "the accidental known", since the quiddity of the thing in the external world and in the mind is same.

In acquired knowledge the man always deals with the quiddities; no one can claim that the acquired knowledge is the presence of the objects in the mind; this is only the quiddity and the limits of external entity which enter the mind.

The quiddity is the external reality which appears as a "mental existent". When it is said that the knowledge has an unveiling aspect, it means that it displays the external reality: a triangle is a triangle, and not a square, whether in the mind or in the external world. Therefore, the quiddity is both the knowledge and the known.

All the primary and secondary qualities, quantities and positions of the things – which are the manifestations of the quiddities of the things- can be perceived through the senses and thus the quiddity can be reached. It is why Mulla Sadra's school mentions this relation as the "saving the essentials"(inhifaz e dhatiyat) in both subjective and objective quiddities.

The only distinction, made between the external object and the mental object by Mulla Sadra, is distinction between their degrees of existence. The external existent has a more intense existence and a greater influence on the other objects (for instance fire burns and water wets); the mental existent, on the other hand, has a weak and shadow-like existence and lacks those influences. It is why the Mystics

believe that the willful men and jukis can grant the strength and influence to those mental existents and realize them in the external world.

From another point of view and following Muslim Mystics, Mulla Sadra regards the world of existents consisted of three world: sensory, imaginary, and intellectual. In another place, he divides it into four world: the corporeal world, the world of sensible souls and all sensible forms, the world of separate souls, and the world of intellects.

In these three or four worlds, the quiddities of the material existents are one, and in correspondence. In these worlds, despite the important distinctions between them, every quiddity, which is seen in the corporeal world, can be seen in other worlds as well, the degree of its existence is, however, different in these worlds.¹¹

Here a confirmation for the correspondence between the material accidental sensible and the ideal and mental essential sensible, and a link for the union between the quiddity of a thing in the external world and its quiddity in the world of mind and soul, even in the level of the essential intellects, could be looked for.¹²

Supplement

A thorough study on Mulla Sadra's needs a more extended time. For the sake of brevity, we content ourselves with mentioning some important points:

First: The first important point, which is worthy to be mentioned, is illusion, which can discredit the forms imprinted by the senses.

It is proved that all the senses are sometimes captured by illusion; for example the eye sees a straight rod, which is placed in water, as a refracted one. Or the senses of hearing, or taste, or touch reports sometimes falsely. For this, some philosophers have regarded the man's perceptions other than the external world, and entirely as the ideas created by the mind.

The subject of illusions or error in perceptions has been studied in details, in Islamic philosophy. It is said that the error is never committed by the senses and the error is, in fact, the error made by man's mind in judging; and in philosophical expressions: the imagination faculty of the man is involved in recognizing it. As Ibn 'Arabi says: "the senses are witnessing and the judge is the reason".¹³

The hallucinations of the psychopath ones, on the other hand, are caused by other things. Melancholic ones see and hear things, which are not in the external world, and in fact the imagination faculty or the mind of the psychopaths creates them.

In universal statements also, the error is possible to be committed, this also is caused by the involvement of the imagination faculty. Following Ibn 'Arabi and Mystics, Mulla Sadra regards these kind of the statements, which are issued by the mind of the path and lead him to skepticism and sophism, as the devil temptations and devil phenomena.¹⁴

Yet the Islamic philosophy does not claim that all the man's perceptions correspond the reality, and content itself to say that- in general- the perceptions may be in correspondence with the external objectivity, and the man also naturally thinks so.

Second. The man's perception is not restricted to the sense perception. But, in addition to this perception, there are two other perceptions, following it, and these three perceptions consist the chain of the man's perceptions. (It may be said that he does not accept the imaginative perception, which has had its own place in Islamic philosophy).¹⁵

The sense perception is defined as the presence of the form of every particular and material thing, which has accidents, for the perceiver, but free of matter and corporeality. The imaginative perception is the presence of every particular, but immaterial thing; and, the intellectual perception is the presence of the universal form of every sensed or imagined thing, which is called "intelligible", and the perceiver is called "intellect", and that universal perception is called "intelligence".

Mulla Sadra classifies this intelligible under " the first" and " the second" philosophical intelligibles and the second logical intelligible. In general, the levels of the perceptions are as follows: the sense perception, the imaginative perception, the intellectual perception (including the first and the second philosophical intelligibles and the second logical intelligible); there is a real and connective relation established between these various levels of the perception. That is, they are like the changes in the warmth of the water and not like the discrete points on a ruler; and the origin of all of them are the external existents and sensibles.

Third. The Arabic term " Dhehn"- which is translated sometimes to mind and sometimes to understanding-is applied, according to Mulla Sadra and Islamic philosophy- to a faculty of the soul which is able to perceive the external entities and things as well as the man's psychical ones. This is same as the " understanding power" of the soul and perhaps one can say that it is other than the English understanding or *Deutsche verstand* or *entendement* in French. Also it is not same as Kantian term and is not restricted to the " understanding power".

Evidently, according to him, Dhehn is not same as the brain or another bodily organ. Also as we have said, it should not be regarded as a container for the knowns and percepts, which there is before the acquisition of the knowns and percepts; but it is same as the percepts, acquired for man, and simultaneous with them.¹⁶

Fourth. The philosophers, hitherto, defined the philosophy as " man's becoming to an intellectual world, resembling and corresponding with the sensible and external world". At the end of his perception theory, Mulla Sadra comes to the conclusion that, according to the rule of union between the sensor and the sensible, and the union between the intelligent and intelligible as well as the rule of union between the knowledge and existence, the man is an aware existent, who, in every life and in every existential stage (sensory, imaginative, intellectual), unites through his perception and awareness , with the existents of that life or stage.

As a result: through his perceptions of this material world and by the transformation of the quiddities of external existents to his mind and spirit, the man becomes, in fact, a mental and intellectual world, similar to the material world; and in Plotinic expression, because of perceiving the truths of the world, the micro anthropo becomes equal with the world and universe(or the macro anthropo). Thus, the intellectual perception of the truths and entities, i.e. philosophy is, in fact, correspondence with the external world; a realistic correspondence, which is opposite to idealistic correspondence of Hegel and his school.

Fifth. There are some distinctions between the man's perception and those of the other animals- who have sense perception and even imaginative perception. Among these distinctions is the intellectual perception and perceiving the universals, from which originate the philosophy and the other sciences.

The other is perceiving the one's perception or knowledge of the knowledge, which is called apperception by Leibniz, and is called the compound knowledge as well.

Abstraction, generalization, and classifying the concepts under universal, particular, imagination and judgment are among the man's characteristics. This article is devoted to the "imaginings", and those perceptions which have statements or judgments, on which Mulla Sadra presents the summit of his thought and designs, with his magic pen the most beautiful scene of the man's perception, require another study.

Notes:

1-Asfar,, vol. 8, p. 202

2- ibid., p.181

3- ibid.

4- ibid. 1/264; al Shawahid al-Rububiyah, pp. 31-32

5- Asfar, vol.1, 265

6- Rawish e Realism (the method of realism), vol.-, p.-

7- Asfar, 3/327-328

8- Asfar, 6/136

9- Asfar- 2/227

10-Asfar, vol.8, p.181

11- Asfar, vol.3, p.363 &p.506

12- Correspondence between three material, imaginary, and intellectual worlds. C.f. Asfar; vol. 6; p. 277;vol.7; p.18; and other points.

13- Ibn 'Arabi; Futuhat al-Makkiyah(Meccian Openings); vol. 2; p. 395.

14- ibid.

15- Asfar; vol. 3; p. 360-362 and vol. 2; p.293.

16- Asfar,, vol. 1, p. 264

Mulla Sadra, Perception and Knowledge by Presence

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Abstract

In Asfar III, 3, Mulla Sadra argues that there is no possible knowledge claim which can contain a representation of the self. This is because any such claim would already imply the existence of the self. This view has been developed by Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi to argue that there is a radically different approach to epistemology in the ishraqi tradition as compared with the European philosophical tradition which stems from Descartes. The Persian school of philosophy is taken to be more empirical in the sense of valuing experience as compared with the Cartesian school, since the former bases its understanding of the nature of the self on the particular character of the experiences which we have when investigating the nature and role of the self.

What underpins the theory of the self in Mulla Sadra's account is the idea of there being a basic knowledge of the self, so basic that it cannot be doubted. Of course, this fits in nicely with the idea of light as the concept which replaces the traditional subject/object ontology of Cartesian philosophy. It is the "lighting up" of the basic self which makes possible the assumption of this self in our everyday activities, and in this way justifies the claim that ishraqi thought is more empirically orientated than Cartesian thought. The arguments which have been produced for this notion of knowledge by presence as found in the thought of Mulla Sadra and developed by Ha'iri Yazdi will be considered and related to modern developments in Western philosophy.

According to many ishraqi thinkers, there is a type of knowledge which is so self-evident that it cannot be doubted. Of course, many philosophers have sought such a kind of knowledge, since if they could base their arguments on such incorrigible knowledge, those arguments would be soundly based indeed. We are familiar with Cartesian strategies which argue from a proposition which cannot be doubted, and even the opponents of the idealists, the empiricists, sought a level of knowledge which was certain on which they could construct different kinds of belief of varying degrees of reliability. What counts as self-evident knowledge for the ishraqi thinkers is that level of knowledge which is so intimately tied in with our perception of ourselves that in doubting it we would doubt ourselves, which is to imply doubting that with which the doubting is possible in the first place. The conclusion is taken to be that such doubt is impossible. The truth which is presupposed by any perception is that the subject of perception exists, it is perhaps Suhrawardi who explores this notion of immediate knowledge, *'ilm al-huduri*, most precisely, and he argues that it is so immediate and incontrovertible that it is known in far more than an intellectual sense. That is, there are propositions which we know through reason and which we know perfectly, in the sense that we grasp all aspects of them and can hold them in our minds all at once perfectly. We cannot doubt these propositions, but these are propositions, and they are only attainable through reason. The sorts of knowledge which are called *'ilm al-huduri* are not only indubitable, but we experience their indubitability. The light of knowledge which shines on them makes evident to us in more than merely an intellectual sense what truth they possess. Of course, another advantage which perception of the self has over discursive knowledge is that the assumption is made that the self is basically a simple thing, so the use of our intelligence implies the activity of a simple self, a self which is characterizable in terms its pure agency.

But surely, it will be said, there is far more to the self than merely a simple substance. Are not selves highly complex? Indeed they are, but what is being argued here is that the key to the self is merely its capacity to represent our existence, and as such it is simple. As Mulla Sadra points out, in knowing anything we know ourselves, and that self-knowledge is primitive epistemologically.¹ He goes even further and suggests that we cannot even formulate that basic form of knowledge in propositional form, since it is so direct that we cannot construct a proposition around it, describing it as though from outside, as it were. We cannot do this because the knowledge is so much part and parcel of thought itself that expressing it propositionally would be to make complex that which is paradigmatically simple, and introduce issues of truth and falsity where they have no place.

This theory fits in nicely with Suhrawardi's suspicion concerning propositions which are complex, the basis of his critique of the notion of definition. Suhrawardi argues that the Aristotelian technique of basing the syllogism on a definition, which is supposed to be a sound basis for such an argument, is fatally flawed, for the parts of the definition which are supposed to be the logical properties which characterize the notion themselves require a proof before they are accepted as parts of the meaning, and so on ad infinitum.² Suspicion of the complex is quite plausible, since how can one be sure that in one grasp of apprehension, as it were, all the characteristics of a thing have been captured? At this point

we need to distinguish between two kinds of knowledge in Mulla Sadra, knowledge which is *huduri* and directly present to us, and knowledge which is *husuli* and which is acquired from without. There is nothing wrong with such knowledge, on the contrary, it represents our role in the world of constant movement in which we seek to perfect our understanding by aligning our consciousness so that it matches better the plurality of existence which describes reality.

What is perception for Mulla Sadra? We have to recall here his antipathy to essences, as evidenced by his adherence to an ontology in which existence is more basic than essence.³ We also need to acknowledge the significance of change in his view of reality, so that we should not regard the perceiver as someone who seeks to come into contact with stable and pre-existing essences, which themselves in some way reflects divine reality. It is certainly true that when we know we come into contact with the divine creation, and we do this by moving from being able to know to knowing in actuality. Mulla Sadra is rather suspicious of the traditional *mashsha'i* understanding of knowledge as grasping the abstract forms which lie within things, since this is to reify essences in objectionable ways. He does adhere to the traditional idea of there being a variety of realms of understanding, ranging from the ordinary perceptual level to the higher intelligible, separated by the *barzakh* of the imaginative, but we certainly should not see this as a progress towards ever-increasing levels of abstraction. On the contrary, as we perfect ourselves we come closer to ever more basic forms of existence, and in this way come closer to the deity.

Now, there is an interesting aspect of light which makes it a popular concept in talking about knowledge, and that is the way in which it reveals that which exists, and yet which is literally invisible until it is affected by light. And light itself, of course, is also invisible, so that which is itself invisible brings to our attention what would otherwise be invisible. Light plays a large part in a large number of philosophies from different cultural traditions, and is certainly not limited to Islamic philosophy. For example, within Buddhism there is a traditional way of conceptualizing the mind as like a mirror reflecting the light of (potential) enlightenment which is ever-present in the universe. All we need to do is to blow the dust off the mirror, and then the pure light will be accessible to us! Some Buddhists like Huineng go ever further and claim that the light is always present within us, and the idea that anything could really impede it is mistaken.⁴ It is this idea that when something is illuminated then one cannot be mistaken about it, one cannot not notice it, as it were, which is such a crucial aspect of Mulla Sadra's notion of perception. For at the root of our perception of everything outside us is our perception of what is within us, and the nature of the subject which is doing the perceiving must be known to us if anything is, since it is ever-present in the action of perceiving. There are many things which we can doubt, but as Descartes argued, the fact that we can doubt itself relies on certain facts which we cannot doubt, and those facts present themselves to us (they are *huduri*) in ways in which more dubitable forms of experience do not.

Many objections have been made to the attempt at identifying such incorrigible experiences, and these objections are soundly based. They basically suggest that even if there are such incorrigible experiences, they do not actually provide us with anything which is really information. For example, the knowledge that my experiences are the experiences of a subject does not reveal anything about the nature of that subject, apart from the fact that it is a subject, and anything we want to know about the subject has to be discovered in the normal sort of way. So the idea, which is quite evidently there in Suhrawardi, of a series of fixed and final objects of knowledge, facts which we cannot doubt and which ground further claims to knowledge, rests on a shaky philosophical foundation. But this should not worry Mulla Sadra too much, given the very different ontology which he constructs based on the notion of *tashkik al-wujud*. Although there is no doubt that Mulla Sadra also adheres to a doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, of the unity of existence, it is what he does with this idea of unity which is so interesting. The very same

concept, the concept of light, which brings everything together also serves as its grounds for differentiation, since it is the degree of light which determines the level of reality of each individual thing in existence. As we increase our knowledge, we reach ever higher levels of perfection, we come into contact with more abstract and significant existences which are brighter and closer to the source of being itself, the deity.

Is this knowledge part and parcel of mysticism? It is difficult to know what to say about such a claim. Much of the technical language which Mulla Sadra uses comes from ibn al-`Arabi, and we know that he was interested in exploring a range of mystical approaches to knowledge. There is certainly a good deal in Mulla Sadra which acknowledges the significance of hikma, by contrast with other forms of rational thought, and which prioritizes the sorts of understanding of reality which come about through the personal contact between the individual and his or her creator. I have argued previously that we can understand Mulla Sadra's notion of the priority of existence over essence without bringing in any particular notion of mysticism, and that is true also of his use of the idea of the imaginal realm (al-`alam al-khayali).⁵ All these concepts have profound mystical implications, yet there is no need to draw these implications in order to understand them. This is hardly surprising, since most ideas have two sides, the *zahir* (open) and the *batin* (hidden), and we can understand them on each level without necessarily having to explore both levels. And it is fortunate that this is the case, since if it was the case that one could only understand ideas which are used mystically from a mystical point of view, it would not be possible to understand those ideas at all unless one were a mystic, and as we know on most accounts of Islamic mysticism this is a difficult and protracted process. I would not want to argue that the mystical aspects of Mulla Sadra's views on knowledge are not important, but in the spirit of the School of Isfahan we should accept that the mystical and the rational levels of discourse are capable of operating independently of each other,⁶ and it is within that spirit that the concept of knowledge will be explored here.

One of the most interesting defenses of the notion of `ilm al-huduri is that provided by Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, and he concentrates on the description of this kind of knowledge as specified by al-Suhrawardi, but it is essentially the same as that used by Mulla Sadra.⁷ The basic argument is that at some level knowledge of ourselves is not to be classified as propositional knowledge, consisting of statements which could be true or false. If this knowledge was capable of being true or false then it would have to be assessable, yet any such assessment already presupposes the self which is doing the assessing. To take an example, there is much about which I could be mistaken, but I could not be mistaken that there is a self writing these pages. I could even get the name of the self wrong, but that there is a self acting here is incontrovertible. There are a variety of ways of expressing this idea. One is to say, as Wittgenstein does, that nothing could be evidence for the absence of such a self, since nothing could give us more grounds for disbelieving in such a self than in believing in it. That is, a world which turned out to justify the denial of such a self would be such a different world from that with which we are familiar that we would not know how to go on. In that case there is no more reason to deny the self than to assert it.

Another way of expressing this supposedly incontrovertible truth is to say that experience of the self is so perfect that it is undeniable. This is to take up a Cartesian strategy of taking some beliefs to be so clear and distinct that we can see everything that there is to see about them all at once, and are unable to deny them. The metaphor of light here is important, since once something is lit up, it is there in front of us and we are aware of it. But could we not be mistaken about its nature? We could be, we might for example imagine that we see something, that something is lit up, but really do not. We may be dreaming or merely having a powerful image before us to which nothing objective corresponds.

Actually, this sort of objection will not work when brought up against ishraqi thought, since imagination and dreaming are here regarded as just as capable of yielding objective and significant experience as our everyday experience. In fact one might go further and suggest that dreaming and imagination is more capable of expressing reality than our ordinary experience, since it is while we are using our imagination that we are better able to represent to ourselves what is really important, as compared with what seems to be important.

The main problem with describing a particular type of experience which cannot be challenged is that to be persuasive the example has to yield very little detail. For example. it may be that as I am writing this I am having an experience of an 'I' doing the writing which I cannot challenge. I then say that this is an example of *'ilm al-huduri* because the experience of the self is so direct that it cannot be separated from the experience itself except as yet another example of the same experience. That is, if I consider the status of my experience of the self, then I am doing it through yet another experience of the self. But what does this actually show? It shows very little if anything about the nature of the self in question, merely that someone is having experience. It does not even show that it is the same subject which is having the experience of writing this paragraph that wrote the earlier paragraph, or is going to write the next one. Perhaps we need the mysticism after all to establish this sort of knowledge, and through such knowledge we can establish links between the different manifestations of the 'I'. If that is the case then it would be disappointing, since it is very much the direction of the argument that it will lead us to incorrigible propositions through the use of reason alone, and without making any specific religious commitments. After all, if to paper over the gaps in the argument we can use principles from mysticism then there seems little point to trying to establish the argument in the first place.

Fortunately we can say that such a strategy of using mysticism as philosophical glue would go entirely against the principles of the School of Isfahan of which Mulla Sadra is such a distinguished representative. There is no doubt that according to the School of Isfahan the level of *'irfan* is the most superior form of knowledge, but it does not follow that there is no scope for using arguments appropriate to other kinds of knowledge within their own universes of discourse. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues, the main issue confronting the School of Isfahan is the reconciliation of *shari'a*, *'aql* and *tasawwuf/'irfan*.⁸ Different thinkers had different lines on how to accomplish this, but what is important here is to appreciate that no one type of explanation should be seen as precluding another type. For example, within the area of law the appropriate mode of argument is legal, and although it is doubtless true that the issues in law have other aspects, both rational and mystical, it would not be appropriate to resolve problems in law by referring to these different ways of working theoretically. We can use this argument to suggest that the criticisms which have been made of *'ilm al-huduri* cannot be resolved by importing concepts from a different logical level of discourse.

Must we conclude, then, that there is nothing of value in this concept of presential knowledge? What it seems to prove, if it proves anything at all, is that we can have a sort of knowledge which is beyond doubt, but that that sort of knowledge is literally content less, and as such is of no use to us. It certainly will not serve as the foundation of higher sorts of knowledge, nor will it transfer its incorrigibility to any of these other candidates for knowledge. But perhaps we are asking the wrong question here. We seem to be asking the question 'What sort of propositions are we unable to doubt?'. This is certainly the question which Ha'iri Yazdi raises and he seeks to link it both with ishraqi thought and with the sorts of claims which modern thinkers like Russell make about knowledge. Yet are they asking the same sort of question? I do not think they are. What we need to notice here is the very different ontology constructed within ishraqi thought as compared with the subject/object ontology of modern Western philosophy, the sort of philosophy in which the sceptical issues of how we know when we know or

otherwise arise. Descartes and his successors tend to take the line on essence and existence that the former precedes the latter, so that we have all sorts of ideas and then wonder how or whether those ideas are instantiated. Of course, that ontology leads automatically to the sceptical question as to whether our ideas are anything more than ideas, i.e. do they have any existence connected with them? Now, Mulla Sadra's ontology works in the other direction. What we are confronted with primarily are different forms of existence, and the ideas we form of this are relatively unimportant. Why are they unimportant? After all, we cannot form ideas of existence without ideas, and these essences must be for us the route to understanding that existence. Here we have to recall the doctrine of transubstantial movement. There are no stable essences which reflect existence, since existence itself is forever changing and altering, and so there is little point in concentrating on essences as a guide to the character of existence. Just as one had grasped an essence the reality on which it is based would be changing, and so there is little point on looking to essences if we are interested in understanding the way things really are.

This suggests that raising the sorts of questions about the reliability of our knowledge claims is to miss the point. Mulla Sadra is not asking the question 'What can we know?' but rather 'What exists?'. Once we have decided what exists, it then remains to us to explain how we have access to that existence, It is at this stage that we can distinguish between two different kinds of knowledge, knowledge which is *huduri* and knowledge which is *husuli*. But it is all knowledge, and the latter kind of knowledge also provides us with a secure route to the truth. This is where we have to remember the significance of light as the main principle of definition here. There is a tendency to think of knowledge which is *huduri* as being more brightly illuminated than other kinds of knowledge, but this is misleading. My knowledge of myself is no more real than is my knowledge of scientific facts about the external world. What explains gradations of light is what explains gradations of reality, and as we grasp increasingly significant levels of knowledge we come into contact with different and higher levels of light. It is important when looking at the ontology here to realise that there is far more to existence than just facts. After all, what has come to be known as the imaginal realm (*al-'alam al-khayali*) is even more real than the world of generation and corruption, yet it appears to consist of nothing more than ideas. Similarly, there is a long tradition in *ishraqi* thought of meetings with imaginary people, yet these meetings are far from illusory. They represent very real meetings between different ways of thinking, and they result in an advance in understanding. Here the metaphor of light is helpful. An imaginary event may well be far more important to someone than a so-called 'real' event. The imaginary event may bring to light a previously unconsidered hypothetical possibility which changes our lives, because it shows us for the first time what it would be like for the world to be very different. There is a lot of empirical evidence that unless an individual is able to contemplate a particular situation, then he or she will be a lot less likely to be able to attain it, or avoid it. So the contemplation of a possibility, the possibility of an event which has not yet happened and which may never happen, may be of a far deeper significance for us than a boring empirical fact. This brings out nicely what is wrong in putting essences before existence. An essence, an idea or concept, may seem in itself insubstantial and far less real than a different concept, perhaps of something far more solid and present to us in the everyday world. Yet the former may be far more important to us than the latter, it may be far more vivid and real. In short, it may represent far more presciently what is real, what exists, and as such the question as to whether it is true rather misses the point.

Let us compare this way of arguing with a much more recent form of argument, that provided by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*.⁹ Wittgenstein argues that there are some propositions which could in themselves be false, and yet which are so crucial to entire ways in which we do things that we cannot doubt them, at least not while we carry on with those familiar activities.¹⁰ In addition, even though

those propositions could be false, it is not possible to doubt them, since there is no alternative proposition which could be any more certain than they are. Wittgenstein has often been accused here of being an idealist, since it seems that he is far more concerned with the ways in which our concepts relate to each other than he is in the question as to whether they actually correspond to something in the real world. This is a relevant question to ask him since after all he is contending with the traditional puzzles provided by the sceptic, whether what we take to be knowledge is really knowledge, whether the propositions which we take to be true are in fact true. And precisely the same questions may be put to Mulla Sadra, it may be asked whether we can ever really know anything by examining our concepts, given that the underlying reality is constantly changing and that existence is far more significant than essence. We could look for some transcendental guarantee, of course, by claiming a basis in divine reality, but this would be to go against the principles of the School of Isfahan, as we have already suggested. But what makes the question seem perplexing is not because it is difficult to answer, but because it is the wrong sort of question. We have to get away from the traditional subject/object, concept/object, language/reality dichotomies of modern philosophy. which Wittgenstein was also trying to transcend. He argued that the link between our language and extra-mental reality is a complex one. As he says, it is not that the former is dependent on the latter, but it is also not the case that there is no link between them. After all, if the world were a very different place, then different concepts would make sense, and he spends a great deal of his philosophical work examining alternative ways of going on conceptually, to explore the nature of the relationship between how things actually are and how that frames for us a particular range of possible ways of talking about that reality.

For Mulla Sadra also the act of perception is not essentially an act in which the agent tries to emerge from his private self to gain access to an external and public world. It is an attempt at understanding an aspect of a changing world, and any claim to truth will have to be limited by a certain reference to time, since everything is changing all the time. What is changing is not the world outside us, though, but we are part and parcel of that world, we change with it, as do our ideas about it. Our ideas and the world which those ideas describe are all parts of the same world, and they are all capable of being just as real as each other. This comes out nicely in his account of knowledge, which often leads to perplexity. It is a familiar thesis in Islamic philosophy that in knowledge there is an identity between the knower, the object of knowledge and the process of knowing itself. This is what happens in the highest form of knowledge, where the object of knowledge is actually something created by the knower (ultimately, God) and where the knowledge itself is part of the essential activity of the knower and not just a casual event. Of course, for us, given the constant change of things themselves, there is in perception a move from potentiality to actuality which is only capable of grasping the truth as it stands at a particular time. In the case of perfect knowledge the constant changing of the substances does not matter, since what is known is more the pattern of change than the particular changing events themselves. One of the problems with such a view of knowledge as unifying knower, known object and process of knowing is that these all seem to be different. That is, I am different from what I am now observing, and the way in which I am observing it is something I might well not be doing, and so it seems strange to see it as part of me. Yet these distinctions only make sense if we adhere to the traditional subject/object ontology of modern philosophy. In Mulla Sadra's ontology there is no essential difference between the changing substance of which I am a part and its states (like perception), and the objects of my perception, since these are all ultimately reflections of higher principles and the activity of the deity. We draw distinctions between them, of course, but at a philosophical level we should appreciate the unity which brings all these different features of reality together. After all, it is just one principle, that of light, which serves as the key criterion both of identity and of differentiation, and any subjects and objects which we then construct out of this one principle is entirely the reflection of a way of thinking appropriate to a relatively low theoretical level of thought. That is how light operates, of course, it illuminates what seem

to be a variety of different things which exist independently of it, but once we appreciate the unity of reality we come to appreciate that this variety (tashkik) is very much an apparent variety of an essential unity, the unity of existence (wahdat al-wujud).

It is this insistence upon interpreting reality as basically a unity which distinguishes Mulla Sadra's approach to knowledge as compared with most modern philosophers. Interestingly, as I have suggested, it could be argued that Wittgenstein also declines to adopt the view of reality shared by modern philosophy of the Cartesian variety. We have not shown here that this sort of approach is better than its alternatives, but we have tried to do is explain why it seems unsatisfactory from the perspective of the Cartesian theory. According to the latter, the main problem of philosophy is to explain what links there are between our ideas and what those ideas purport to describe. According to Mulla Sadra, this is not an important question, since our ideas and what they seem to describe are part of the same reality, and asking how they are linked is akin to asking how one side of a coin is linked to the other side. Many admirers of Mulla Sadra will feel that this account of his work is carried on at far too limited a level of understanding, and that it does not do justice to him as a master of esoteric knowledge, but the argument here is that he was in his work following the hermeneutics of the School of Isfahan. This implies arguing from the existence of our world to the existence of ever higher levels of existence, and from the higher to the lower, and for the significance of keeping these two means of argument separate from each other. Then it can be seen that the arguments from hikmah and the arguments from `irfan are really just two versions of the same argument, as one would expect given the basic unity which runs through the whole of reality.

Notes:

1 Mulla Sadra (1965) *Al-hikmat al-muta`aliyya fi'l-asfar al-arba`a al-`aqliyya*, Qum: Intisharat-i Mustafavi, I,3,part 3

2 For more detail on this argument see Leaman, O. (2000) *Islamic philosophy and the attack on logic*, *Topoi*, 1—8

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5 Mulla Sadra and Mysticism', *ibid.* Leaman (1999) , 96—100

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The nature and stages of perception in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy

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Abstract

Cognition and perception as philosophical themes are of extreme importance and between them take up a major part of issues investigated within Islamic Philosophy in general, and particularly in Sadrian school of Philosophy.

In this paper, we intend to briefly examine the nature of perception and its stages from Mulla Sadra's view point.

To do this we need to have a cursory look at the history of cognition in Islamic Philosophy and develop our discussion within the following sections:

Mulla Sadr's innovative approach to the philosophy of cognition.

The essence of perception within the philosophy of Mulla Sadra.

Perception and its relevant stages in Mulla Sadra's philosophy.

Introduction:

"The theme of cognition and its historical development within Islam philosophy".

The pre-Islamic philosophy in general (Greek's, Alexanrain, and new platonic etc.) contained very little on the theme of cognition.

Oswald Kulpe points to this fact in his book (*Einleitung in die philosophie*).

"The early philosophers never dealt with knowledge or cognition as a distinct issue. Even Plato discusses cognition within an overall section that he calls "Dialectic". Aristotle also analysis the same theme under "Metaphysics". None of these philosophers have made a clear distinction between cognition and what are purely metaphysical or logical issues.

Examining correctness and the general veracity of cognition were the most important issues that ancient philosophers dealt with. Their discussion is devoid of almost all of the contemporary themes, like the relation between the objectives and the subjective factors in cognition, the role that the perceived and the perceiver play in perception, the limit of the human cognition and the definition of the nature and the reality of pure experiments.

Other issues such as evolvment of and the bases for the verity of cognitions, simplicity of Nafs (soul) and the classification of its powers into perception and others, division of mental knowledge into minor and general and the general knowledge into initiative and speculative types, make up the most important part of philosophical concepts about cognition that were extremely brief and unclear in the pre-Islamic era of philosophical history.

The pre-Mulla Sadra (1571-1640) Muslim philosophers undertook an in-depth study of the above issues. Not only they clarified major ambiguities that were remaining within this field; they manage to present a vast amount of new ideas on the issue of cognition.

For example Mohammad bin Mohammad bin Tarkhan al-Faraabi's (872-950) division of cognition into imaginative and affirmative types lead to a great transformation for the first time within the philosophy of cognition as well as logic. Among the new concepts presented for the first time in the context of cognition was "mental existence". Fakhrod-din-Razi (1149-1209) has a chapter under this title in his book "al-Mabahith al-Shariqieh" (eastern discourses).

Khajeh Nasired-Din expanded this concept even further and consequently developed a new definition for knowledge and perception. Before Nasirod-Din Tusi, philosophers used to believe that knowledge and perception of the perceived was due to the pictorial form or impression of the thing within the intellect (howa as-sura al-hasilah min al-sha'i ladal 'Aql).

Although grand philosophers like Farabi and Abu Ali Sina as well as others have made use of this definition in their books, this definition was inherited from the pre-Islamic philosophy.

From Nasirod-Din Tusi onwards, knowledge and perception were re-defined as "the existence of the reality and the essence of the known with the knower".

This definition radically changed the concept of knowledge and turned it into a form of existence of the known within the knower.

The significance of the concept of "mental existence" is not only due to the fact that it provided new definition for knowledge and perception, but its significance is mainly due to the linkage between mental and reality or between the knower and the known that became the foundation for the modern understanding of cognition.

The topic of mental existence completely transformed the concept of cognition within Islamic philosophy and presented a new dimension for this context. This topic also influenced the analysis of existence, essence and nafs (soul). Discussing the development and the mode of influence of these ideas will be beyond the scope of present discussion.

Division of knowledge into empirical and intuitive introduced a major new idea in Islamic philosophy. In the empirical knowledge, the knower attains through mental existence a form of that to be known however this mental existence is different from the external existence of the known.

In intuitive knowledge the known in its external reality appears before the knower. In other word in intuitive knowledge a unity is achieved between the knower and the known.

Separation of knowledge into empirical and intuitive paved the way for a very important Sadrian philosophical concept, which is the unity of intelligent, intelligible and the intelligence.

There is no clear historical record indicating clearly when this division took place, however, the earlier Muslim Philosophers like Abu Ali Sina, within the self knowledge of Nafs (soul), do discuss the notion of unity of intelligent and the intelligible.

Fakhord-Din Razi in his book *al-Mabahith al-sharqieh* (the eastern discourses) also discusses this concept and states that "fin anna ta'aqol al-shy' li-dhatih howa nafse dhatih wa anna dhalika haadhiiron abada".

(The understanding of the knower of itself is like itself and is permanently present), and uses the phrase *hodhoor* (intuitive).

It appears that Abu Ali Sina does make the distinction between intuitive and empirical knowledge, in his philosophy, however a transparent and precise definition for these phrases became available only within Sadrian philosophy.

The above has been a brief history of the most important concepts within the philosophical analysis of cognition before Mulla Sadra. These concepts have been used extensively in the Sadrian Philosophy and played a major role in his innovative interpretation of the philosophy of cognition.

Let us look at a few important concepts relating to cognition and perception within Mullah Sadra's philosophy.

Brief accounts of Mullah Sadra's innovative approach to cognition and perception.

Primordality of Existence (*Isalatol Wojood*)

The theory of Primordality of Existence forms the backbone to the Sadrian Philosophy. It clarifies all the ambiguities and difficulties that were faced in the pre-Sadrian theory of "mental existence".

One of the major difficulties faced by the theory of "mental existence" was how to explain the transmission of external characteristics of a known to the domain of mental existence?

Let us elaborate this further. We know that the supporters of mental existence believed that cognition in reality was that the essence of the known takes a mental reality and without this cognition would not be possible. Here, a question might be presented:

If the reality of the known exists in the mental domain, then it is natural to expect that its external characteristics must also be present. For fire to be perceived, the heat and burning characteristic must also be present in the mind. Perceiving snow must imply that the coldness and its freezing characteristics must also be present. For the mind to perceive fire and snow would imply in an instance the mind is cold and hot, and since they are intrinsically mutually exclusive this can not be possible.

Mulla Sadra's reply to this question is based on the theory of the primacy of existence. He stipulated his reply in the following manner:

The presented objection rests on confusing of real existence that makes up the bases for the external reality with *Mahiyat* (essence) of things. What have the external characteristics in fire and snow is the external existence and not their mental existence.

A further theory presented within Sadrian philosophy is the theory of transcendental motion (*harekate jawharieh*). Mulla Sadra affirms that there is an intrinsic motion within all physical realities. Human *nafs* (nature) is a purely material being. However, it constantly moves through transcendental motion

towards purity and abstract nature. Cognition and perception mark the beginning of that abstract form and are both associated with this state.

He claims "It is a fact that the human essence at the moment of creation was purely material but its existence and perception is abstract and spiritual. Since other philosophers were unaware of this concept (transcendental motion), they were unable to provide a solution to a number of issues like contingency and permanence as well as attachment and abstraction of human nature (nafs).

It is clear from the above statement that Mulla Sadra considers human nature to be non-material and abstract. He also concludes that,

The essence of man was created after its material body as a consequence of transcendental motion.

Man's essence is devoid of any cognition and perception and neither has the potential for it.

Due to the abstract and simplicity of this reality, it possesses a pure singularity of nature.

Human cognition begins with the sense perceptible. Once the mind has acquired enough information through the senses. It begins to develop and deal with intuitive forms of cognition and then evolves further. Expansion of human knowledge in reality takes place through the various forms of conceptual and judgmental divisions of intuitive cognition.

The following is 'Allameh Shaheed Motahari's abridged version of Mulla Sadra's comments:

"The multiplicity of effects could be attributed to diversity of causes, variation in spaces within which the effects materialize, multiplicity of means or to the linearity of the effects in relation to each other.

As for human nature (Nafs), and its various forms of cognitions it can not be due to the multiplicity of 'nafs' itself, as it is abstract and simple. Even if it were complex, its complexity would not be sufficient to become the cause for these variations. The only possible explanation would be the multiplicity of means.

The combination of these means in addition to the simple sensual perceptions that are accumulated over the year would lay the ground for human intellect to comprehend conceptual and judgmental forms of cognition and by following this process as well as inductive forms of analysis, cognition can be expanded limitlessly.

The concept of unity of intelligence, intelligent and the intelligible is a further philosophical innovation that created a new outlook within the process of cognition.

The reality of perception in Sadrian philosophy

Mulla Sadra views perception as "the existence of the perceived within the perceiver but not in the immanent form.

For knowledge he asserts that: "knowledge is an abstract existence that forms within the nature of the knower". Once the soul due to the simplicity and transparency of its nature reflects images of sensual, imagining and intellectual world similar to the images that are reflected on mirrors, but with a

fundamental difference between the two reflections. In mirror images, mirror has a passive role, but in human soul or nature, the soul plays a very active role in the process of creating these images.

Accordingly knowledge and perception are a kind of evolution and elevation for nafs (soul), and with every perception, soul gains a new reality.

Although every intellectual existence is a distinct reality for itself, it is also a reality for the soul of the knower and these two realities are in essence but one. Based on his theory of unity of intelligence, intelligible and the intelligent, Mulla Sadra claims that within perception, the power that perceives, the perceived and the perceiver are not three separate entities. In every perceptive act, a reality is created by the soul (nafs) for the perceived, but it also is a reality for the perceiver and these actions are not independent and separate from each other.

In his book "Al-Asfar" in a chapter titled "Clarification that intelligence is in essence the unity between the intelligible and the intelligent", he writes: "The issue relating to the way human beings' the forms of external intelligible is one of the most profound philosophical subjects that has not been clarified for the philosophers yet". He then begins to shed light on this matter in a way that we have summed up in the following way: Impressions are to be divided in two categories: - First: The Gestalt, which is based on the material, its place and situation. This material element is not conceivable. It is not possible to perceive this through sense, only in an indirect way. What is then conceivable is the abstract of the concrete material existence. - Second: Impressions that are not based on the material, place and situation. It is rather an abstraction which is either complete that should be classified as an actual processed knowledge, or incomplete that should be classified as an actual perception or pretension" - he continues: "If something is conceivable this could be accepted under the condition that there is unity between knowledge and mind, otherwise it will not be possible". Thus the essence of this subject is that if the unity between knowledge and mind is rejected, knowledge itself will be impossible, because if knowledge has a separated existence compared to mind it will never exist.

In Asfar, in a chapter titled "To explain that discernment is the concord or unity between the essence of intelligent and the intelligible", Mulla Sadra asserts: "the way in which soul understands the form of the intelligible, is one of the most difficult philosophical issues that as yet our grand scholars have not been able to fully comprehend". (Asfar vol. 3. Page 312).

The following is an extract of what he proposes as an ex-position for this issue: "things, have two different types of forms:

First - the physical form that is based on shape, situations and space etc.

The forms of external objects, immersed as they are in matter and material concomitants, can not move into the mind and become known, since mental forms and material forms are different in several essential respects. This particular form in its physical condition can not be perceived or understood, it neither can be felt, unless in a contingent way.

In other word, what can be sensed or felt, is its abstract form. The physical form is sensed only in a secondary way.

Second is a form that is free from shape and situation. If this abstractness (immateriality) is exhaustive and absolute, then the form will have a tangible or actual perception, and if this immateriality (Tajarrood) is partial and incomplete the form will be physically senses. (Asfar vol.3. p313).

Mulla Sadra adds: "for something to become intelligible, requires an intelligent being to comprehend it. If intelligent and the intelligible are at variance then the intelligible on its own can not become the object of knowledge. If the intelligible posses a complete existence distinct from the intelligent it can not be perceived". (Asfar vol.3. P315).

He continues: "we have already indicated in the previous chapters that two admixture must have equal existence and of equal status. If one has a primary existence the other will also have an existence of the same nature, and if one has potentiality for existence, the other will have similar statuses.

As we divided the intelligible into potential and actually perceptible. The above relationship applies to both types of the perceptible too. There is a fusion between a perceiver and the perceived in actuality or potential. One should not misunderstand or falsely assume that our senses, in the process of perceiving, extract the forms of the perceptible from their essences and preserve their characteristics that in turn are further refined by our imagination. This is due to the fact that the forms of external objects, immersed in matter and material concomitance can not move into the mind, since mental forms and material forms are different in several essential respects). (Asfar, Vol.3, p 315-316).

He then adds: " Things that have material forms can never be conceptually known by the mind, perceiving them takes place through the illuminated perception that we are granted by the Almighty Allah. This illuminated power gives actuality to perception as well as the perceived. Before such illuminated power everything remains in the Potentiality State. The forms that appear in our materialistic/physical senses, simply pave the way for receiving that illuminative power that becomes instantly the perceived, perceiver and perception, in the same way that we explained the intelligible, intelligent and the intelligence". (Asfar vol.3, P317).

According to Mulla Sadra, perceptions in its three stages of "sense, imagination and intellection" are nothing but new beings for human nature, similar to the other realities of the world granted by the Almighty Allah (s.w). Human essence posses variety of means and lives in number of unique conditions for these means to develop, (like coming into contact with perceptive material).

Through these special characteristics, it arrives at the inception stage. This spiritual inception that materializes through the divine mercy, become the source of genesis that gives the soul the capability to unite with the perceived and the perception.

In other words, Mulla Sadra believes that "every perception is a new stage in the process of existence that is created for soul through divine mercy.

These divine illuminations generate the same images that are used for the creation of images by our imagination. Our imaginative faculty is in unity with our soul.

After the imagination stage, the soul begins its activity in the intellection stage, which is yet a further form of reality. Through the divine assistance, it creates the intellection forms that in itself a further stage in the existence of soul. In this stage the intellected images will be in unity with intellect and the intellectable.

The Phase and Stages of Perception in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy

Under the chapter "types of perception" in Asfar, Mulla Sadra divides perception into four types, "sensory, imaginary, estimation and intellection", and then redefines these classifications into three types according to the three modes of beings: (sensory nature, the world of images and the intelligible realities.

Sensory perception is physically based and the perceiver senses and the perceiver senses the physical realities with their characteristics of time, space, quality, quantity and conditions.

However, what is present before the perceiver is the image of the perceived and not the physical reality. The kind of image that is produced before the perceiver must be equal in the status of being with the perceived. If this is not achieved then perception will not be attained.

The images created for sensory perception are incomplete abstraction of physical characteristics.

After sensory stage, comes the imaginary stage of perception, which in effect is similar to the images that were produced in the previous stage.

In the tawahom (estimation) stage, the object of the perception is the incensed intellectable and not general concepts.

In the intellection stage, perception is based on the reality and essence of things without due consideration to the specific conditions associated with that reality. This makes the perception general and more inclusive.

According to Mulla Sadra, every stage of perception requires a degree or form of abstraction;

In sensory perceptions three conditions must be fulfilled:

- The material presence of the perceived before the means of perception.
- The perceived must be accompanied with its characteristics.
- The perceived must be particular and not general.

The imaginary stage, does not require the first condition and tawahom (estimation), is free from fulfilling the second condition, while in the intellection stage, non of the above conditions need to be satisfied.

The difference between perception in its estimation and intellection stage is not due to the intrinsic nature of these perception; it lay in the external factors, like attachment to and adjoining with particular/partial issues or lack of such characteristics.

Accordingly, tawahom (estimation), is a lower level of intellections, and this in practice reduces perception into three major types. (Asfar vol.3 – P360-362)

We conclude from the above that:

There are four primary stages for perception.

1- The sensory stage, where perception is due to the actual or physical contact between the perceiver with the perceived and such perception comes to an end, by the termination of this direct contact.

In the imaginary stage, human mind preserves an image from the perceived from the direct contact. This image will remain even after the termination of this contact. Such images possess all the characteristics of the perceived, a part from its physical essence. In the tawahom (estimation) stage, the mind denudes all the characteristics from the image without totally severing the linkage between the abstract image and the physical reality. The image created by the mind at such stage can not be related to anything else but that individual or particular reality that was perceived. This image is similar to the image that is created in our mind, when an object is seen from far away without a clear understanding of its nature, (animal or human), colour, shape and size etc.

Such an image, although devoid of all the relative characteristics, can be related to a particular object and not to others. This particularity of the object is shared with the perception in the 3rd stage. In such a stage, although the perceived is denuded of all sensory characteristics, however the image remains singular and individual and can never be applied to others.

In the intellection stage, the mind denudes all the relevant features even its singularity and turns the image into a general concept that can be applied not only to the perceived that is actually sensed, but to other examples that share with the perceived the general hallmarks. This is the stage for absolute and total abstraction of perceived images.

2- The difference between the sensory, imaginative and intellection perceptions are fundamental and intrinsic. Each of these stages represents a stage within the being of the soul that is different in other stages. While the difference between the estimation and intellection stage is the perceived, that is to say, that perception in the former is particular while in the latter is general, and this is not an intrinsic difference. The above account focuses the stages of perception into three:

"Sensory, imaginative and intellection".

This classification closely matches the division of the world into three distinct kinds.

The world of coarse matter and material bodies (nasoot); the world of images ('Alam al-Mithal or Malakoot) and the spiritual world of intellection and pure ideas. (Jabaroot).

According to Mulla Sadra's doctrine, the ontological structure of reality comprises three worlds. The material bodies associated with sensory perception, like, man, animal white, black etc., this is called the first intelligible (ma'ghoolate Aw-walieh), that lies at the lowest rung in the order of ascension, they constitute the basic order/stage with human intellection.

Then comes the world of pure images and figures that are associated with logical concepts, e.g. generality, singularity, differentia and accident that are used primarily in logic as distinctive hallmarks and referred to as logical intellection or secondary intelligible (ma'ghoolate thanieh).

The mind attains such intellection after acquiring the first intelligible. It then creates new concepts that can not be applied but to a very limited contexts. This stage lies at the middle rung of the ascension order.

Finally, the secondary philosophical intellection. (ma'ghoolate thaanieh phalsaphy). These are general philosophical concepts like, existence, nonexistence, unity, diversity, contingency etc.. that are similar to the secondary logical images, in that they do not have an external reality, however they can be applied to external examples, like EXTERNAL MAN that is contingent in its nature but not general in its application.

These constitute the most widespread and general intellectual concepts that the mind can have and unlike the first intellections have the widest of all coverage. These intellectual entities rung on the top of the ontological structure. (Asfar, Vol. 1 P 332, fi an-nal wujud 'Ala ay-ye wajhwn yoghal in-naho minal ma'ghoolat al-thanieh)

How is it possible to see Ghouls (Ghûl) in the Desert?

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Abstract

How is it possible to see ghouls in the desert? Mullâ Sadrâ's answer to this question in his Sharh Usûl al-Kâfî (vol. II, pp. 440 ss.) gives us an opportunity to learn more about what it is for him to see something. The chapter in Asfâr (vol. VIII, 178-200) about the faculty of vision is specially centred on the vision of external things of this world. Mullâ Sadrâ presents and discusses there the positions of earlier philosophers (naturalists, mathematicians, ishrâqiyyûn) and develops his own.

The text of Usûl al-Kâfî (vol. II, pp. 435-444) gives us a broader interpretation of what it is to see. While explaining a hadîth about the difference between the messenger and the prophet, Mullâ Sadrâ explains what it is to have visions (divinely inspired or not).

He shows us how it is possible to understand our dreams or the vision we can have when awake, vision of things existing in another world as it is the case in revelation or inspiration, or vision of things existing only in our imagination.

After a close consideration of what is written in the Asfâr, our paper will concentrate on the text of Usûl al-Kâfî to show what it can learn us about the process of seeing, and the part estimation (wahn) and imagination is playing in it.

The Arabs believed all kinds of fabulous creatures to inhabit the desert. Among these are the ghouls (ghûl, pl. aghwâl or ghîlân) which, assuming different shapes, lead travellers astray to attack and eat them.¹ How is it possible that travellers see and hear those fabulous beings? Mullâ Sadrâ's answer to this question in his Sharh Uûl al-Kâfî 2 provides us with a broader statement of what it means for him to see beyond the mere account of seeing the things that our eyes meet in this material world. For to consider the possibility of seeing ghouls in the desert is for Mullâ Sadrâ to ask in a poetical manner how it is possible to see what has no reality in the outside world, to perceive and be affected by fictional beings.³

Where do these images come from and which one of our faculties does perceive them? The second question is easily answered. It is the sensus communis (al-liss al-mushtarak) that perceives them. They

cannot have any direct effect on the external senses since otherwise every one would see them. They can only be perceived by one of our internal senses and this proves to be the *sensus communis*.⁴

As a matter of fact, even sensory perception of things of this world is of a psychic nature, something that happens inside the soul. Perception takes place due to the presence of the form of what is perceived to the perceiving faculty. What I see is not the form that is in the material thing outside in front of me but as Mullâ Sadrâ says: « The form that the soul sees with the eye of the *sensus communis* ». ⁵

What is needed for perception to be completed is the psychic perception and not the fact that a bodily sensory organ is affected by something as is the case in our perceiving of the things of this material world.⁶ The fact that a sensory organ is stimulated by something is only the occasion for a perceptible image corresponding to that thing to arise within the soul, image that is what is actually perceived.

Perceptible images don't necessarily emerge because or following the fact that an external sensory organ is stimulated by something. They can also be provided by some other sources, one of them being the compositive imagination (*al-mutakhayyila*) whose nature is to imitate things through their likeness and contraries. This faculty is ceaselessly active in creating new forms. If they reach the *sensus communis* these forms are perceived just as the forms arising due to an external stimulus.

In every day life, this does usually not happen. Why? First: because the *sensus communis* is too busy perceiving the forms coming from the external senses. Second: because the intellect refuses to assent to the reality of these forms created by the compositive imagination and denounces their illusive character.⁷ It is not completely impossible however for fictional forms created by the compositive imagination to reach the *sensus communis* and be perceived. This can happen when the imaginative faculty is particularly strong and the judgmental activity of the intellect diminished for some reason, disease or fear for instance.

This is exactly what happens to those who see ghouls in the desert. Their fear makes them see what frightens them. Ghouls are forms created by their compositive imagination and perceived by their *sensus communis* just like any other sensible form. The different shapes they assume are depending on the individual character of the person who sees them. The intellect, paralysed by fear, doesn't reject the existence of these forms. And so these purely fictional images are perceived and do affect their creator.

To see ghouls in the desert, or more generally to see things with no real counterpart in the outside world is not an every day experience. But to see illusive images when asleep is much more common. The external senses being at rest it is much easier for a strong imagination to impose its images on the *sensus communis*. When the sleeper wakes up, his intellect judges this dream to be delusive.

To see fictional forms in dreams or when awake is an experience proper to weak souls dominated by the overpowering influence of the compositive imagination (*al-mutakhayyila*) uncontrolled by intellect.⁸ But this is only a peculiar aspect of seeing things that are not in this material world. Beside these dreams that have no ground there are other dreams that tell us something about what is real and beside these delusive visions there are other visions that are means to know something of a higher reality. In dreams and even when awake, we can see things that have no counterpart in the outside material world but that are not however without ground. Even if sometimes the compositive imagination has something to do with these experiences, what is seen is no more a pure creation of this faculty but has some real counterpart in another higher level of reality. These visions are no more a token of weakness but of perfection of the soul. They are a way to gain knowledge of the Realm of the Unseen (*'âlam al-ghayb*).

Usually our souls are busy managing the affairs of this world, ceaselessly preoccupied by the stimuli of the external senses. But when the soul is not completely imperfect and there is an opportunity for it to escape these occupations, it is prepared to join another higher world, a world of spiritual entities (jawâhir rūlâniyya). The soul becomes then a mirror where the forms of this world are reflected in a more or less perfect manner depending on the perfection of the soul.

This happens mostly in dreams when the external senses are at rest. But the soul is not always able to join a higher world, and all our dreams are not telling something about the truth. If the activity of the compositive imagination is predominant, the images created by this faculty can bother the soul and impede any junction with a higher level of reality just as the images arising when an external sense is stimulated do when awake.⁹ These are the dreams with no real ground, the confused dreams that are the counterpart of illusive visions when awake.

If junction takes place the dream is said to be sincere. But even then the compositive imagination can interfere, if it is strong or the soul's perception of the form weak. In this case the compositive imagination does what it is its nature to do, that is to create imitative forms of what has been seen, obscuring and veiling the primary vision. The dream then needs interpretation, which is difficult and highly doubtful. It can also happen that particularly strong souls have dreams without any interference from the compositive imagination. These are true visions of the higher realm.

When awake it is much more unusual to have such visions of a higher level of reality but it is not totally impossible. Some persons are able to connect when awake with the world of spiritual substances, either because of the perfection of their souls or for some other reason, such as a peculiar temperament (mizâj) dominated by dryness and heat. The people who have such temperament seem to be unaware of the world around them even with the eyes wide open. It is not completely excluded for these people to see something from the Realm of the Unseen, as might happen to madmen and diviners. But only perfect souls can reach the higher levels of the Realm of the Unseen. If their compositive imagination is not too strong, it is pure revelation (waîl), witnessed by the eye of imagination (khayâl). If it is strong, it will give an imitative representation of what has been seen in a sensible form, that will be perceived by the eye of the sensus communis, and this vision will need interpretation (ta'wîl).

What we have learned from what Mullâ Sadrâ says in these pages of his Sharî Uûl al-Kâfî is that there is a possibility to see something else than the things belonging to this material world. What we see then, be it in dreams or when awake, can be something illusive, a pure creation of our imaginative faculty. It can also be something pertaining to another higher level of reality. The fact that some travellers see ghouls in the desert and perceive them as something real makes it clear that sensible perception is not necessarily dependent on the bodily organs, that perception takes place within the soul, so much so that it is possible to have sensible experiences that are wholly internal without any external ground. If sensible perception can do without the external sensory organs, it is possible to understand how we can see things that are real but that do not belong to this material world and can thus not touch one of our sensory organs. This is very important for Mullâ Sadrâ because for him this kind of perception that we experience sometimes in this world, mostly in our dreams and even so in an unperfected manner, is what will prevail in the afterlife, « dreaming being the first level of afterlife, followed by death and perfected by resurrection¹⁰ ».11

Appendix: Translation of Mullâ Sadrâ's Sharî Uûl al-Kâfî, vol. ii, p. 434 -440

[434] Book of proof. Chapter III: On the distinction between the Messenger (rasûl), the Prophet (nabî) and the one endowed with narration (mu`addath)¹²

It contains four hadîths.

First hadîth (436th [hadîth of the Kitâb U`ûl al-Kâfî])

« A number of our companions, from A`mad b. Mu`ammad, from A`mad b. Mu`ammad b. Abî Na`r, from Tha`laba [435] b. Maymûn from Zarâra. He said: I asked Abû Ja`far, – Peace be with him –, about the saying of God Almighty: "He is a messenger [and] a prophet" (19: 51; 19: 54), what is a messenger and what is a prophet? He said: The prophet is the one who sees in his dreams and hears the voice but doesn't see the angel with his own eyes ('âyana), and the messenger is the one who hears the voice, sees in his dreams and sees the angel. I said: And what is the status of the imâm? He said: He hears the voice but doesn't see nor witnesses the angel. And then he recited this verse: "We did not send before you any messenger or prophet" (22: 52) or someone endowed with narration (mu`addath) ».

Commentary

Know that this world is the world of witness (or evidence: 'âlam al-shahâda) and possession (or power, mulk), and the hereafter is the world of the unseen (ghayb) and the dominion (malakût). Man is composed of two parts, one belonging to this world, that is his elemental body (badan 'un`ûrî) that is vanishing, that comes to be and decays, — this being the status of this world and of all that is in it: it is vanishing, coming to be and decaying at every moment. The other belongs to the world to come, and it is his spirit (rûl) that is constant (thâbit) and permanent, — and in the same manner all that is in this world is permanent, everlasting, never passes away.

There are many degrees in the hereafter each surpassing the other in worth, as He says – May He be exalted: « And certainly the hereafter is much superior in respect of degrees and much superior in respect of excellence » (17: 21). The first degree of the hereafter is the state of dream (manâm), then the state of death and its completion is through Raising (ba`th). Sleep is thus a part of the movement towards the return to the hereafter. The Prophet (nabî), as Prophet, is like the raised (mab`ûth) on the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyâma). He sees forms, realities and states that people don't see, as the Prophet says, –May God's blessing be with him and his family: « I do see what you don't (see) ». He is then talking about what he sees and hears in that world [the hereafter] and then tells to the people of this world — who are to tell the truth like sleepers, as he says, – May God's blessing be with him: « People are asleep » — with the dress of words (alfâ`) and by giving examples (amthâl), as He says, – May He be exalted: « These examples We set them forth for the people, and none understand them but those who know » (29: 43).

[I. Dream-visions]

If you want a clarification on this point and an explanation of what is the meaning of prophethood, messengerhood and narrationhood, know first that dream-vision (ru'yâ) is caused (sabab) by the reflection (in'ikâs) from the outer to the inner of the animal pneuma (or spirit, rûl hayawânî) that is the seat of the higher pneuma. This pneuma means a subtle body (jirm la`îf) generated in the cavity of the heart by the vapor of the humors. Its mount (markab) is pure blood and it is a mount for the psychic and animal faculties. By this, life spreads in the whole body (badan) and the faculties of perception and motion join their tools and the organs of sensation and motion.

Therefore if [436] there is an obstruction in its canals that is the nerves that lead to sense perception, sense perception is neutralized and epilepsy and apoplexy take place. And in the same way if a man's hand is constricted tightly, [this man] will feel an insensibility in the extremity of the hand, and his sense perception will immediately be neutralized until [what compresses his hand] is cut, and it comes back after a while.

By means of the arteries, this pneuma spreads to the exterior (manifest side, *Ââhir*) of the body and sometimes it is held in the interior (nonmanifest side, *bâtin*) for reasons like the search for rest after a lot of movement – therefore sleep overcomes when the stomach is full –, or like the fact that the pneuma is scarce and decreased, and does thus not suffice for the exterior and the interior altogether – there are medical reasons for its decrease and increase; exhaustion means that the pneuma has decreased by dissolution due to movement –, or like the humidity and moisture that gain ground in it due to the fact that the pneuma that sustains the faculty of sensation is held back, or the weight that subdues it and hinders its speed of movement, as is predominant in the hammam and after coming out of it and after taking drinks moistening (and soothing) the brain.

[1. Junction with a higher realm]

When the senses are at rest due to some of these reasons, the soul remains free from the preoccupation of the senses. [Usually] it never ceases to be busy reflecting on what the senses bring to it. But when there is an opportunity to escape and all that could be an obstacle is eliminated from it, it is prepared to join (*ittiÖâl*) the noble intellectual spiritual substances in which are all the frames of all existents (*mawjûdât*), – and this is what is called in the language of the Law (*shar'*) the Preserved Table (*al-lawî al-malfûdh*) –, I mean [to join] the forms (*Öuwar*) of the things that are in these intellectual substances, especially that which is in accordance with what is desired by the soul and what matters to it.

The imprint of this form from these [intellectual substances] in the soul when junction takes place is like the imprint of the form of a mirror in another mirror which faces the first one when the veil between them is lifted. Everything that is in one of the mirror appears in the other in proportion to it.

[1 a. No interference from the compositive imagination]

If this form is particular it falls in the soul in the faculty of imagination (*khayâl*) and the retentive faculty (*al-lâfiÂa*) keeps it [437] like it is, in its own shape, and the faculty of compositive imagination (*mutakhayyila*), that imitates things through something similar to them, doesn't operate in it. This vision is thus sincere and doesn't need interpretation.

[1 b. Interference from the compositive imagination]

If the compositive imagination (*mutakhayyila*) is dominant or if the soul's perception of the form is weak, the compositive imagination begins, following its nature, to replace what the soul has seen by something similar. It replaces the man by a tree, and the enemy by a snake or it replaces it by what is similar to it or corresponds to it in some way. It can also be by something opposite, like when someone sees that he will beget a boy and it's a girl who comes into the world and vice versa.

These visions need interpretation. The transpositions of the imaginations may not be precisely kept in a determined manner. The modes of interpretation ramify and are varying depending on persons, states, professions, seasons of the year, health of the sleeper or his being ill. The one who interprets them only reach [their meaning] by a kind of intuition. There are many mistakes in this and ambiguity prevails in it.

[2. Confused dreams]

As for confused dreams, these are the dreams for which there is no ground. Their source is the movement of the faculty of compositive imagination (mutakhayyila) and its agitation. In most of the states, this [faculty] does not let up imitating and transforming [things], and it doesn't let up either during sleep or in most of the states. When the soul is weak and remains preoccupied by the imitations of the [compositive imagination], just like it is preoccupied by the senses when awake, and thus not prepared to join the spiritual substances, if the compositive imagination with its agitation is strong for some reason it is ceaselessly active in imitating and creating forms that do not have existence. These [forms] stay in the retentive faculty until [this man] wakes up and remembers what he saw in his dream.

There are also reasons due to the states of the body and its constitution (mizâj) for its imitations. If the bile dominates its constitution, it will imitate it by yellow things. And if there is heat in it, [438] the [compositive imagination] will imitate it by fire or by a hot bath, and if moistness dominates it, it will imitate it by snow or rain, and if it's melancholy (black bile) that dominates its [constitution], it will imitate it by black things and dreadful things.

The form of fire for instance occurs in the compositive imagination in case of domination of the heat only because the heat that is in a place spreads to its neighbourhood, like the light of the sun spreads to the bodies (ajsâm), meaning that it is a reason for its occurring, since things were created existent by an existence that pours forth what is like it on others. The faculty of compositive imagination being imprinted in or attached to the hot body, it is affected by it in a way that befits its nature and its world, since it is not a body so that it could receive the heat as such. It receives thus from the heat what it is in its nature to receive from it, and that is its form and its likeness.

This is the way the soul is affected by the body and the body by the soul, since every one of them is affected by its companion by the kind of existence which befits it. Don't you see that if anger, which is a psychic disposition, dominates the soul, the body is affected by it by reddening and becoming warm and [other] bodily dispositions? And in the same way, the acts of the body and its characteristics affect the soul with psychic dispositions that befit it.

[II. Visions when awake]

As for the reason for the knowledge of the Unseen (ma'rifat al-ghayb) and the vision of what has no existence in the external [world] when awake (fi l-yaq'în), it is what I will say [now].

[1. Junction with a higher realm]

The reason for the need of sleep and its occurrence is one of the things that prevail due to the weakness of the soul and the fact that the senses are preoccupying it, so that if the senses are at rest, [the soul] joins the intellectual substances and is prepared to receive from them. It is possible that this occurs to some souls when awake for two reasons.

[1a. Strength of the soul]

The first one is that the soul is so strong that it is not preoccupied by the senses so as to be completely absorbed by them and impeded [to do anything else]. On the contrary, its strength encompasses the grasp of both sides and the care for both aspects, the upper aspect and the lower aspect, altogether. One concern does not preoccupy it so as to distract it from another, just like some souls are strong enough to join in one and the same time writing, speaking, hearing and seeing. It is possible that the preoccupation of the senses slackens for such souls in some states, and that they ascend to the World of the Unseen and so some things from this [World] may appear to them, this being a part of prophethood (nubuwwa).

Then if the compositive imagination is weak and the eye of the internal sense is strong, what has been disclosed to it from the Unseen remains in its memory, and this is pure revelation (walî). And if the compositive imagination is strong and is engaged in imitating [things], [as is its] nature [to do], this revelation [439] will need exegesis (ta'wîl), just as dream-vision needs interpretation.

[1b. Constitution (mizâj)]

The second reason is that dryness and heat dominate the constitution so much so that the soul is distracted from what the senses supply due to the domination of melancholy. With eyes wide open [the man with such a constitution] is like someone perplexed, absent, inattentive to what he sees and hears, this being due to the weakness of the exit of the pneuma to the outward (Ââhir). This man also, it is not impossible that something from the Unseen among things that befit him should be disclosed to his soul. He relates it and this flows on his tongue, but even then, he seems to be unaware of what he is saying.

This exists for madmen and epileptics and some diviners among Indians and Arabs: they tell what is in accordance with what will be. This is a kind of deficiency and what one sees from the Unseen is something particular that is in some lower intermediate world (barzakh). But the first reason is a kind of perfection and what is seen may be from the forms of the higher Malakût.

[2. Illusive visions]

As for the reason why man sees when awake things that do not have existence in reality, [you have] first to know that to see (ibÛâr), and in the same way all sensations and perceptions, doesn't mean in reality to witness (shuhûd) the form itself that is in the external matter. This latter form is not perceived (maîsûs) nor is it occurring to the perceptive soul. What is essentially perceived (maîsûs) is the forms that the soul sees with the eye of the sensus communis. As for the [forms] that are outside they are a reason for a form that resembles it to be manifest to the sensus communis. What is perceived in reality is this representative form and the external [form] is called perceived in another sense.

[You have also to know that] for the representative form to occur before the sensus communis it makes no difference if it occurs from outside and rises to it by using the tools of the senses to perceive what is outside or if it occurs from inside, and moves down to it by using the compositive imagination to make present what is in the treasury [of the soul] among the objects of perception (mudrakât), be it intellectual or other: everything that occurs to the sensus communis is witnessed (mushâhad).

[440] This being stated, we say: the soul sometimes perceives something from the Unseen (ghayb) and that which it perceived stays in the memory as it is. But sometimes it is received in a weak way, so that

the compositive imagination seizes command of it and gives an imitative representation of it in a sensible form. If this form strengthens in the compositive imagination the eye of the *sensus communis* regards it as true and [this form] is represented to it, so that the soul sees and witnesses [this form] with the eye of sense, even if the eyelids are closed and even if it is in complete darkness.

What man imagines (*takhayyala*) when awake is [usually] not seen by the eye of the *sensus communis* so as to be witnessed only because generally the *sensus communis* is preoccupied by what the external senses are bringing to it, and because the intellect breaks into pieces the forgeries of the compositive imagination and refutes them, and [these forms] are not strong enough to be represented when awake. But as soon as the intellect becomes too weak to deny and refute [the forgeries of the compositive imagination], due to some disease or a violent fear, it is not impossible for them to be imprinted in the *sensus communis*, as is the common doctrine, or to be present to it, as we say, so that the sick person sees images that have no existence. And in the same way if fear achieves supremacy and the estimative faculty (*wahm*) is strong and the refuting intellect is weak, the form of what is feared will be represented to the sense so that it witnesses (*shâhada*) it and sees with his eye (*ba'ðara*) what he fears. Therefore sometimes the frightened coward sees dreadful forms for which there is no existence. This is the reason for the ghouls that can be seen and whose voice can be heard in the deserts. And sometimes the desire (*shahwa*) of this sick person becomes more intense due to some weakness, so that he sees what he desires. He extends his hand to it and moves [it] back as if he were eating and seeing people and things for which there is no existence.

Notes:

1- On the *ghûl* in the Arabic and Islamic traditions, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, s. v.

2- Mullâ Sadrâ, *Sharh Usûl al-Kâfî*, vol. ii, p. 434 sq., *Bâb al-farq bayna l-rasûl wa l-nabî wa l-muhaddath*. This text is primarily concerned with the explanation of the prophetic visions. To do so, Mullâ Sadrâ explains the possibility of dreams, illusive or sincere, and of visions when awake. There are other texts where these different aspects of vision are considered. See *al-Asfâr al-arba'a fî l-hikmat al-muta'âliyya* (henceforth abbr. *Asfâr*), vol. viii, p. 209-210, where the inner nature of sensation, and specially vision, is stressed, and *Tafsîr sûrat al-Baqara*, vol. i, p. 295-302, on the vision of the Angel by the Prophet. Mullâ Sadrâ is not the first philosopher in the Islamic tradition to consider this matter. See the chapter on *al-mutakhayyila* (compositive imagination, representation) in *Fârâbî's Mabâdî' ar-râ' ahl al-madînat al-fâzila* (*Al-Farabi on the perfect state. A revised text with introduction, translation, and commentary by Richard Walzer. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, ch. 14, p. 211-227*) and *Ibn Sînâ* on the same subject in his *De Anima*, M. IV, f. 2 (*Avicenna's De Anima. Being the psychological part of Kitâb al-Shifâ'.* Edited by F. Rahman, London, Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 169-182). The way Mullâ Sadrâ is dealing with the matter is not particularly innovative but his exposition reveals the peculiarities of his doctrine on sensation and on the human soul.

3- Note that ghouls are not considered by every one in the Islamic tradition to be fictional. See the references to the classical authors like *Mas'ûdî* and *Jâhiã* in the article referred to in note 1.

4- See Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, vol. viii, p. 209-210. The very fact that we see fictional images is used by Mullâ Sadrâ in this text to prove that there is such a faculty as *sensus communis*.

5- *Sharh Usûl al-Kâfî*, vol. ii, p. 439. See also several passages of the *Asfâr*, for instance *Asfâr*, vol. viii, p. 203 : « What is perceived essentially is the form that is present to the soul, not the external thing

corresponding to it ». See also 'Arshiyya, p. 248 ; English translation by J. W. Morris, The Wisdom of the Throne, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 159.

6- See Asfâr, vol. viii, p. 234 : « In sensation (ihsâs), two things happen : stimulation (ta'aththur) of the sensory [organ] and perception (idrâk) by the soul, [...] that is the fact that the form is there (Husûl al-sûra) ».

7- A chapter of the Asfâr is entitled « That the senses do not know if there is an existence to what is sensed, this being the concern of the intellect » (Asfâr, vol. iii, p. 498 sq.). The madman and the sleeper are given as example: they can believe in the existence of what their sensus communis perceives, even if it is fictional, because the intellect is not there to judge. See Asfâr, vol. iii, p. 499.

8- It is the intellectually weaks (zu'afâ' al-'uqûl) who are readily influenced by their fear. See Asfâr, vol. viii, p. 210.

9- See 'Arshiyya, p. 238. English translation by J. W. Morris, The Wisdom of the Throne (1981), p. 138 : « It is not true [...] that these forms are mere phantom images without the regular effects of real being, as is the case in most dreams. For in sleep too, the soul is usually preoccupied with the body ».

10- Or by Raising (bi-l-ba'th).

11- Sharh Usûl al-Kâfî, vol. ii, p. 435. See also 'Arshiyya, p. 238. English translation by J. W. Morris, The Wisdom of the Throne (1981), p. 138: « The complete manifestation of these forms and the perfection of the power of their being occurs only after death. [...] Then the Unseen becomes directly visible, and knowledge becomes immediate vision. In this is the secret of the "Return" and the resurrection of the body ».

12- On these muhaddathûn, see Mullâ Sadrâ, Tafsîr Sûrat al-Baqara, vol. i, p. 302: « [...] the muhadaththûn, with "a" on the doubled dâl are those who discard the World of witness ('âlam al-shahâda) [i. e. this world] and ascend to the World of the Unseen ('âlam al-ghayb). They may hear a voice from inside when awake but they do not see ('âyana) an individual person ».

13- That is, composed of the four elements.

14- See Mullâ Sadrâ, 'Arshiyya, p. 234. English translation by J. W. Morris, The Wisdom of the Throne, p. 128: « [...] this world is a realm of extinction, transience, and passing away, while the other world is a realm of stability ».

15- bi-l-ba'th : bi-l-'abth

16- This saying , usually followed by this phrase : « When they die, they awaken » is frequently cited. Mullâ Sadrâ usually attributes it to Imâm 'Alî (as in Mullâ Sadrâ, 'Arshiyya, p. 238. English translation by J. W. Morris, The Wisdom of the Throne (1981), p. 138).

17- kamâ : kamâl

18- On this animal pneuma or spirit and its differenciation from the natural and the psychic pneumata or spirits, see Mullâ Sadrâ, Tafsîr âyat al-nûr, vol. iv, p. 368 sq. See also Ibn Sînâ, De Anima, M. v, f. 8

(Edited by F. Rahman (1959), p. 263-264) and *al-Mabdâ' wa l-ma'âd*, Edition 'A. Nûrânî, Tehran, 1363/1984, p. 95.

19- We translate here *ad sensum*. The fact that obstruction in the canals of transmission impede sensation is taken as a proof for the existence of a subtle body between the body (*badan*) and the faculties by Avicenna. See Ibn Sînâ, *De Anima*, M. v, f. 8 (Edited by F. Rahman (1959), p. 263 and *al-Mabdâ' wa l-ma'âd*, Edition 'A. Nûrânî (1363/1984), p. 95.

20- *fa-lâ yakfî : fa-lâ yafî*

21- *bi-sabab : bi-sbt*

22- The anger and its effects is also used in the 'Arshiyya to prove that the dispositions of the soul can cause external effects. See 'Arshiyya, p. 249. English translation by J. W. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne* (1981), p. 160.

23- The Highest Kingdom, the highest Realm of reality.

24- *nafs al-sûra : nafs sûra*

25- See the passages referred to in n. 5, and *Tafsîr sûrat al-Baqara*, vol. i, p. 298 (in a text on the vision of the Angel of revelation by the Prophet): « What is needed for sensible vision and hearing in man is the existence of the visible form, – like the colors, the shapes, etc. –, and of the auditive form, – like the sounds, the letters and the words –, for the soul through its internal faculty that perceives the particular forms, and their representation before the internal sense that unites all the external senses. What is seen in reality and what is heard in reality from the thing that represents itself to the external sense is its form that is present within the rational soul and its realm (*malakût*). As for the existence of the form in its external reality and its spatial matter, it is only perceived by accident and secondarily ».

26- We have said already that Mullâ Sadrâ's approach to the question of visions is not without some relations with the approach of other philosophers, especially Ibn Sînâ. Here even the expression is near that of Avicenna in his *Najât* (*Ilâhiyyât*, *Fasl fî ma'âd al-anfus al-insâniyya*, Ed. M. Fakhry, Beyrouth, *Dâr al-Âfâq al-jadîda*, 1405/1985, p. 333). Note Mullâ Sadrâ's use of *huzûr* instead of Avicenna's *irtisâm*.

Unification of Intelligent and Intelligible

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Abstracts

The question of unification between the Intelligent and Intelligible has been discussed since the olden times; the matter has also been attended to by Islamic philosophers. There are those such as Ibn Sina who vehemently oppose this unification and those like Sadr-ul Muta'liheen Shirazi, and his followers, who are inclined towards the unification between all genres of the 'Perceiver and Perceived', including that of the Intelligent and Intelligible. The latter have proved this concept by means of the 'demonstration of correlation'.

Demonstration of correlation is based on a series of fundamental principles to which one must pay attention. The author has attained another way for proving the unification between the Intelligent and

Intelligible and the paper aims to explain this method in detail. Proving this matter (of unification) bears major importance in the field of 'Ma'rifat-shinasi' (Epistemology); however, one can employ this method to solve many of the existing problems and difficulties. Sadr-ul Muta'liheen Shirazi's theory on the subject of the unification between the intelligent and Intelligible may be compared to that which is proposed by Husserl's i.e. concerning intuition existence; the latter should be discussed at a later, more convenient time.

The rule of the union of the intelligent and intelligible had been posed since the olden times; and Porphyry is said to have discussed this issue in details. The Muslim philosophers also have paid attention to this rule. Ibn-Sina, however, has rejected it. On the other hand, philosophers such as Mulla Sadra and his followers had staunch belief in this principle, and alleged arguments to prove it. To prove this rule, Mulla Sadra has appealed to the argument of correlation (tadayuf). In this argument, he has relied on some fundamental principles, which play important roles in this argument.

These principles are as follows:

1. The actual forms, which always make up the actuality of things are of two kinds: one, the actual forms, which depend on the matter and space; and the other, the actual forms, which are free of the matter, time, space...The actual form, which depends on the matter and its concomitants, will never become the essential intelligible; and even if it is called "intelligible", it is, in fact, accidental intelligible. The actual form, which is separate from the matter and its concomitants, however, is always the essential intelligible. Thus, the intelligibles are of two kinds: one, the essential intelligible, i.e. a separate and intellectual form, which depends on the mind; and the other, the accidental intelligible, which is the objective form of the thing in the external world, which depends on the matter.
2. The philosophers are of one accord that the existence of the intelligible is always to be intellected by the intelligent; that is, the psychical existence of the intelligible form is nothing but the existence of the form of the intelligible which is intellected by the intelligent. In other words, the essential knowledge of the actual intelligible and its existence, which is intellected by the intelligent are identical; and there is no discrepancy involved.
3. An intelligible form, which is separate from the matter and depends on the mind, is always an actual intelligible, whether there is, out of its essence, an intelligent to intellect it or not. Thus, the intelligibility of the actual intelligible could be in no way divided, since its essence is the intelligibility, and no other title but the intelligibility can be applied to it.

The intelligibility for the essential intelligible is not like the movingness for the body; since in the latter case, if we ignore the movingness of the body, the attribute of being a moving body will be negated from the body, the attribute of being a body, however, remains intact. As regards the actual intelligible, however, if we ignore the attribute of the intelligibility, no other thing will remain. Thus the attribute of the essence of the actual intelligible is intelligibility, and has no other thing but the intelligibility. Thus the actual intelligible is always the essential intelligible. Taking what has been already said into consideration, Mulla Sadra's argument, which is called the argument of correlation, can be understood; for what is, whether there is another thing or not, actual intelligible, in its essence, will be, according to the rule of correlation, the actual intelligent as well.

As regards the correlation, it is agreed that two correlative things are correspondent in existence as well, and thus if one of them is potential, the other one also will be potential, and if it is actual, the other one is actual as well.

From the previous promises it is concluded that the actual intelligible, which, whether is other thing or not, is intelligible, is the actual intelligent to intellect itself well. And thus the rule of the union of the intelligent and intelligible is realized. Here it may be said that the point, mentioned by Mulla Sadra, that the intelligible, whether there is other thing or not, is not free of the objections; for, if we demonstrate the union of the intelligent and intelligible through the argument of correlation, it means that the intelligible is intelligible only when there is an intelligent to intellect it, and since the intelligible is always in correlation with the intelligent, one of them can never be intellected without the other. Thus how can it be claimed that the actual intelligible, whether there is other thing or not, is intelligible?

Among those who have interjected this objection and then answered it is Hakim Sabzawari. He says: when we speak of the actual intelligible, the existence and the reality of the intelligible form, which is the origin of separation of the intelligibility, is meant. Thus the objective reality of a thing is among the independent and non-correlative realities, which the notion of correlative is applied to it in the mind. This holds for the cause and the effect as well; since two notions of the causeness and causedness are correlated, and according to the rule of correlation they should be correspondent as well; whereas, according to the philosophers, the cause is always prior over the caused (effect). So when we say that the cause is prior over the caused (effect), we mean the existence of the cause, whereas the notions of the causeness and causedness are known, in the mind as correlated and correspondent ones.

The other way to prove the union of the intelligent and intelligible is to say that: what is intelligent, is intelligible as well, since if a thing intellects another thing, there occurs another intellection as well; that is, the intelligent thing intellects its own intellection on the intelligible thing; for, the intellection of the intelligent thing on the intelligible thing is the acquisition of the intelligible form by the intelligent. This acquisition, which itself is acquired by the intelligent, will not be concealed from the intelligent. Therefore, the intelligent thing always intellects its own intellection on the intelligible thing, and evidently the intelligent's intellection is nothing but the intelligent itself. Thus, it could be claimed that what is intelligent is intelligible as well.

Knowledge as Appropriation vs. Knowledge as Reprehension

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Abstract

The relation between the knowing subject and the object known, one of the central themes of epistemology, has taken on a number of different and conflicting courses in Islamic philosophy. The definition of knowledge as representation (al-'ilm al-irtisami) was expounded extensively by the Peripatetics, a major position going back to Aristotle himself. This view construed knowledge in terms of a mirror relationship between the subject who knows and the object which is represented and mirrored in the mental plane of existence. The second major perspective taken on the subject was mainly that of kalam thinkers who had defined knowledge as a relation (idafah) obtaining between the subject and the object. Reminiscent of Locke's description of knowledge as a relation between ideas, this view was proposed to underline not only the ontological but also the epistemological independence of the subject and the object, thus leading to a concept of knowledge without an existential and 'presential' (huduri)

content. The third position on knowledge whose roots go back to Aristotelian (Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius and Muslim Peripatetics) and neo-Platonic sources was fully developed in the post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy, especially in the school of Mulla Sadra, and came to be known as the unity of the knower and the known (ittihad al-'aql wa'l-ma'qul). Historically speaking, Mulla Sadra is the first philosopher to have given a full exposition of this view of knowledge by drawing from a number of sources such as the Peripatetic, the Illuminationist (ishraqi) and Ibn Arabian (akbari and 'irfani). Realizing the intrinsic difficulties of both the theory of knowledge as representation and that of as relation, Mulla undertakes the grand task of recasting the entire issue of knowledge in a new framework, viz., knowledge in terms of the modes of being (wujud). In sharp contrast to the Peripatetics, Sadra defines knowledge not as an abstract concept subsisting in the subjective-mental plane of existence but as a mode of being (nahw al-wujud). By grounding knowledge in the all-inclusive reality of Being, Sadra redefines the terms of epistemology under what he calls the primacy of Being (asalat al-wujud), a conception which gives a new meaning to the relation between the mind and the world on the one hand, and between epistemology and ontology on the other. My paper will combine the historical and philosophical approaches to the problem with the aim of both clarifying the historical trajectory of the issue and its philosophical significance for some long-standing issues in epistemology.

I. Problem Stated

The kind of relationship that one can establish between the knowing subject and the object known is one of the cardinal issues of epistemology and has given rise to a number of positions within Greek and Islamic philosophy. Of these, the doctrine that has come to be known as the unity of the subject who intellects and the object of intellection (ittihad al-'aql wa'l-ma'qul) underlies a deep and persistent current in Islamic philosophy. Sadr al-Din Shirazi (980/1572-1050/1640), known as Mulla Sadra, is without doubt the most ardent exponent of this doctrine with his extensive analyses and glosses in addition to a separate treatise devoted to the subject. With Sadra, the idea of knowledge as a unity of the intellect and the object of intellection becomes the hallmark of all post-Sadorean epistemology. This view was a logical outcome of Sadra's bold attempt to cast the whole story of knowledge (al-'ilm) in terms of being (al-wujud) and its modes, an attempt whose formulation given by Sadra has tremendous implications for epistemological thinking in the post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy.

In his magnum opus *Asfar*, Sadra, after quoting Farabi's celebrated treatise on the intellect with some variations, gives a summary genealogy of this idea and traces it back to the famous *Theology of Aristotle* (uthulujiyyah Aristu), hence describing it as an implicit, if not explicitly admitted, part of the Peripatetic school. Sadra repeatedly refers to the failure of earlier philosopher, especially that of Ibn Sina and his close disciples, in refuting this view, and expresses his bewilderment as to how they denied it as mere poetry and imagination.

In this treatise [i.e., Farabi's *Risalah fi'l-'aql*], there are parts that clearly point to the unity of the intellect with the intelligibles and to the possibility of man's becoming a simple active intellect in whom all the intelligibles are united. In addition to the clear writings of this teacher [Farabi], there is also the book *Uthulujiyyah* attributed to the first teacher Aristotle and what the headmaster [Ibn Sina] narrates from some of the students of this great philosopher. [By this], I mean Porphyry who wrote a book on the intellect and the intelligibles, which has a section on the unity of the intellect with the intelligibles and its union with the active intellect. There is also a book on this very subject by Alexander of Aphrodisias whom the master [Ibn Sina] describes as a virtuous and knowledgeable philosopher among the ancients. In spite of all these [works], they, in a surprising way, permitted the denial of this sublime matter and the [level of] exaggeration with which those who did not examine the matter carefully rejected it like

the later philosopher and Ibn Sina and those who came after him did until our own day. Anyone who has not reached this state [of knowledge and understanding] should follow the will that Ibn Sina states at the end of the *Isharat*.¹

Insofar as the relation between the knowing subject and the object known is concerned, we may detect, according to Sadra's classification, three major theories of knowledge, which are strictly of philosophical nature in Islamic thought. The first view is the relational theory of knowledge (*idafah*) that construes knowledge as a relation arising between the subject and the object. Defended chiefly by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and a host of later theologians (*muta'akhhirun*), the notion of knowledge as a relation between the mind and objects hinges upon a number of premises. The most fundamental premise of this view is its construal of the domain of objects/facts as bereft of intrinsic intelligibility. Since the knowledge of objects arises as a relation in the mind, the objects that exist in the extra-mental sphere do not possess a cognitive content prior to their intellection by the mind. This makes knowledge a property of the knower -- a position that underlies much of modern epistemology. From the point of view of the subject, to say that intellection (*ta'aqqul*) obtains only as a relation between the subject and the object is equal to positing a subject without ideas and concepts, a subject whose possibility is denied even by Ibn Sina's famous 'suspended man' (*al-insan al-muta'alliq*).² When taken to its logical extreme, as some critiques of it like Sadra do, knowledge as a relation presents a number of grave difficulties, which we have to leave for another discussion.

The second view of knowledge is the representational theory of knowledge (*al-'ilm al-irtisami* or *al-'ilm al-husuli al-irtisami*). The Peripatetic philosophers were the privileged patrons of this view as they were content with focusing on representation (*rasm*, *irtisam*) as the most important and potent form of knowledge. Similar to Wittgenstein's picture theory of language minus his strict atomism, the theory of knowledge as representation underlies the epistemological orthodoxy of classical philosophy and is again based on a number of ontological and cosmological postulates. Said briefly, this view states that knowledge is a true representation of the external world in the mind if and when there is a veritable correspondence (*tatabuq*) between the extra-mental object and its mental picture. Thus 'mirroring', to use a Rortian language, becomes the proper abode and method of all knowledge. It is the impressions that we gather from the exteworld that give us a picture of the world, whose truth value is judged by the correspondence obtained between the mental impressions and the physical world. Defined as such, knowledge as representation and/or impression presupposes the existence of objects prior to the knowing subject. It is obvious that this theory of knowledge would face a number of difficulties especially in cases where the reality and impression are given as a single unity such as in the case of self-knowledge and God's knowledge of things.³

The third view of knowledge which was proposed, we may assume, as a response to the first two is called knowledge by presence or presential knowledge (*al-'ilm al-huduri*). Developed and defended primarily by the illuminationist (*al-ishraqiyyun*) philosophers, the concept of knowledge as presence (*hudur*) undercuts the very foundations of the representational theory of knowledge and casts the whole story of knowledge in terms of being (*wujud*) and its modes (*anha' al-wujud*). Although Suhrawardi, the founder of the school of illumination (*ishraq*), was an essentialist in his ontology and did not consider being (*wujud*) any more than a general term abstracted by the mind, the posterity turned away from his essentialist ontology (*asalat al-mahiyah*) while retaining the metaphysics of light that he had espoused. Thus, Suhrawardi's life-long preoccupation with self-knowledge and his rigorous definition of all knowledge as light and presence came to represent the biggest challenge ever faced by the representational theory of knowledge both in Islamic and Western philosophy.⁴

All of this brings us to Mulla Sadra, who has given the most extensive account of knowledge as the unity of the intellect and the object of intellection in Islamic philosophy. It was Sadra's grand synthesis that put knowledge as presence and the unity of the intellect and the object of intellection, which is a corollary of the first view, at the center of all epistemology in the post-Sadorean era of Islamic philosophy. Sadra's epistemology of being revolves around the fundamental idea that knowledge is predicated upon the essential unity (ittihad) that obtains between the intellect or the knower ('aqil) and the object of intellection or the known (ma'qul).⁵ Hence the title of Sadra's celebrated treatise 'ittihad al-'aqil wa'l-ma'qul', a title which defines, both historically and philosophically, much of the post-Sadorean epistemology in Islamic philosophy.

More often than not, Sadra proudly declares this view to be one of the crown achievements of his philosophy, which he calls 'transcendent wisdom' (al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah), an achievement which as great a mind as even Ibn Sina was not able to foresee. Putting the language of triumphalism aside, Sadra is aware of the fact that the kind of unity that he envisages in the process of knowing runs against the common sense epistemology which is based on the binary opposition of the subject and the object. Furthermore, there is an unremitting opposition to it by the Peripatetics, especially by Ibn Sina who did not hesitate to call it 'sheer sophistry and poetry'. Although Sadra firmly believed that the Peripatetic position on this particular question was never decided and that Ibn Sina and others implicitly accepted it, he always warned against simplistic attempts to grasp the true meaning of the union which he advocates. It is for this reason that he always states a number of aphorisms and even prayers after giving his full account of the subject. ⁶ Sadra's main concern, we may infer, is to show the philosophical subtlety of the argument by insisting that the ultimate grasp of the matter thrives on a metaphysical vision or insight, which is hoped to take us beyond the minimalist oppositions of common sense epistemology, and which he calls 'essential witness' (shuhud 'ayni). Keeping this point in mind, Sadra's reading of the history of philosophy, both Islamic and Greek, to which he owes on this particular issue more than we may expect, displays a remarkable attempt of reconstruction and synthesis. At any rate, Sadra was aware of the long and surprisingly persistent history of this idea in both Greek and Islamic traditions. In what follows, we will try to give a historical analysis of the subject, hoping that this background will contribute to our understanding of the problem as it is addressed by Mulla Sadra.

II. The Greek Background

It is customary to turn to Plotinus and the neo-Platonists for the full exposition of the idea that knowledge comes about as a union between the intellect and the object of intellection. Indeed, Plotinus gives a considerable space to its analysis in the *Enneads* which has remained to this day the locus classicus in Greek on the subject. We also know that this idea was both hailed and criticized as the hallmark of neo-Platonism. Even though the poor Plotinus never enjoyed the celebrity of Aristotle because parts of his *Enneads* (IV, V and VI) were translated into Arabic as the *Kitab Uthulujiyya Aristotalis* and his name *aflutin* or *aflutinus* and nickname *al-shayk al-yunani* is a rarity in classical Arabic sources,⁷ his disciple and biographer Porphyry (*furfirius* in Arabic) was credited (or discredited) for envisaging an essential unity between *nous*, *noon* and *noeton*, namely the intellect, the process of intellection and the object of intellection. Prior to Plotinus' bold exposition and defense of the subject, however, there is a trajectory of development we have to pursue, which will ultimately bring us back to Plotinus himself.

Plato's *Dialogues* do not present a full-fledged defense or discussion of the problem. Nevertheless there are certain passages which we may take as pointing to the direction taken by Plotinus and other Platonists. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates, when giving his argument about the immortality of the soul only

minutes before drinking the poison in his cell, refers to a relationship of *homoiōs* between the *ousia* and the *psyche* (77 a). The human soul, which is the intelligible principle in man, shares with the essence or archetypal reality of things something fundamental, which makes it superior to the perishable body.

'Yes, Socrates, I am convinced that ... the existence of the soul before birth cannot be separated from the existence of the essence of which you speak. For there is nothing which to my mind is so patent as that beauty, goodness, and the other notions of which you were just now speaking, have a most real and absolute existence' (Phaedo, 76 d-77 a).

Furthermore, the soul (*nous*) is akin to the intelligible world in such a way that it faces no difficulty in uniting with the *ousia* of things. The Platonic philosopher attains happiness in this world only by becoming one with the intelligible world.

'...the true lover of knowledge is always striving after being -- that is his true nature; he will not rest in the multiplicity of individuals ... until he have attained the knowledge of the true nature of every essence by a sympathetic and kindred power in the soul, and by that power drawing near (*pleesiasas*) and mingling (*migeis*) and becoming incorporate with very being (*toōn ontos*), having begotten mind and truth, he will have knowledge...' (The Republic, VI, 490 b-c).

This is not to suggest that there is an absolute unity between the soul and the Forms. It is, however, true to say that the soul, being immortal, simple, and indivisible, belongs to the Divine order (80 a-b).

This makes the soul share something of the Divine, on the basis of which man is innately capable of knowing.⁸ The isomorphic unity between the possessor of knowledge and what it knows is of course a Greek idea as old as the pre-Socratics, and Aristotle gives a well-informed account of it in the *De Anima* (404 b) and cites the *Timaeus* as one of its primary sources among the Greeks.⁹ The idea that 'only the like can know the like' (*homoio to homoion*) underlines the essential unity between man and what can be known, suggesting that the intellect and what it knows cannot be of two separate orders of reality. On the contrary, they belong to the realm of the intelligible, a realm in which the intellect, intellection and what is intellected constitute a unity without fissure. This turns all knowledge into the exclusive property of the intelligible world because the intellect knows to the extent to which it participates in the reality of the intelligible. In other words, the homogeneity of the intellect with the intelligible renders knowledge possible, and every act of true knowledge becomes a way of sharing in the intelligible world.¹⁰

In a surprising way, Aristotle, despite his professed language of immanence against Plato's transcendentalism, speaks of a unity between *noetos* and *noeta*, viz., the objects of thought and the soul or the mind (*De Anima*, 430 a). This somewhat enigmatic part of the *De Anima*, whose few lines have captured the attention of the neo-Platonists as well as the Peripatetics for a long time and led to the writing of a number of commentaries, depicts immaterial substances as displaying an isomorphic unity between *episteme* and *episteton*, namely the process of thinking and being thought. This unity is reached when the potential intellect becomes actual by thinking the intelligible substance. Aristotle's text reads as follows:

'We have stated ... that the intellect, prior to thinking, is in a certain way potentially the intelligible objects but is none of them actually; and it should [be regarded potentially] as [being] in a tablet which has no actual writing. This is indeed the case with the intellect. Moreover the intellect itself is intelligible like the [other] intelligible objects. For in the case of objects without matter, that which thinks and that

which is being thought are the same, for theoretical knowledge and its knowable object are the same' (De Anima, 429 b- 430 a).¹¹

Aristotle's version of this problem is obviously imbedded in a number of postulates that he puts forward concerning the Divine intellect and the self-intelligibility of the intellect, a fundamental issue into which we cannot enter here.¹² In addition to the De Anima, Aristotle makes a similar point in the Metaphysics, which combines in a sense the so-called distinction between the psychological and cosmological intellects.

'If thinking and being thought of are different, in respect of which does goodness belong to thought? For to be an act of thinking and to be an object of thought are not the same thing. We answer that in some cases the knowledge is the object. In the productive sciences it is the substance or essence of the object, matter omitted, and in the theoretical sciences the definition or the act of thinking is the object. Since, then, thought and the object of thought are not different in the case of things that have not matter, the divine thought and its objects will be the same, i.e., the thinking will be one with the object of its thought' (Metaphysics, XII, 1074b-1075a).¹³

These lines of Aristotle were interpreted by the posterity to prove the self-subsistence of the Divine Intellect that contains the principles of intellection in its own essence. Furthermore, the idea of the intellect as having the principle of intellection in itself was a corollary of the hylomorphic epistemology of the Peripatetics. Since knowledge, in the Peripatetic perspective, is based on abstracting the intelligible form of things from their material garment, the farther removed a thing is from matter, the closer it is to the intelligible realm. This explains Aristotle's insistence that the immaterial intelligible substances are both intelligible and the subject of their intellection. As Ibn Sina would later say, every intelligible form (al-surah al-ma'qulah) contains its principle of intellection and intelligibility in itself and becomes purely actual and realized when detached, namely abstracted from its material matrix.¹⁴

The Peripatetic principles that we just summarized, as formulated by Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius, were incorporated by the Muslim Peripatetics and applied to God's knowledge in order to address the question of Divine intellection. Whether what the posterity made out of those few lines coincided with what Aristotle meant is something we can not decide here. It is, however, certain that the later readers and commentators of Aristotle interpreted him as saying that the unity between the intellect and the object of its intellection is a sine qua non of all veritable knowledge in things without matter, i.e., the intelligible substances. The numerous references to Aristotle in the Sadrean corpus, whether from the pseudo-Aristotelian Uthulujiyyah or from the translations of the De Anima¹⁵, give weight to the view that Aristotle's scant remarks on this particular problem were read through the eyes of Alexander of Aphrodisias, whom Farabi calls the 'exegete'.¹⁶

The De Intellectu, attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias, is one of the key Greek texts under whose light the later commentators, neo-Platonists and Muslim philosophers read and commented upon Aristotle. In this regard, Alexander's short work, which reads more like a restatement than a commentary, is one of those key texts that have paved the way for the neo-Platonic reconstruction of Aristotle. Although we know little about the life and career of Alexander, we are informed by Porphyry that he was respected and read as an authority in the seminar of Plotinus.¹⁷ After all, Alexander as Alexander mysticus is considered to be the source of Aritoteles mysticus.¹⁸ The De Intellectu was translated into Arabic in the school of Hunayn ibn Ishaq as early as the 9th century and enjoyed a considerable prestige among the Muslim philosophers who used and commented upon it.¹⁹ One major exception is perhaps Averroes who accused the Peripatetics of his day of being 'Alexandrist' in their

interpretation of the Stagirate.²⁰ Nevertheless Sadra, for instance, quotes the full text of the *De Intellectu* in his *Asfar* with some minor variations and omissions.²¹

The *De Intellectu* is the source of a number of key issues in the Aristotelian tradition. Among them, the notion of the unity of the intellect with the object of its intellection is of particular importance for our purposes here. Sadra refers to it, without actually mentioning its title, as one of the primary sources of this idea and admonishes Ibn Sina and his students for failing to appreciate Alexander's remarks about the problem. At any rate, the application of this idea to the nature of Divine knowledge was a momentous event in philosophical theology in that the epistemology of the Divine, if we may use such a term, was now linked inextricably to the ontology of the Divine: the act of the Divine at the level of knowledge results in the ontological production of what it 'knows' -- a process in which the principles and objects of intellection and the intellect itself are given all at once as a single unity. Considering Alexander's influence on Plotinus as well as the Muslim philosophers, his work is without doubt an integral part of the history of this idea and deserves more attention than we can do here.²²

In Plotinus, we find a rigorous and very elaborate statement of the idea that the Intellectual principle is at once the means, process and object of intellection. Two important outcomes of this claim can be stated as follows. First of all, this view serves as a strong assertion of the independence and completeness of the intellect at the level of the Divine. The intellect as the logos does not depend on things for its act of intellection. Rather, its intellection is primary and by presence, viz., its ontological presence and transparency by itself to itself, which is the first condition of all knowledge by presence. This is the root of Plotinus' controversial doctrine 'that the intellectual beings are not outside the Intellectual-Principle (*hoti ouch exo tou nou ta noeta*)' (*The Enneads*, Fifth Ennead, V, 1). For Plotinus, the Ideas are the thoughts of the Intellect. One may rightly invoke the danger of solipsism here as Plotinus himself was presented with this criticism during his lifetime.²³ We may also remember that Plato himself had to face a similar difficulty concerning the ontological status of the *eide*: do they exist before the Demiurgic Intellect which then thinks them as ontologically separate realities or do they exist as ontological and cosmological productions of the intellect? In any case, Plotinus' response would be his realist ontology of the ideas and the Intellect,²⁴ which asserts that 'the *eide* are truth, they are real 'being', they exist in themselves'. This, however, is a huge subject in itself to which we cannot do justice within the confines of this study.

The second aspect of this view, which became the *sine qua non* of Sadra's epistemology also, can be called the constitutive theory of the intellect. If the intellect and the intelligible reality of things belong to the same ontological realm, then the intellect can no longer be conceived as a mere instrument of thinking or judgment. The instrumentalist theory of the intellect, or reason for that matter, construes reason as a means of connecting 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact'. By contrast, Plotinus regards all these elements as one single unity, included within the realm of the Intellectual-Principle. Said differently, the intellect, when fully actual, is not and cannot be different in its essence from what it produces and what it operates on. As Plotinus states in the fifth Ennead:

'Now a principle whose wisdom is not borrowed must derive from itself any intellection it may make; and anything it may possess within itself it can hold only from itself: it follows that, intellective by its own resource and upon its own content, it is itself the very things on which its intellection acts. For supposing its essence to be separable from its intellection and the objects of its intellection to be not-itself, then its essence would be unintellectual; and it would be intellectual not actually but potentially. The intellection and its object must then be inseparable -- however the habit induced by our conditions may tempt us to distinguish, there too, the thinker from the thought' (*The Enneads*, V, 9, 5).²⁵

If this is so, then the representational theory of knowledge cannot be the main, let alone only, form of knowledge. Knowledge as representation or impression is based on the existence of objects prior to the intellect. But in things whose intelligible reality is entailed in and identical with the intellect, representation, as Sadra would later claim, can only be a second-order concept, and the idea of presence (*hudur*) as the basis of knowledge gains prominence. This implies that we know things knowable by appropriating their intelligible form/reality.

When applied to Divine knowledge, this notion establishes an ineluctable relationship between being and knowledge because what we call being comes about as a result of the Divine intellection: 'it is clear that, being Intellect, it really thinks the real beings and establishes them in existence. It is, then, the real beings.'²⁶ Moreover, since the intellect itself is intelligible and object of its own intellection, everything that it creates, be it in the form of ontological production or conceptual schemes, cannot be devoid of cognitive content. The intrinsic intelligibility and thus value of being, regardless of a thinking subject, goes back to this bold assertion of Plotinus, and it was taken up by the posterity wholeheartedly as a blessing of neo-Platonism.²⁷ A corollary of this view is what is called 'axiarchism', namely the view that the world is grounded in value because it is generated by an Intellectual and self-intelligible principle which grants it an intrinsic value and significance.²⁸ The same point can be made from the point of view of the ontology of potentiality and actuality, a theme so central to the entire Aristotelian system from physics and metaphysics to cosmology and epistemology. According to this scheme, the creative principle is a fully actualized being with no potentiality. Since actuality signifies perfection and potentiality, conversely, imperfection and deficiency, the fully actual and perfect being imparts upon the world its meaning, intelligibility and value. As Kenney points out, perfection implies ontological production, which is an effect to be understood in valuational terms.²⁹

III. The Islamic Philosophy

The Muslim Peripatetics, especially Farabi and Ibn Sina, took an ambivalent position on the idea of knowledge as the unity of the intellect and the object of intellection. Farabi talks about this principle only in relation to Divine intellect and its form of intellection. Ibn Sina follows more or less the same path, at least in his *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*, but adamantly opposes it in the *Shifa'* and *al-Isharat wa'l-tanbihat* when talking about it in relation to human knowledge. Sadra notices Ibn Sina's somewhat ambiguous position on the subject and admonishes him, as we have said before, for failing to appreciate its true meaning. Sadra, however, is not alone in approaching the Avicennan position somewhat obscure as there is an interesting debate among the modern scholars of Ibn Sina as to how to interpret his remarks on the subject.

In *al-madinat al-fadilah*, Farabi gives a clear definition of the problem:

Because the First is not in matter and has itself no matter in any way whatsoever, it is in its substance actual intellect; for what prevents the form from being intellect and from actually thinking (intelligizing) is the matter in which a thing exists. And when a thing exists without being in need of matter, that very thing will in its substance be actual intellect; and that is the status of the First. It is, then, actual intellect ('*aql bi'l-fi'l*'). The First is also intelligible (*ma'qul*) through its substance (...) It is intelligible by virtue of its being intellect; for the One whose identity (*ipseitas*) is intellect is intelligible by the One whose identity is intellect. In order to be intelligible, the First is in no need of another essence outside itself which would think it but it itself thinks its own essence. (...)

...The essence which is thought is the essence which thinks, and so it is intellect by virtue of its being intelligized. Thus it is intellect and intelligized and thinking,³⁰ all this being one essence and one indivisible substance -- whereas man, for instance, is intelligible, but what is intelligible in his case is not actually intelligized but potentially intelligible; he becomes subsequently actually intelligized after the intellect has thought him³¹... We think, but not because our substance is intellect; we think with an intellect which is not what constitutes our substance; but the First is different; the intellect, the thinker and the intelligible (and intelligized) have in this one meaning and are one essence and one indivisible substance.'³²

I have quoted this somewhat long text by Farabi to show the importance of this discussion in his theology and cosmology. The basic Aristotelian principle that things without matter are both intellect and intellecting underlies Farabi's analysis here, which was incorporated by both Ibn Sina and Sadra. The same idea is used profusely in Farabi's *Risalah fi'l-'aql* which Sadra quotes, as we have mentioned before, in his *Asfar* with some omissions.³³ Unlike Ibn Sina, however, Farabi does not indulge in any kind of polemic against Porphyry who is discredited by Ibn Sina as claiming that the soul, when it is actual, becomes identical with the object of its intellection (*ma'qul*).

As we have indicated before, Ibn Sina takes a hostile position towards the idea that we have been pursuing so far. Both the *Shifa'* and the *Isharat* deny any kind of union between the soul or the intellect and the object of intellection. In the *Shifa'*, he makes his famous aphorism against Porphyry:

'How shall the soul, then, become forms of things? The man who has misguided people most in this regard is the one who has composed the *Isagogy* for them... True, the forms of things come to inhere in the soul and decorates it and the soul is like a place for them, thanks to the material intellect. If the soul became the form of an actual existent, then, since the form itself, being actuality, cannot accept anything else (i.e. any other form)...it follows necessarily that the soul cannot accept any other form.'³⁴

Ibn Sina makes a similar point in the *Isharat* whose text reads as follows:

'A group of people who [claim to] pass on [the teachings of Aristotle] thought that the intellecting substance, when intellecting an intelligible form, becomes [identical with] it. Suppose that the intellecting substance thinks A. According their claim, it becomes identical with A, viz., the object of intellection (*al-ma'qul*). In this case, is it in the same state as if it did not think A? Or perhaps this [i.e., intellection] did not take place. If it is like before [i.e., before its intellection], then it does not make any difference whether it intellected it or not...

There was a man among them known as Porphyry who has written a book on the intellect and the intelligibles, which is praised by the Peripatetics. All of it is gibberish. And they know very well that they do not understand it neither does Porphyry himself.

Learn this well: to claim that something becomes something else not by way of transformation from one state to another, nor by way of conjoining with something else so that a third thing may come out of it, but in such a way that a single object becomes another single object, is poetical nonsense with no meaning.'³⁵

As we can see from these texts, Ibn Sina does not make any distinction between Divine and human knowledge and categorically rejects the idea that he attributes to Porphyry. In spite of this radical rejection, Ibn Sina affirms this unity in *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad* when discussing the intellection of the

Divine. The sixth chapter of this book has the following title: 'Concerning that the Necessary Being intellects by itself and is the intellect by itself, and the explanation that every form which is not attached to matter is like this, and that the intellect, the subject of intellection (al-'aql) and the object of intellection (al-ma'qul) are one and the same thing.'³⁶ The discrepancy between the two positions of Ibn Sina was noticed by both Suhrawardi and Sadra in their *Talwihat* and *Asfar* respectively.³⁷ Interestingly enough, this has also led to a live debate among the contemporary scholars of Ibn Sina, whose texts can equally be taken to lend support to both interpretations.³⁸

As Sadra points out, Ibn Sina's drastic refutation of Porphyry on this particular matter is largely due to his aversion towards any kind of unity or union (*ittihad*) between two things. For Ibn Sina, who was operating within the framework of Aristotelian physics and cosmology, the unity between any two things means the termination of these two elements and the emergence of a new element. Or, it simply means 'ontic union', which he considers to be marred by a number of fallacies.³⁹ To ensure this position, Ibn Sina makes a bold distinction between 'unity' (*ittihad*) and conjoining or conjunction (*ittisal*), a distinction that runs through the entire Avicennan corpus.⁴⁰ When speaking of the relation between the human soul and the active intellect, for instance, the word used by Ibn Sina is always the same: *ittisal*. Being aware of this subtle point made by Ibn Sina, Sadra responds by giving a long discourse on the three meanings of unity (*ittihad*) in philosophy and physics, and invokes his celebrated teachings of the substantial movement (*al-harakat al-jawhariyyah*) and the gradation of being (*tashkik al-wujud*). We do not have space here to enter into the analysis of this subject. Nevertheless, Sadra explicitly states that it was, among others, the ignorance of these two teachings of Sadra that has led Ibn Sina and the Peripatetics to the denial of any kind of unity between two or more things.⁴¹

After the Peripatetics, perhaps the most important name in this long-debated issue is Suhrawardi whose ideas on self-knowledge and knowledge as a form of light had a direct impact on Sadra's epistemology. Sadra's language of light that he employs in conjunction with his epistemology is derived mostly from Suhrawardi's *ishraqi* doctrines, and the idea of knowledge by presence (*al-'ilm al-huduri*) underlies much of his notion of the unity of the intellect with the object of intellection. Having said that, we have to remind ourselves that on the question of the unity of two things in strictly physical terms, Suhrawardi's position was the same as that of Ibn Sina. The *Talwihat* clearly rejects the idea as physically impossible, providing a counter-argument similar to the one given by Ibn Sina.

Some people have thought that when the perceiver perceives something, he becomes [identical with] it. Some other people have thought that the soul perceives things through its union (*ittihad*) with the Active Intellect. You have learnt from the previous arguments that two things do not become one thing except through conjoining (*imtizaj*), conjunction (*ittisal*) or synthesis by whole (*tarkib majmu'i*). This is one of the qualities of [physical] bodies. When we say that A became B, does A remain the same and then we have B, thus both of them becoming multiple entities? Or is it rather that A is destroyed and B did not come into being, in which case there is no unity (*ittihad*) between the two? ... When the soul thinks of A, does it remain the same as it was before [it thought of it]? If so, then there is no union or the establishment [of a new being]. Or, perhaps the soul is destroyed and something else comes into being, in which case again there is no unity [obtained between the soul and its object of intellection].⁴²

In spite of this objection which was, according to Sadra's interpretation, a necessary result of the Aristotelian physics and cosmology within which both Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi operated, the idea of presence (*hudur*) and luminosity (*nuraniyyah*) as the basis of intelligibility continued to play a central role in Sadra's defense of the unity of the soul with its object of intellection. Considering the fundamental differences between the Peripatetic and Sadrean physics, it is not difficult to see how

Sadra was able to overcome the problems posed by Aristotelian natural philosophy while incorporating the Suhrawardian metaphysics of light on the one hand, and the primacy of self-knowledge and consciousness on the other.⁴³ Furthermore, the ishraqi doctrines of light and knowledge provided Sadra with an arsenal of arguments to refute the Peripatetic concept of knowledge as abstraction (tajrid) and representation.

The pre-Sadorean adventure of this idea does not end with Suhrawardi. There are numerous references to and, in some cases, hints at the unity of the subject and object of intellection in the works of Ibn al-Arabi, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi,⁴⁴ Dawud al-Qaysari, Abu'l-Hasan al-Amiri and others. Within the confines of this essay, we have to postpone to another study the examination of these figures and the role they played in Sadra's rigorous defense of the subject. Before closing this discussion, however, we have to mention the fact that this idea had an interesting history at the hands of some Jewish and Christian philosophers writing in Arabic such as Moses Maimonides and Muhy al-Din al-Isfahani (11th or 12th century).⁴⁵ We cannot say that all of these philosophers had a 'common agenda' in defending or commenting upon this idea, this being particularly true in the case of al-Isfahani. It shows, however, the extent of the remarkably persistent history of this idea, which we tried to analyze in the present essay.

Notes:

1- Al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah fi'l-asfar al-'aqliyyah al-arba'ah, (cited hereafter as Asfar) ed. by M. Rida al-Muzaffar (Tehran, 1383), Vol. 3, Part I, p. 327. The will at the end of the Isharat, to which Sadra refers, exhorts those who are serious about gaining knowledge to examine philosophical matters with utmost care. See, al-Isharat wa'l-tanbihat, with the commentaries of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and Qutb al-Din al-Razi, (Qom, 1375), Vol. 3, pp. 419-421.

2- Asfar, Vol. 3, Part I, pp. 344-5.

3- Sadra, in addition to being a philosopher in his own right, was a master historian of philosophy. The preceding account is gathered from his detailed analyses in the Asfar. See, inter alia, Asfar, Vol. 3, Part I, pp. 284-291, 318-321 and 344-5.

4- There is a sizable literature on the concept of knowledge by presence, written mostly by the members of the school of Mulla Sadra. See, for instance, Qazwini's treatment in his *Ettehad-e aqel be ma'qul*, edited with critical notes and commentary by Hasan Hasan-zadeh Amoli (Tehran, 1983). For a contemporary exposition with references to modern Western philosophy, see Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy* (Albany, 1992), and Muhammad Fanaei Eshkevari, *Elm-i Huzuri* (Qom, 1996). See also John Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardi and the Heritage of the Greeks*, (Albany, 2000), pp. 164-181.

5- This view has a number of formulations, one of which is *ittihad al-'ilm, al-'alim wa'l-ma'lum*. It is applied to perception in general under the name *ittihad al-mudrik wa'l-mudrak*.

6- See for instance Asfar, Vol. 3, Part I, p. 443 and *Kitab al-Masha'ir*, ed. by Henry Corbin as *Le Livre des Penetrations metaphysiques* (Teheran-Paris, 1982), Paragraph 114, p. 52.

7- *Uthulujjiyya* has been edited and published by Abdurrahman Badawi in his *Plotinus apud Arabes/Aflutin 'ind al-'Arab* (Cairo, 1955) with some other neo-Platonist fragments. His introduction (pp.

1-66) provides a well-informed discussion of the reception of the so-called pseudo-Aristotle in Islamic philosophy.

8- In fact the philosopher derives his 'divine happiness' from the peculiar relationship he has with the Divine order: 'And the philosopher holding converse with the divine order, becomes orderly and divine, as far as the nature of man allows...' The Republic, VI, 500 c.

9- A full exposition of this isomorphism is given in the Timaeus 35.

10- For an analysis of the subject in Plato, Plotinus and Proclus, see Jean Pepin, 'Elements pour une histoire de la relation entre l'intelligence et l'intelligible chez Platon et dans le neoplatonisme', Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'étranger 146 (1956), pp. 39-64.

11- Translation by Hippocrates G. Apostle, Aristotle's On the Soul, (Iowa, 1981), p. 51.

12- Themistius pays a particular attention to this part of De Anima in his Paraphrase. See Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators on the Intellect, the De Intellectu Attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius' Paraphrase of Aristotle's De Anima 3.4-8, Introduction, Translation, Commentary and Notes by Frederic M. Schroeder and Robert B. Todd, (Toronto, 1990), pp. 81-93. See also the Arabic translation of Themistius' commentary on the De Anima, The Arabic Version of Themistius' 'De Anima', edited by M. C. Lyons, (Norfolk, 1973), Section VI, p. 169 ff.

13- Translation by W. D. Ross.

14- 'The intelligible form of every quiddity is detached from matter and its attachments... the intelligible form exists in the external-natural world but it exists as mixed (mukhalitah) with things other than itself, not as purely detached.' Ibn Sina, al-Mabda' wa'l-Ma'ad, ed. by Abdullah Nurani, (Tehran, 1363), pp. 6-8.

15- See, for instance, Asfar, Vol. 3, Part I, pp. 461-465.

16- Al-mufassir, which is the word used by Farabi, is the Arabic translation of Alexander's Greek title 'ho exegetes'. See his Mabadi' ara' ahl al-madinat al-fadilah, translated by Richard Walzer as On the Perfect State, (Chicago, 1998), p. 54.

17- Porphyry, Via Plotini, 14.13, quoted in the Introduction by F. M. Shroeder and R. B. Todd, p. 1.

18- Phillip Merlan, Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness (The Hague, 1963), p. 20. Ibrahim Madkour refers to Alexander's doctrine of the intellect as the primary source of 'mysticisme rationaliste' of the Muslim Peripatetics in general and of Farabi in particular. See his La Place d'al Farabi dans l'école philosophique musulmane, (Paris, 1934), p. 186.

19- See the introduction by F. M. Shroeder and R. B. Todd, pp. 2-3.

20- Averroes, De Anima, I. III, comm. 15, 159, d-e, quoted in G. Quadri, La Philosophie Arabe Dans L'Europe Médiévale: Des Origines a Averroes, (Paris, 1960), p. 158. Yet, Alexander is not totally absent from Ibn Rushd's theory of the intellect, which, as G. They points out in Autour du decret de 1210: Alexandre d'Aphrodise. Apercu sur l'influence de sa noétique (Le Saulchoir Kain, 1926), p. 41, is geared in many ways towards establishing a harmony between Alexander and Themistius as the two greatest

commentators of the First Teacher. See also Arthur Hyman, 'Aristotle's Theory of the Intellect and its Interpretation by Averroes' in *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. by Dominic J. O'Meara, (Washington DC, 1981), pp. 161-191. For the place of Alexander and Themistius in Ibn Sina's philosophy, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden, 1988).

21- See Asfar, Vol. 3, Part I, pp. 428-433. The authority of Alexander as to how to read Aristotle was without question so much so that the first chapter of Sadra's treatise called *ittihad al-'aql wa'l-ma'qul* has the subtitle 'On the degrees of theoretical intellect according to the account given by Alexander of Aphrodisias' (*fi darajat al-'aql al-nazari muwafiqan lima zakarahu iskender al-afridusi*). This treatise, which I am currently translating into English, is edited and published by Hamid Naji Isfahani in *Majmua-yi rasail-i falsafi-yi sadru'l-mut'allihin*, pp. 63-103. The aforementioned subtitle is on p. 65.

22- P. Moraux's *Alexandre d'Aphrodise: exegete de la noetique d'Aristote* (Paris, 1942) remains to this day the best account of Alexander of Aphrodisias and his place in the Aristotelian tradition. For Ibn Sina's use of Alexander as the primary channel of reading the Aristotelian corpus, see the section on the soul in his *Kitab al-Najat*, translated by Fazlur Rahman as *Avicenna's Psychology: An English Translation of Kitab al-Najat*, Book II, Chapter VI, with *Historico-philosophical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition*, (London, 1952).

23- See, A. H. Armstrong, 'The Background of the Doctrine "that the intelligibles are not outside the Intellect"' in *Les Sources de Plotin*, (Vandoeuvres-Geneve, 1957), p. 393-413.

24- Kenney, *Mystical Monotheism: A Study in Ancient Platonic Theology*, (Hanover & London, 1991), p. 95.

25- Translation by Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page, *The Six Enneads*, (Chicago, 1952), p. 248.

26- *The Enneads*, V. 9. 5, translation by J. P. Kenney, *Mystical Monotheism*, p. 113.

27- Or Platonism for that matter because the so-called distinction between Platonism and neo-Platonism on this particular issue is inconsequential.

28- For an interesting exposition of this view, whose roots in Islamic philosophy would require a separate study, see John Leslie, *Value and Existence*, (New Jersey, 1979).

29- Kenney, *Mystical Monotheism*, p. 104.

30- The words Farabi uses are 'aql, ma'qul and 'aqil.

31- According to the Arabic text, this part should be '...after the intellect intellected it [the intelligible form]'.
32- *Al-madinat al-fadilah*, translation pp. 71-73.

33- Asfar, Vol. 3, Part I, pp. 421-427. Sadra recapitulates the first part which he does not quote here by a wording of his own.

34- Quoted in Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London, 1958), p. 16.

35- *Al-isharat wa'l-tanbihat*, Vol. 3, pp. 292-295.

36- *Al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*, p. 6.

37- Shihaboddin Yahya Suhrawardi, *Ouevres Philosophiques et Mystiques*, edited by Henry Corbin, (Teheran-Paris, 1976), Tome I, p. 69. After discussing the possibility of the unity of the soul with what it know and its rejection by Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi has the following to say on this ongoing debate: 'Ibn Sina, the greatest of all the later philosophers, narrated this view from Porphyry and dishonored him in a way that suits the nobility of neither of them. In spite of this, he clearly claimed the unity of the soul with the intelligible form in *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad* and some of his other books. Then he finally realized the fallacy of this view.' *Ibid*.

38- L. Gardet interprets Ibn Sina as accepting this view, offering a reading similar to that of Sadra. See his *La Pensee Religieuse D'Avicenne (Ibn Sina)* (Paris, 1951), pp. 153-157. For Fazlur Rahman's critique of Gardet's interpretation, see his *Prophecy in Islam*, pp. 27-28, n. 29. For a general evaluation of the problem, see J. Finnegan, 'Avicenna's Refutation of Porphyrius' *Avicenna Commemoration Volume*, (Calcutta, 1956), pp. 187-203.

39- Finnegan, *ibid*. p. 188.

40- A. M. Goichon, *Lexique de la Langue Philosophique d'Ibn Sina (Avicenne)* (Paris, 1938), p. 428 for *ittihad* as 'the emergence of one single entity out of the combination of multiple objects' and pp. 434-435 for *ittisal* as conjunction, of which Ibn Sina approves.

41- Sadra, R. *ittihad al-'aql wa'l-ma'qul*, pp. 20-22. The quote Sadra makes from the *Isharat* appears in V. 3, p. 295. Here, Sadra mentions specifically two aspects of this philosophy: the principiality of being (*asalat al-wujud*) and the continuously changing structure of physical bodies, which is a result of the gradation and intensification (*tashdid*) of being.

42- *Kitab al-talwihat*, Corbin's edition, Tome I, pp. 68-69.

43- On the importance of self-knowledge and consciousness in Suhrawardi insofar as our discussion is concerned, see Hossein Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination: A Study of Suhrawardi's Hikmar al-Ishraq* (Atlant, 1990), pp. 143-154.

44- Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi in his *al-Nafakhat al-ilahiyyah* defines true knowledge as an absolute unity between the subject and object of knowledge: 'Know that obtaining the knowledge of something as it is and through the perfection of its knowledge hinges upon the union with that which is known. And [real] union with something is based on the disappearance of all [those qualities] that distinguish the knower from the known. In [the world of] existence, there is a Real Divine element (*amr*) between a thing and others, that necessitates the participation (*al-ishtirak*) [of all things in one single reality] without differentiation. And there are other things that distinguish this particular thing from what is other than itself. This is one [of the doctrines] in which there is no doubt according to the school of those who affirm the truth (*mashrab al-tahqiq*)'. *Al-nafakhat al-ilahiyyah*, ed. by Muhammad Khwajawi, (Tehran, 1375/1417), p. 32.

45- For Maimonides see *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Part 1, sec. 68 translated by M. Friedlander (New York, 1956, 2nd edition), pp. 100-102 where he states that the intellectus, intelligens and intelligibile are one and the same in God and in fact in every intellect in actus. Accordingly, the intelligible form of a tree is the intellect in actus. For Muhy al-Din al-'Ajami al-Isfahani, see *Epitre sur l' unite et la trinite, traite sur l' intellect, fragment sur l' ame*, edited and translated by M. Allard and G. Troupeau, (Beyrouth, 1962), pp. 53-61 where al-Isfahani uses the idea of the unity of the al-'aql, al-'aqil and al-ma'qul as one of the philosophical proofs of the Christian trinity.

Sufi Knowledge in Mulla Sadra

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Abstract

In the history of Islamic philosophy, Mulla Sadra is usually mentioned as a philosopher who differs from the peripatetics merely in his attempt to combine philosophy with Sufism. At least in the case of his epistemology, however, this is not the case. As a Sufi, or 'arif, Mulla Sadra tends to use philosophy for the purpose of providing a justification for his Sufi ideas.

The way of Sufism in the Islamic world, especially in Iran, is also called 'irfan, knowledge or gnosis. According to Sufism, the goal of the journey toward God is finding perfect knowledge or gnosis of the truth (Haqq) and being. However, this knowledge has different degrees, which are obtained at the various stations of the Sufi path. This is why the Sufi is also called knower ('arif).

For the first time, in his *Revivification of the Science of Religion*, Ghazali proved that the true knowledge the Qur'an commends believers to seek is Sufi knowledge. Referring to this idea, Mulla Sadra tries to revive true knowledge, and to build a philosophical system on its basis. Sufi knowledge is the knowledge by presence (huduri) found in the heart through its purification. Contrary to this, Philosophical knowledge, especially among the peripatetics, is conceptually mediated (husuli). In addition to knowledge by presence, which is the foundation of the knower and the known and the creative power of the soul, have a basis in Sufism for which Mulla Sadra tries to provide philosophical argumentation. Mulla Sadra's essay, *Seh Asl* (Three Principles), the only extent work written by him in Persian, is especially important for substantiating his view that true knowledge is Sufi knowledge. After disparaging different kinds of alleged knowledge, he holds true knowledge to be Sufi knowledge that can only be attained through purification of the heart.

In this article it is shown that Mulla Sadra's conception of knowledge is drawn from Sufism, and that the major themes of his epistemology are illuminated through an exegesis in terms of his commitment to Sufism.

The problem of perception as expounded by Muslim philosophers and Sufis is essentially different from what is proposed in Western philosophy, especially from Descartes and Kant until the present. One of the most important factors in the modern Western problem of perception is the opposition between subject and object which results from the new definition of man as subject and the external world as the object of man's perceptions. The modern senses of subject and object existed in neither Greek nor medieval philosophy. In Islamic philosophy, there are no equivalents for these terms in their modern meanings, and what are called dhin (mind) and 'ayn (entity) are completely different from what are meant by subject and object, although they are commonly used to translate the Western terms.

In Islamic thinking, knowledge and perception are not merely human activities, for they also have a divine origin, as existence has a divine origin. The divine origin of perception has been propounded in

the various schools of Islamic thought in different ways and with different emphases. For example, among the Muslim philosophers, the epistemology of the peripatetic places more emphasis on discursive reasoning (bahthi), while Sufi epistemology places more emphasis on the divine origin of intuition (shuhud). Between these two schools, the Illuminationist philosophers (Ishraqiyun) come closer to the Sufis, and Mulla Sadra, as a philosopher with Illuminationist taste, tries to build his epistemology on a Sufi basis. Thus, his concept of knowledge is a Sufi concept in philosophical garb.

In order to explain the Sufi aspects of Mulla Sadra's epistemology, I should make clear at the outset what is meant by Sufism is not the same as what is called mysticism in the West, at least in contemporary usage. Mysticism is more concerned with feelings while Sufism implies a kind of knowledge. This goes back to the very concept of faith (iman) in Islam. Islamic faith is not only a way to salvation. It also brings a heartfelt knowledge caused by the unveilings (kashf) and intuitions (shuhud) of the believer. In Christianity (especially after Meister Eckhart) knowledge is a subsidiary issue, and mysticism came to be considered a subjective matter, completely divorced from the gnosis of being. In Islam, Sufism itself is called 'irfan, which literally means knowing or gnosis. Sufis are 'urafa, that is, people who have acquired true knowledge of existence. This sort of knowledge is not a relation between subject and object. There is no opposition between the 'arif or knower and the external world. In fact, it is self-knowledge that ends in perception of existence. The 'arif is a wayfarer (salik) who has traveled the path toward God, has reached the reality of existence (haqiqat), which is God, and has acquired a knowledge which is the only true knowledge of existence. In this kind of epistemology, the more one attains various degrees of faith, the more this knowledge is attained.

In the history of Islamic thinking, dialectical theologians (mutakalimun) and peripatetic philosophers, by giving more emphasis to rational knowledge, failed to understand Sufi epistemology. This is why the Sufi shaykhs tried to revive this knowledge, an important example of which is the famous book of Imam Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (Revivication of the Sciences of Religion).¹ In his book, Ghazali did his best to revive this forgotten meaning of knowledge in the Islamic world. Sufis like Rumi and Ibn 'Arabi, and philosophers like Sohrawardi,² who calls the metaphysics of this knowledge, *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (Illuminative Wisdom), reminded people of this knowledge. During the Safavid period Mulla Sadra did the same. Mulla Sadra calls his philosophy *al-hikmah al-muta'aliyyah* (transcendent wisdom) in order to indicate its Sufi character in contrast to peripatetic philosophy.³

Among his books, *Se 'Asl* (Three Principles)⁴ has a special bearing on this subject. More than in any other of his works, it is in this book, which is the only Persian work that remains from him, that Mulla Sadra surveys this view by quoting from Ghazali (without attribution). In the beginning of this treatise, he defines this knowledge and way of perception, which, according to him, is the only true one; then he enumerates its differences from other sorts of knowledge, and emphasizes that it is a kind of intuitive knowledge by presence ('ilm al-huduri). Finally, after explaining how to obtain this knowledge, he turns to a detailed discussion of the obstacles to it. There are three obstacles, or according to Mulla Sadra, principles or roots, that prevent man from reaching true knowledge. Interestingly enough, these obstacles are not epistemological in the modern sense of the word, rather, they are obstacles to spiritual progress, for in the works of Mulla Sadra, epistemology is focused on self-knowledge because this is seen as the avenue for acquaintance with being.

There are three roots [of evil], which, for people of insight, are the chief devils that destroy the soul.... The other roots and sources of evil ... are derived from them.⁵

The first root is, "ignorance of knowledge of the self, which is the reality of the human being."⁶ The second source "is the desire for position, money and the tendency toward lusts...."⁷ The third one "is the temptations of the commanding soul (nafs al-ammara)...that shows evil as excellent and excellence as evil."⁸ In Se 'Asl, Mulla Sadra not only describes these roots of evil, he also explains the nature and main features of what he means by knowledge.

Here I will describe various aspects of the main characteristics of this knowledge and perception according to Mulla Sadra's treatment of them in Se 'Asl.

1. "What is meant by this knowledge is not the knowledge called philosophy or that which philosophers know."⁹ The philosophers (by whom he means the peripatetics) as well as the dialectical theologians (mutakallimun) have not tasted it at all.¹⁰ That is why they have tried to reject and blame the true men of knowledge, i.e., the Sufis.

2. This knowledge, like God's knowledge of things, is knowledge by presence.¹¹

3. True knowledge is light.¹² Just as features of the material world are disclosed by the light of the sun, the light of knowledge and faith of the true gnostics ('urafa) discloses the realities of the worlds.¹³

4. This knowledge is the knowledge of one's self "which is the key to all knowledge."¹⁴ "Anyone who does not have self-knowledge does not have a soul, for the existence of the soul is identical with light, presence and consciousness."¹⁵

5. In accordance with the saying of the Prophet, "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord," "remembering oneself causes one to remember God,"¹⁶ and "God's remembrance of the self is identical with the self."¹⁷ "After these premises it becomes clear that whoever does not know himself does not know God."¹⁸ Nevertheless, "knowing the reality and essence of the self by the light of disclosure and certainty belongs only to the Sufis.¹⁹" Philosophers, though they have a great share of knowledge on this issue, their knowledge in comparison to that of the Sufis ('urafa) is negligible.

6. "Most scholars ('ulama) and philosophers have thought that the essence of humanity is the same in all, without any difference, but this is not true for the people of insight (the Sufis)."²⁰ "The degrees and stages of humanity varies from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high." So many men live by the animal soul and even lower while there are some who can say, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Truth."²¹ Knowledge of the self and its stages, however, is difficult and is not gained except by the perfect ones.

7. This knowledge is identified with faith. "The true faith... is achieved by the one who has reached the stage of the light of the spirit." "The true believer is one who knows God ('arif)."²²

8. Only through this knowledge are one's actions useful.²³

9. Besides the bodily eye and ear, considered unreal, with which we see and hear, there are another eye and ear for man which are real. They are the eye and ear of the heart and result from the light of knowledge.²⁴ It is only by these that one sees the realities of the world.²⁵ But most of the theologians and philosophers want to find the truth by their vain intellects and bodily senses.

10. This knowledge is not acquired through the senses or the faculty of reason. "These senses, also in one respect are needed, but in another respect they are obstacles on the way. The need for these senses is due to the fact that in the beginning the soul is infinitely incomplete, potential, and devoid of all knowledge. These senses are like the tablet for a pupil, for they perceive images and forms of existents."²⁶ However, anyone who trusts sense perception, which is the source of error and deception, he will not obtain anything but weariness of the eye and perishing of vision and hearing as well as of reason and consciousness. "Even reason, let alone the senses, so long as it is not illuminated by the light of love, cannot reach its main ideal."²⁷

From the point of view of man, in his relation to the external world, the main characteristic of this Sufi knowledge is that it is presentational. Knowledge by presence ('ilm huduri), is one of the most fundamental elements, if not the fundamental element, of the epistemology of Mulla Sadra.

Mulla Sadra holds that the perception of the reality of being is not possible except through direct observation and presence. He says, "So, knowledge of [the reality of existence] is either by presentational observation (mushahadah huduri) or by reasoning to it through its effects and implications, but then it is not apprehended except weakly."²⁸

One of the main divisions of knowledge is between knowledge by presence ('ilm huduri) and acquired knowledge ('ilm husuli). The former is direct while the latter is mediated through forms. In his definition of knowledge by presence, Mulla Sadra says, "Sometimes knowledge of a thing is of a kind that the being of the knowledge is identified with the object known."²⁹ In defining acquired knowledge, he says, "Sometimes [it is] of a kind that the being of the knowledge and the known thing are two different units of absolute being. They are two different beings that are not unified existentially.... We call this kind of knowledge acquired or passive knowledge."³⁰

The famous instance of knowledge by presence accepted by all Muslim philosophers, including Mulla Sadra, is the knowledge that abstract things have of themselves,³¹ like the perception the soul has of itself in which any sort of intermediary is unimaginable. Knowledge by presence has various characteristics. First, it can be neither true nor false, and does not admit of doubt, for these features only apply to cases in which there can be some correspondence between the perception and the thing perceived. According to the traditional theory of truth, i.e., the correspondence theory, which is also accepted in Islamic philosophy, for the most part, the correspondence of forms with objects is the main element of acquired knowledge. Thus, truth is defined as this correspondence of intellect with the external world (*adequatio intellectus et rei*). However, in knowledge by presence, the known is present for the knower in its very reality, and there is no distinction between them on which basis they could be said to correspond or fail to correspond.³² Second, while the Muslim peripatetics divide acquired knowledge into two kinds, knowledge of concepts (*tassawurat*) and knowledge of assertions (*tasdiqat*), this division does not apply to knowledge by presence which by definition is without intermediary, while concepts and assertions are themselves intermediaries.³³ Third, since knowledge by presence cannot be divided into concept and assertion, it is beyond the scope of discursive thought and reasoning. Sufis consider knowledge by presence to be perfected through mystical unveilings and intuitions. The veil of being is parted for the wayfarer (*salik*) who has completed the stages of the journey to the Truth (*haqq*), and thus he attains perfect knowledge by presence.

Historically, Western philosophers have paid scant attention to knowledge by presence, and even discussions of self-knowledge are primarily concerned with acquired knowledge of the self. For philosophers like Parmenides, however, epistemology and ontology are identified, and in the

terminology of Islamic philosophy, it seems that his epistemology is based on knowledge by presence. The Muslim philosophers have discussed knowledge by presence at length. Because of their definition of knowledge as conceptually mediated, the peripatetic philosophers restricted knowledge by presence to knowledge of one's own soul. Illuminationist philosophers expounded knowledge by presence in their philosophy, however, because of the influence of Sufism on their thought. Although Sohrawardi did not devote an independent chapter to this subject, his epistemology focuses on the notion of knowledge by presence, or in his own more precise terminology, illuminative knowledge by presence.³⁴ He says, "Intellection [i.e., knowledge] is the same as the presence of a thing to an abstract essence, or in other words, it can be said that it is the nonexistence of the absence of a thing for it. This is a complete definition, for it includes both perception of one's self and others."³⁵

According to his metaphysics of light and darkness, knowledge and apprehension are the same sort of thing that light is. Apprehension is the appearance (zuhur) of a thing, and appearance is identified with radiance (nuriyat). He denies the peripatetic theory of abstraction and holds that the criterion of apprehension is radiance.³⁶

Mulla Sadra tried to address the problem from the differing points of view of the theologians, peripatetics, the illuminationists, and the Sufis. He discusses and examines their views, and finally reaches the conclusion, in agreement with the Sufis, that the only real knowledge is knowledge by presence. After rejecting various theories of knowledge, including the theory that knowledge is the idea of a thing impressed in the mind, he concludes that knowledge is a kind of presentational existence. This is the second characteristic of knowledge for Mulla Sadra, which is derived from the first, namely, that it is presentational. He considers knowledge to be not an essence but a sort of existence in the mind. He says, "Theosophers (hukama), except for a small group of literalists, are in agreement on this issue, that aside from this apparent existence that is observable to all, things have different existences or appearances called mental existence (wujud dhini)."³⁷

Mental Existence is one of the topics handed down directly to Mulla Sadra from the Sufis. It is based on the famous ideas of the oneness of being (wahdat al-wujud) and the fundamentality of existence (asalat al-wujud) held by Mulla Sadra. Existence is a unitary reality having different stages starting from divine Ideas ('ayan al-thabitah) and descending to material existence. Mental existence is also one of its stages. However, each of them is a manifestation, called by the Sufis a hadrat, an honorific title from the same root as huduri, meaning presence, of one divine reality.³⁸ Everything has an appropriate manifestation in each hadrat. Mind or the soul of man is also a stage of being, that is, it is a hadrat. In this way, the apprehension of a thing is the existence of that thing as manifest in the hadrat of the soul. This is the manifestation of the same thing in its mental existence as is also manifest in material existence. Thus it is that knowledge ('ilm), the known (ma'lum), and the knower ('alim) are united, as will be explained in detail in what follows.

We have seen that the origins of the difference between knowledge by presence and acquired knowledge go back to the question of the ultimate source of human knowledge, whether it is essence or existence. If it is essence, knowledge will be acquired, while if it is existence, human knowledge will be knowledge by presence. Where the known object is its essence, knowledge of it will be conceptually mediated, but where the known object is existence, knowledge of it will be by presence.

In the *Asfar*, Mulla Sadra begins in harmony with the peripatetic philosophers, holding that knowledge and apprehension are essences of the category of mental qualities, but he eventually arrives at his main idea that the reality of knowledge is nothing but existence. He says, "Knowledge is not something

negative, like abstraction from matter, nor is it a relation, rather it is an existential fact.... It is a pure actual being unmixed with nothingness. Insofar as knowledge is purified from mixing with nothingness, it is all the more so knowledge."³⁹ As appears from his words, Mulla Sadra denies theories according to which knowledge is to be considered a process of abstraction, as well as those according to which knowledge is a relation between the knower and the known, as is found in the works of Imam Fakhr Razi. The reality of knowledge is the complete presence of the object known to the knower.

Mulla Sadra even traces acquired knowledge to knowledge by presence. He held that without knowledge by presence, acquired knowledge would be invalid. Most of Mulla Sadra's commentators have emphasized this. For example, 'Allamah Tabataba'i, one of his contemporary advocates, says, "Acquired knowledge is a mental regard of things that the intellect cannot avoid. It is derived from what is known by presence."⁴⁰ According to him, after this knowledge by presence, mind begins to apprehend the essence of things, and in fact, it is the mind that can change knowledge by presence into acquired knowledge.

However, the world of being is a world in which existents are separated from one another, each of which is absent to the other. So, how can existents in this separated and absent condition become present for human beings? In the view of the Sufis, and following them, Mulla Sadra, through the perceived proximity between being and knowledge by presence, existence and knowledge by presence are finally found to become united and to denote a single reality. There is also an indication of this in the fact that the Arabic word for existence, *wujud*, is from the same root as *wajid*, meaning finding or apprehending. At the level of knowledge by presence, the differences among existents disappear and all are gathered in the radiance of knowledge, and they emerge from absence to presence. According to Mulla Sadra, "Knowledge is nothing but the presence of being without a veil."⁴¹

At this point we arrive at the question of what, according to Mulla Sadra, is the reality of knowledge. His answer is, "Knowledge is one of those realities for which its being is the same as its essence."⁴² This is true about existence itself because its essence is nothing but existence. Thus, when the question about the essence of knowledge is raised, the answer will be that it is nothing but its existence. Where existence and essence are the same, no logical definition is possible. Mulla Sadra says, "All existents become apparent to the mind by knowledge, so how can knowledge appear by means of anything but knowledge?"⁴³ The reality of knowledge, like the reality of existence, is light and presence. It is because of this that in his division of the branches of philosophy Mulla Sadra not only places the topic of knowledge in ontology, but he takes knowledge to be one of the primary categories of being, and he considers its treatment to belong to *philosophia prima*. He goes on to say, "One of the essential accidents of being qua being... is to be knower, knowledge or the known."⁴⁴

If, however, the topic of knowledge is one of the problems of existence, and the reality of existence cannot be apprehended except through knowledge by presence and direct intuition, then insofar as man lacks self-knowledge and is ignorant of the presence of himself to himself, he will not grasp the meaning of knowledge by presence. It is here that ontology, epistemology and self-knowledge, according to Mulla Sadra, approach one another.

Like the other great Sufis, Mulla Sadra considers self-knowledge to be the origin of all wisdom. In testimony to this he refers to the well known saying of the Prophet, "He who knows himself knows his Lord." The ultimate goal of the journey to God is the gnosis of Him, which is the gnosis of being. It is the apprehension of the presence of man to himself. In the horizons of his being, man contemplates

existence. When the Sufi speaks of witnessing truth, it is always accompanied by the unveiling of being and knowledge by presence.

In his search for knowledge by presence, Mulla Sadra opens a new chapter in epistemology, his famous idea of the union of the intelligent knower ('*aqil*) and what is intelligible (*ma'aqul*). Although this topic is usually described in terms of the intellect, Mulla Sadra claims in various writings that it is much more comprehensive and includes all the cognitive faculties. Regarding one of the arguments for this he writes, "This reasoning is also applicable to concepts of prehension, imagination and perception."⁴⁵ So, we find here a union of the knower and the known in a very broad sense not restricted to the intellect. Mulla Sadra uses the terms object known by essence (*ma'lum bil dhat*) for the existent in the external world and object known by accident (*ma'lum bil-arad*) what is perceived. Here the void between subject and object is removed. The final consequence of the fact that knowledge is presentational is that the knower and the known achieve union at the stage of knowledge, just as the Sufis had taught.

Mulla Sadra has dealt with this issue in various works, including his *Masha'ir*, where, after proving that God has knowledge of Himself and other things through Himself, he goes on to demonstrate the theory of the union of the knower and the known by a proof called *burhan tadayuf* (the argument from correlativity).⁴⁶ According to this argument, the intelligent knower and the intelligible known are correlative. Whenever there is a knower there must be something actually known, and vice versa. They are the same. From one aspect of the relation it is knower, and from another it is the known.⁴⁷

Mulla Sadra is proud of having discovered this idea and in the *Asfar* he asserts that it is one of the most difficult and complicated of all philosophical problems. None of the Muslim philosophers since Ibn Sina, Sohrawardi and Tusi had been able to solve this problem, and he, after tearfully beseeching God, was inspired.⁴⁸

Peripatetic philosophers did not accept this view,⁴⁹ and Mulla Sadra reached this position through his Sufi ideas.⁵⁰ According to Ibn Sina, cognition is a quality of the soul, and the knowledge the soul has of things other than itself is acquired knowledge, like the addition of accidents to a subject. The accidents are not united with the subject, but a kind of appending obtains, like the color of a flower that inherently subsists (*qiyam hululi*) in the flower without becoming identified with it. However, after proving the principle that the soul in its unity is all of its faculties, Mulla Sadra holds that the subsistence of mental forms for the soul is like the subsistence of an action in an agent (*qiyam suduri*). This same relation exists between God and His creatures and between the soul and its perceptions.⁵¹ In its unity, the soul has different modes and activities, all of which come from it. When the mind cognizes, it is not the case that it comes into the possession of the known, but rather it becomes the known. The relation between the knower and the known is a relation of unification. There is a difference between saying that the seed became man and that the table became white. In the former case, the seed is man, but in the latter case the table is not its color.

According to the theory of substantial motion of Mulla Sadra, the soul has a progressive motion in which its existence is intensified. The philosophers before Mulla Sadra held that there is a common essence for all men who differ solely because of their accidents. To the contrary, Mulla Sadra, following the Sufis, taught that individuals differed according to the degree of their existence of their souls.⁵² These degrees correspond to the degrees of an individual's knowledge. Knowledge elevates the existence of the knower.

As we have seen, Mulla Sadra considers the union of the knower and the known to be like the kind of knowledge God has of His creatures, for this knowledge does not consist in the presence of the forms of creatures in the mind of God, but rather, His knowledge is the creatures themselves. With such knowledge, man becomes similar to God, for according to the Sufis, this similarity is acquired when man's knowledge is intuitive and presentational, not representational and acquired. In other words, when knowledge becomes the very existence of the known, being and knowledge become one. Accordingly, Mulla Sadra defines the goal of his Sufi philosophy as follows: "Wisdom is man's becoming an intelligible world similar to the objective world."⁵³ Here any gap between the knower and the known is eliminated. Being becomes the mirror in which man is depicted. Man is a mirror in which being is depicted. Both are mirrors depicting God.

Thus ends the first of Mulla Sadra's four journeys (asfar), that is, the journey from creatures to God. There is, however, another journey, more complete than the first, the journey from God to creatures. In this journey God becomes the mirror depicting His creatures and existence.⁵⁴

Notes:

1- In the Shi'ite world, Fayd Kashani, the son-in-law and famous student of Mulla Sadra, did the same sort of work as Ghazali to revive the true meaning of knowledge. In his book *Al-Mahaja al-Bayda fi Tahdhib al-Ihya*, as is evident from the title, by referring to narrations attributed to the Shi'ite Imams, he sought to revise Ghazali's book, or as he himself put it, to revive it.

2- In a dream, Sohrawardi, who was seriously occupied with the problem of knowledge and was unable to solve it, saw Aristotle, and asked him for the solution to this problem. Aristotle replied to him, "Return to your soul. The problem will be solved for you." Then he asked, "Among the philosophers of Islam, which ones have reached the stage of understanding true knowledge?" After denying that Farabi and Ibn Sina were true philosophers, he mentions some of the great Sufis such as Bayazid Bastami and Sahl Tustari, and continues, "They are truly philosophers and theosophists who have not stopped with what is commonly accepted as knowledge [i.e., representational knowledge], rather have reached intuitive unitive knowledge by presence." Sohrawardi, *Talwihat in Opera Metaphysica et Mystical 1*, ed. Henry Corbin, (Tehran: 1993), p. 70-73. Sohrawardi's account of the vision is translated in full in Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi's *Knowledge by Presence* (Tehran: 1982), 329-337.

3- This term, *al-hikmah al-muta'aliyah*, was used long before Mulla Sadra by Sufis such as Qaysari. It even appears in the works of the peripatetic philosophers. (See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and His Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran: 1978), p. 85.) Ibn Sina used this term in his *Isharat* when he speaks of the souls of the celestial bodies. He says that only those who possess transcendent wisdom (*al-hikmah al-muta'aliyyah*) can understand this. In his commentary on this part of *Isharat*, Tusi says: "Peripatetic wisdom is purely discursive, while this problem and those like it can only be solved completely through discussion and reasoning accompanied by unveiling (*kashf*) and intuition (*zawq*), and the wisdom that includes it is transcendent wisdom, in contrast to the former wisdom." *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat ma' al-Sharh Tusi*, (Tehran: A.H. 1403), Vol. 3, p. 401

4- Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), *Se 'Asl*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, (Tehran, 1961).

5- *Se 'Asl*, p. 11.

6- *Se 'Asl*, p. 13.

7- Se 'Asl, p. 28.

8- Se 'Asl, p. 32.

9- Se 'Asl, p. 6.

10- Se 'Asl, p. 7.

11- Se 'Asl, p. 14. This issue will be explained in detail later.

12- Se 'Asl, p. 6. The same idea has been the source of the illuminative theory of knowledge in Sohrawardi and in many other theories of the medieval period.

13- Se 'Asl, p. 44.

14- Se 'Asl, p. 7.

15- Se 'Asl, p. 14.

16- Se 'Asl, p. 13.

17- Se 'Asl, p. 14.

18- Se 'Asl, p. 16.

19- Se 'Asl, p. 23.

20- Se 'Asl, p. 26.

21- Se 'Asl, p. 27. As will be seen, Mulla Sadra uses this idea in his theory of the union of the knower with the known.

22- Se 'Asl, p. 68.

23- Se 'Asl, p. 24.

24- Se 'Asl, p. 36.

25- Se 'Asl, p. 49.

26- Se 'Asl, p. 56-57.

27- Se 'Asl, p. 58.

28- Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyyah fi al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-'Arba'ah* (Beirut: 1981), Vol. 3, p. 297. (Hereafter this work is cited as *Asfar*.)

29- Mulla Sadra, *Tassawur wa Tasdiq*, Persian translation, Agahi va Guvahi, ed. and tr. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, 2nd ed., (Tehran: 1988), p. 4.

30- Agahi va Guvahi, p. 5.

31- Agahi va Guvahi, p. 4.

32- The correspondence theory of truth is attributed to Aristotle while the pre-Socratic thinkers considered truth to be a kind of unveiling, *aletheia*. The knowledge appropriate to the pre-Socratic notion of truth is knowledge by presence. Mulla Sadra, like Sohrevardi, considers those thinkers to have had great mystical knowledge. Mulla Sadra, *Risalah fi al-Huduth*, ed. Husayn Musavian (Tehran: 1999), pp. 152-241.

33- Mulla Sadra devotes his book *Tassawur wa Tasdiq* to an explanation of how acquired knowledge is divided into concepts and assertions.

34- Sohrevardi, *Kitab al-Mashari' wa'l-Mutarihat in Opera Metaphysica et Mystical 1*, ed. Henry Corbin, (Tehran: 1993), p. 485.

35- Sohrevardi, *Talwihat in Opera Metaphysica et Mystical 1*, ed. Henry Corbin, (Tehran: 1993), p. 72.

36- Sohrevardi, *Hikmat al-Israq in Opera Metaphysica et Mystical II*, ed. Henry Corbin, (Tehran: 1993), p. 114.

37- Asfar, Vol. 1, p. 263.

38- Ibn 'Arabi and his followers have discussed the view of the Sufis about mental and external existence and the different *hadrats* in detail. One of the best of these discussions is found in Qaysari's commentary on Ibn 'Arabi's *Bezels of Wisdom*, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*, ed., Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani (Tehran: 1996), pp. 66-67, 89-93.

39- Asfar, Vol. 3, p. 297.

40- *Nahayat al-Hikmat* (Qom: n.d.), p. 211.

41- Mulla Sadra, *Kitab al-Masha'ir*, ed., Henry Corbin, 2nd ed. (Tehran: 1984), p. 50.

42- Asfar, Vol. 3, p. 278.

43- Asfar, Vol. 3, p. 278.

44- Asfar, Vol. 3, p. 278.

45- *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*, tr., Parviz Morewedge, (New York and Tehran: 1992), p. 65.

46- This proof is also presented in the *Asfar*, Vol. 3, pps. 313-316.

47- *Masha'ir*, p. 64-65.

48- Masha'ir, p. 64-65.

49- Some of Mulla Sadra's commentators have come to the conclusion that despite his explicit denial in *Isharat wa Tanbihat*, part 7, Ibn Sina was in agreement with this position which he seems to support in his *Shifa, Mabda' wa Ma'ad*, and *Nijat*. See Hasan Zadeh Amuli, *Ittihad 'Aqil bi Ma'qul* (Tehran: A.H. 1404), pp. 18-22. After reviewing the arguments of Ibn Sina against the unity of the knower and the known, Mulla Sadra himself alludes to the fact that Ibn Sina seems to approve of it to some extent in his *Mabda' wa Ma'ad*. See Asfar, Vol. 3, pps. 333-334.

50- With regard to the background to this topic in Sufism, in addition to being mentioned in the works of Ibn 'Arabi and Qunawi, Sabzivari refers to the following lines from Rumi's *Mathnavi*:
O brother, you are that same thought (of yours); as for the rest (of you), you are (only) bone and fibre. If your thought is a rose, you are a rose-garden; and if it is a thorn, you are fuel for the bath-stove. The *Mathnawi* of Jalal'uddin Rumi, ed. and tr., R. A. Nicholson, Vol. II, p. 236. See Sabzivari, *Sharh Mathnavi*, ed., M. Burujerdi (Tehran: 1995), Vol. 1, p. 241.

51- Asfar, Vol. 8, p. 223.

52- Asfar, Vol. 3, pps. 321-327.

53- This definition of wisdom or philosophy (*hikmah*) implies spiritual wayfaring in the acquisition of knowledge. This is true philosophy, according to Mulla Sadra, and he refers to this in various works, including Asfar, Vol. 2, p. 18.

54- In *Se 'Asl*, p. 105, Mulla Sadra distinguishes these two journeys with respect to whether creatures are the mirror of God or vice versa.

Berkeley, Whitehead, Sadra: From Sense Impressions to Intuition

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Abstract

This contribution is an ongoing research project that comes to terms with two decisive philosophic issues encountered in the western tradition, while meeting the eastern Islamic tradition in philosophy. The first question can be formulated thus: How does Whitehead transform the western tradition, especially, the empirical version of epistemology, exemplified by Locke, Berkeley, Hume? Whitehead shows masterly performance of transforming the world of sense impressions into the world of "Prehensions". It is a novel epistemological vision in terms of process. This is, no doubt, a major achievement in 20th century western philosophy (see the present author's relevant essay, "Whitehead and Berkeley: On the true nature of sense perception", in: *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Creativity*. Editors F.Rapp and R. Wiehl. SUNY Press 1990, pp. 21-33). The second question, highly relevant to our discourse with contemporary, as well as historical Islamic philosophy: With the intellectual intuition of God as a legitimate category of epistemology in the east, the western tradition has, long since, broken with this wisdom and considered this category of knowledge as being non-evidenced, non-verified, state of empirical epistemology. The acute question emerges: How can we show that a serious discourse between the western and eastern philosophic tradition is possible on the grounds of intuitive

knowledge? Again, the very idea of intuitive knowledge must be re-examined in the western tradition. The candidates for these concerns are, no doubt, Whitehead (1865-1947) in the West, and Sadra al-Din Muhammad al-Shirazi (1571-1640), better known in the East as Mulla Sadra. The present author has, on another occasion of honouring Sadra in Tehran at the May Conference 1999, trying to come to terms with these issue (see the author's paper in the forthcoming Proceedings of the Tehran Conference). For the benefit of East and West, we must come into a discourse with such genius insights of a Whitehead and a Sadra, as to deepen our sensitivities in terms of the possibility of knowledge, beyond what Kant prescribed us. Kant is still useful, but, in terms of Whitehead and Sadra, there is a serious gap in Kant's epistemological framework. How is intuitive knowledge possible? This question, both Sadra and Whitehead tackle, but is not really taken serious by Kant, since he follows the mechanics of his day, the natural philosophy of Newton. Another contribution by the author in the same direction was presented to the 18th German Philosophy Association Meeting in Konstanz, Germany, entitled, "Intellectual Intuition as a problem of knowledge between West and East", in: *Die Zukunft des Wissens (The Future of Knowledge)*. Edited by J. Mittelstrass Konstanz University Press, 1999, pp. 1263-1268).

Introduction

The 21st century will be a century of various discourses and dialogues between diverse civilizations and societies and their respective traditions. The present contribution intends to promote such an enterprise by pursuing the specific problem of perception and its relation to intuition as a source of human knowledge. Moreover, it focuses upon the western as well as Islamic tradition of philosophy, since these two traditions are in dire need to talk to each other, instead of imitating reverberations of clashes of civilizations.

Philosophy has no need for such clashes in Plato's cave. Philosophy promotes arguments, insights based upon rational justification, sensibility to learning and intuitions acquired through wisdom of old and new. Of course, these are beautiful words and require serious backup through research projects and meetings places, such as the present one, in order to turn these words, at least to some extent, into reality. In that sense, the present contribution is a continuation of an ongoing project of which some research results have been published, such as the writers " Whitehead and Berkeley: On the True Nature of Sense Perception ", in: *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Creativity*. edited by F. Rapp and R. Wiehl. SUNY Press 1990, pp. 21-32; another result, by the same writer, had been presented at the Sadra Conference in Tehran, in May 1999, entitled " The Transformation of Substance in Whitehead and Sadra ", to be published in the Tehran Proceedings. A variation of some of the ideas presented here were started at the 18th German Philosophy Conference in Konstanz, October 1999, entitled " Intellectual Intuition as a Problem of Knowledge between East and West ", in: *Die Zukunft des Wissens*. edited by J. Mittelstrass. Konstanz University Press 1999, pp. 1263-1268. These three research items are, of course, interrelated and are directly relevant to the present topic that we address. In that sense the writers presentation at this conference is a continuation and deepening of the problems at hand, namely, from perception as sense impression to intuition. The focus is on three thinkers who are surprisingly close in philosophic attitude, despite their convergent cultural background, that we see a point of departure for a discourse badly needed between thinkers rooted in the western tradition, as well as those intellectual who have their home in the Islamic east.

The fundamental problem in the western tradition of philosophy, since the Enlightenment, has been the disregard and negation of intuition as a legitimate source of knowledge. The rationalists, such as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, on the one hand, and empiricist, such as Locke, Berkeley, Hume, may have disagreed on many points, but they did not really address the epistemological problem of intuition. They seem, in fact, agree on the matter that intuition is somehow relevant to us, but in the scientific context

useless. This, it seems to us is a serious blind spot in the modern western tradition, since the Enlightenment and, in fact, a source of friction in the engagement with the Islamic east.

No doubt, the crisis in the western tradition of philosophy has a great deal to do with this problem mentioned beforehand. We may even call it an "intuition crisis". Be that as it may, no doubt, the discrepancy between the west and the east, on the problem of perception in form of intuition, is real enough and apparent. One of the reasons why both sides had been unable to initiate a discourse, for some time, has been the inability of western thinkers to appreciate intuition, especially intellectual intuition, as an important element in human knowledge.

Despite his great merits, Kant contributed to this prejudice. His basic understanding of experience as a basis for transcendental knowledge is thin and inadequate to grasp the "thicker" aspects of the human soul.

We, of course, are in no position to belittle Kant, however, we should be made aware that Kant's concept of experience (Erfahrung) is, in fact, not sufficient to cover aspects of human insights that claim legitimate knowledge as intellectual intuition. How did western thinkers lose the intuitive grasp of things ?

We have introduced Alfred North Whitehead as a thinker who took intuition seriously. He, of course, was never part of the mainstream of western thinkers. Needless to say, he has been strangely neglected after the publication of the monumental *Principia Mathematica*, assisted by pupil Bertrand Russell. Whitehead, a mathematician and admirer of Plato, turned to metaphysics late in life after a distinguished career as professor of applied mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge, and Imperial College, in London. At last, in his retirement he was appointed professor of philosophy at Harvard and his metaphysical impulse and insights flowed from his pen. It was Whitehead, as we have shown in numerous publications, who transformed British empiricism into an extraordinary metaphysical scheme. It was Whitehead who transformed Berkeley's perceptive act into a prehension. It was a stroke of philosophic genius. It is in Whitehead, as we have argued on numerous occasions, that western philosophy regains sensitivity towards intuition as a legitimate source of human knowledge.

In the Islamic east it was Sadra al-Din Shirazi, known in his homeland as Mulla Sadra, who arises as a surprising figure from the Isfahan school of philosophy of the 17th century to 20th century, if not the 21st century. The appearance of Sadra, badly neglected in Islamic philosophy, not to mention the west, where he was unknown until recently, defies the common opinion, still held by many, in the Islamic west and Europe, that Islamic philosophy lost touch with true philosophy in its critical spirit and turned into a dogmatic slumber, after the attack of al-Gazali. If this is true, it is also a fact, that Sadra got Islamic philosophy out of its slumber, if only somewhat later than Hume waking up the early Kant. Be that as it may, we no longer can hold on to the view, propagated by the first formal textbook on the history of Islamic philosophy by De Boer in 1901, that philosophy in Islamic died, after al-Gazali's attack on the peripatetics. However, also unnoticed and badly neglected was Max Horten, professor of philosophy and Islamic studies at Bonn University, who made it clear in his pioneering works on Sadra in Europe, that Islamic philosophy did not end with al-Gazali, but flourished in the east of Islam, namely, in Isfahan. Horten wrote his first Sadra book in 1912 and another published in 1913. Horten writes, " Gazali does not mean the death of theological-philosophic thought, but only a temporary lapse toward a heightened awareness towards philosophic acumen". (see M. Horten, *Das philosophische System von Schirazi*. Strassburg: Trubner 1913, p. 220). The pioneering works by Horten have never been translated into English or French, but he has been honored by S.H. Nasr and the late Fazlur Rahman, in their own pioneering monographs on Sadra in 1973 and 1975, respectively. Slowly, consciousness is dawning on a new generation of Muslim scholars in philosophy, as well as among the more culturally sensitive among their European and American colleagues, that a

serious reassessment of Islamic philosophy is needed. The benefits, no doubt, will be reaped by anyone who professes to be a lover of wisdom and truth, east or west.

Again, in this presentation we want to explore the possibility of a point of departure for a serious discourse between western philosophy and Islamic philosophers in terms of the philosophic problems that beset sense perception and intuition in relation to epistemology. The relevant systematic question that we must address, aside the cultural framework and setting is, How can Whitehead's idea of perception in terms of revolutionary concept of prehension accommodate Sadra's ingenuous understanding of human experience on the level of the imagination, illumination and intuition ? How can we promote the idea of intuition, as being a serious and legitimate source of relevance to human knowledge in the western tradition of philosophy, since the Enlightenment ? That intellectual intuition of the world regains its importance in western philosophy has it had been in the tradition of Plato, Plotinus, Augustine and Nicolaus Cusanus.

Whitehead's Transformation of British Empiricism from Sense Impressions to Prehension

How does Whitehead transform the tradition of British empiricism, from Locke to Hume, especially Berkeley, ushering into the neo-empirical epistemology of Bertrand Russell and A.J. Ayer ? Whitehead, in his major work, *Process and Reality*, shows a masterly performance of transforming the world of sense impression, i.e. from a subject-object-empirical-data-based-epistemology to a process version, of an enveloping superject version of sense perception and intuition, namely prehension. This, no doubt, is a major achievement in 20th century philosophy, that has not been duly honored among mainstream western philosophers. Sadra, as we know, had a similar fate: he had his difficulties, as he tells us in the introductory phase of his major work *the Asfar*, and, most first-time readers of Sadra have a tendency to declare that he seems to quote a great deal from the ancient classics, Greek as well as Islamic. Of course, we know that is a matter of inexperience or plain ignorance on part of the reader. Sadra's enormous learning and acumen as well as assessment of major thinkers in philosophy and theology, west and east, gives testifies in his writings. This is also the case with Whitehead's first readers: they are puzzled and confused as to what he meant. The readers of Whitehead and Sadra, unless somewhat experienced in matters of philosophy, will not see the subtle relevant references to other thinkers in the context of their own systematic thinking. Some cameo reviews of Locke, or Hume, or Plato, are a sheer delight in Whitehead's texts. Of course, everyone knows that Whitehead said that all philosophy is a footnote to Plato. Both thinkers are capable to survey the whole gamut doctrines, teachings, and opinions of others, and make them live again, in their own respective scheme of things.

In British empiricism, Berkeley's relevance for Whitehead's philosophical development has been demonstrated by this writer in the relevant articles cited. Whitehead had been concerned with Berkeley since his early works, such as *Concept of Nature* (1920), especially on the acute analysis of sense perception in Berkeley's writings, such as the *Dialogues*, the *Principles*, and particularly *Alciphron*.

In *Science and the Modern World* Whitehead realized that he had to incorporate Berkeley's analysis in his expanded context of explanation. Whitehead transforms Berkeley's perception from an epistemological context into an ontological one, thereby finding a lever for his own constitutive perception, which is systematically developed as the theory of prehension in *Process and Reality*. This shift enables Whitehead to start anew his philosophic enterprise, but this time from a metaphysical perspective. At this point we find a similar situation with Sadra: after his critique of Aristotle and Ibn Sina, with the help of Suhrawardi, Sadra starts anew his metaphysical inquiry. It can be

stated that, what Berkeley was to Whitehead, Suhrawardi was to Sadra. Berkeley did some preliminary work for Whitehead as did Suhrawardi for Sadra. Whitehead had to enter a critical discussion of concepts in Newtonian cosmology. On that score Berkeley provided some guidance for Whitehead: and so did Suhrawardi critique of Aristotle and Ibn Sina, for Sadra.

Berkeley's critique of Locke's theory of sense qualities and Newton's conception of absolute motion become components of Whitehead's own critique of scientific materialism and its metaphysical consequences, namely the bifurcation of nature. Whitehead carried Berkeley's criticism of Newton further in a consistent and systematic manner, in the same way as Sadra in terms of Suhrawardi's critique of Aristotle and Ibn Sina. The criticism of Newton and Locke in *Process and Reality* part 2, chapter 1, bears witness to that. Whitehead attempts, at this point, to transform Locke's fundamental position into a theory of constitutions of actual entities. Berkeley, Locke and Newton are transformed from their traditional empirical doctrine of sense perception and mechanics of Newton's conception of bodies, into prehension and actual entities. The early Whitehead of the *Principles of Natural Knowledge* hints at that, " Perception is always at the utmost point of creation. We essentially perceive our relations with nature because they are in the making." (PNK.Cambridge UP 1919, p.14) Hence, perception is an act of creative activity, continually and permanently in the making: this certainly sounds like Sadra. The mature Whitehead formulates in *Science and the Modern World*, " Perception is simply the cognition of prehensive unification; or more shortly, perception is cognition of prehension. The actual world is a manifold of prehensions; and a ' prehension ' is a ' prehensive occasion ' ; and a prehensive occasion is the most concrete finite en." (SMW.Macmillan New Edition, 1975, p. 89) Prehension, therefore, is a grasping of a situation, a pattern, a paradigm, an intuitive act, a creative act of insight, that may occur consciously as well as unconsciously. Prehensions, to Whitehead, using a metaphor from Hume, is the cement that holds bricks together. Unfortunately, Whitehead did not have sufficient time left to complete a systematic scheme of prehensions, of which, this writer counted about sixty-two types. This may be an undertaking for the future.

Whitehead's original problem was that of the bifurcation of nature initiated by Descartes. In Berkeley, he found the point of departure from which to submit sense perception a scrutiny and new interpretation, and therefore, overcomes the bifurcation dilemma, from which the mainstream thinking in western philosophy still suffers. Whitehead went on to develop a metaphysics of experience that still needs to be discovered by mainstream western philosophy as well as contemporary Islamic philosophic activity. Those acquainted with Sadra's general view will see immediately the relevance of Whitehead as a fellow traveler and companion of Sadra. Both always held that there is more than just what "meets the eye". That there is the beyond which is non-discursive, non-mediary, non-dialectic and non-bifurcation, is an essential element in both Whitehead and Sadra's view. How can we discourse about something that can't be discoursed about without contradicting itself ? This is one of the pitfalls that we must come to terms with, dealing with the intuitive nature of things, and not the least, Deity.

Sadra's Tran Formation of Substantive Metaphysics into a Perpetual Intuition of Divinity

What makes Sadra's metaphysical project interesting to a western cast of mind is his head on critique of the substantive metaphysics of Aristotle. Basically speaking, all intellectual revolutions had their origins in the critique of Aristotle, which includes the scientific revolution in western Europe. Sadra's Aristotle critique is an important and productive part of his project. It is his initial starting point towards a mature

metaphysics of non-substance, a dynamic perpetual creation of Being, not as existence, but as process in Deity.

Some of the basics entertained by Sadra are necessary to understand in order to come to terms with his revolutionary concept of "substance-in-motion". The subtle relationship to Whitehead's "prehension" still awaits analysis. A basic presupposition in Sadra's major work, *Asfar*, is the perspective that the proto-something emanating from Deity is Being. This means that the usual causality concept we entertain in terms of a mechanics of Newton, or Kant, or contemporary physics, does not apply, since we deal with a metaphysical setting.

Sadra's presupposition precludes a bifurcation of nature, as promoted by Descartes, or Europe's scientific revolution. At times Sadra reminds us of Leibniz by maintaining that Deity is a mirror of world entities and that the telos of time and its movements is to develop Being. Moreover, that each entity entertains the principle of searching and seeking a movement in terms of intensity and differentiation, time and regeneration of Being. Clear, this is not Being in Aristotle's terms of *Ousia* or *Todi Ti* epistemology. This is what we may call, remembering the late Gilbert Ryle, "thickness metaphysics", analogous to Clifford Geertz's usage of the Ryle term of "thickness" in anthropological studies, in which Geertz describes the richness of the Islamic tradition, layers, and presupposition, exemplified by Indonesia and Morocco. This "thickness" tells us that individuation is based on existence and not essence. That an entity without cause can either be known intuitively, or is beyond our power of cognition. Deity recognizes all moveable entities in the general Being - whose forms of appearance, it is. Also, the reflexive cognition of the Self is identical with the proto-self; this, of course, reminds us of Fichte's dynamic vision of the creation of the ego through itself. A reading of Fichte with the eyes of a Sadra would, no doubt, be a creative act of philosophy. This is Sadrian philosophy in the best sense of the word.

Sadra rejects Aristotle's substrate, or *hypokeimenon*, not the least Kant's *Dinge-an-sich-selbst-betrachtet*, the original version of things-in-themselves.

Sadra treats sense perception not as part of natural science, but a part of psychology. In that sense he's closer to the Gestalt psychology people than the modern behaviorists. It is not empirical psychology, but metaphysical psychology. The soul, in a strict sense, is not part of the body, but an emergence something that undergoes continual substantive change. The soul is not, it processes. For Aristotle and Locke perception is direct perception of objects at hand. Yet, for Sadra, as well as for Suhrawardi, the luminous object faces the visual organ as an immediate illuminations event of awareness. This doctrine is contrary to a transparent medium and reject an analogous idea of the dialectic. Perception or vision is a creative act by the power of Deity. This form resembles the external object from within the domain of the soul; yet, this form is separated from external matter. It is related to the cognizing soul as a creative act. Thus, in Sadra we can discover, analogous to Searl's speech acts, different types of creative acts, such as the creative act of speech, the creative act of perceptible acts. In short, this area has not yet been systematically explored, namely, the different creative acts of perception we find in Sadra.

At one time Sadra is close to Berkeley when he points out in the first journey of the *Asfar* that the eyes see, the ear hear, the tongue tastes, the feet walk, or the hand holds, but these are conditions of our physical being, organs, and accidental facts of the material world.

Yet, how does it differentiate from the concept of "feeling hungry", "feeling pleasure", "feeling thirsty" ? these seem to be intrinsic conceptualities, rather than Kant's internal-external bifurcation.

Berkeley did ask onetime, which tower is the real one - the one far out there, or the one I see in front of me ? which one is the real one ?

In the very act of perception, as an creative act, we find the union between subject and object. The description of Whitehead of superject seems more appropriate to Sadra's analysis than to Whitehead himself.

Sense perception as an ontic act means, the identity of the knower and the known. That the knowledge of being itself is that of the identity of the knower and the known. Rahman talks of "being-for-knowledge".

Perhaps this too is something too rationalistic as S.H. Nasr pointed out in his benign critique of Rahman's analysis of Sadra. Or, in his *Wisdom of the Throne*, Sadra, in part one, paragraph ten and three, suggests to us the nature of the known and the knower in terms of sense impressions.

Sense impressions are ontic acts directing themselves toward the Return. This is another aspect of Sadra that can be easily misunderstood by the western cast of mind. Return means, to return to the One, the Deity, who is already, and we are accidents in the journey towards that One. Epistemology, for Sadra is an ontic affair. It is ontic in nature. It is not merely epistemological realism as sense impression. It is an epistemological process with metaphysical underpinnings - a journey to its source, continually. In that sense we can't speak of subject and object, since the knower and the known already had an inner sacred epistemological bonding. Subject and object remind themselves of the source en route to their Return. Again, the idea of alienation is foreign to Sadra, since the original sacred bond between the knower and the known does not include an alienation process, in the Hegelian style of negation. Epistemologically speaking, the knower and the known is in exile and on the way home. That is the reason to speak of substance metaphysics is a contradiction in terms, as far as Sadra is concerned. For "substance" is always, and has been always, a part of the Being of the One, and can't be separated by mere abstraction theory. The five senses have a peculiar status in Sadra's epistemology. They are, in fact, ontological in nature, being generated from the Unseen. Sight is not impression, but expression, in terms of activity. Thus, Sadra tells us, the senses are not sensible qualities of material entities. From an essential point of view they are a part of the "class of qualities", peculiar to the soul. The eye exists through the power of sight and not vice versa. Thus, that which perceives and that which is perceived are one mode of existence. And that mode of existence is the Eternal Return.

Conclusion

It is clear by now that a point of departure for a serious philosophic discourse between western philosophy and Islamic philosophy can be had in the metaphysics of two great human beings and thinkers: Whitehead and Sadra. Much work is still needed to sort out the details and pitfalls. However, the visions of these two giants of philosophic speculation should give us courage, energy, and hope that human kind may yet see the light at the end of the tunnel. Plato's Cave need not be a permanent state for the majority of human beings. Light, that universal component of everything that exists, must be reincorporated into a philosophic perspective that is truly universal in outlook, far superior to mere globalization. Heidegger should have waited for Sadra. Corbin saw and sought out Sadra himself. Whitehead, unfortunately, never heard of Sadra, but students who admire his work, do. Thus, we too are caught in the Eternal Return, in the web of the sacred bond, when we find somesolice and peace at the end, realizing, it's just the beginning.

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