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Continuity and the Logic of Perception

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Abstract

In his *On What is Continuous* of 1914, 1 Franz Brentano makes the following observation:

If we imagine a chess-board with alternate blue and red squares, then this is something in which the individual red and blue areas allow themselves to be distinguished from each other in juxtaposition, and something similar holds also if we imagine each of the squares divided into four smaller squares also alternating between these two colours. If, however, we were to continue with such divisions until we had exceeded the boundary of noticeability for the individual small squares which result, then it would no longer be possible to apprehend the individual red and blue areas in their respective positions. But

would we then see nothing at all? Not in the least; rather we would see the whole chessboard as violet, i.e. apprehend it as something that participates simultaneously in red and blue.

In this paper I will describe a simple and natural framework—a logic of perception—in which this "simultaneous participation" or superposition of perceived attributes is accorded a major role. (This framework was originally introduced in for a different purpose.) The central concept of the framework is that of an attribute being manifested over a region or part of a proximity space—an abstract structure embodying key features of perceptual fields. An important property of the manifestation relation is non-persistence, namely, the fact that a space may manifest an attribute not manifested by some part. This will be shown to be closely related to the idea of superposing attributes. I will also show how this framework is tied up with the continuity of perceptual fields.

Let us think of attributes or qualities such as "blackness", "hardness", etc. as being manifested over or supported by parts of a (perceptual) space. For instance if the space is my total sensory field, part of it manifests blackness and part manifests hardness and, e.g., a blackboard manifests both attributes. Each attribute A is correlated with a proposition (more precisely, a propositional function) of the form "—manifests the attribute A."

I shall use letters A, B, C to denote attributes. I assume given a supply of atomic or primitive attributes, i.e., attributes not decomposable into simpler ones. For each such attribute A and each space S we may consider the total part of S which manifests A; this will be called the A-part of S and denoted by [A]S. Thus, for instance, if S is my visual field and A is the attribute "redness", then [A]S is the total part of my sensory field where I see redness: the red part of my visual field.

Attributes may be combined by means of the logical operators  $\dot{\cup}$  (and),  $\dot{\cup}$  (and/or),  $\emptyset$  (not) to form compound or molecular attributes. The term "attribute" will accordingly be extended to include compound attributes. It follows that (symbols for) attributes may be regarded as the statements of a propositional language L—the language of attributes.

In order to be able to correlate parts of any given space S with compound attributes, i.e., to be able to define the A-part of S for arbitrary compound A, we need to assume the presence of operations  $[\dot{\cup}]$ ,  $[\dot{\cup}]$ ,  $[\emptyset]$ , corresponding respectively to  $\dot{\cup}$ ,  $\dot{\cup}$ ,  $\emptyset$ , on the parts of S. For then we will be able to define the A-part [A]S for arbitrary attributes A according to the following scheme:

$$[A \dot{\cup} B]S = [A]S [\dot{\cup}] [B]S$$

$$[A \dot{\cup} B]S = [A]S [\dot{\cup}] [B]S (*)$$

$$[\emptyset A]S = [\emptyset][A]S.$$

Once this is done, we can then define the basic relation  $[\acute{I}]S$  of inclusion between attributes over S:

$$A [\acute{I}]S B \dot{\cup} [A]S \acute{I} [B]S$$

where, as usual, " $\acute{I}$ " denotes the relation of set-theoretic inclusion.

Now the conventional meaning of " $\dot{\cup}$ " dictates that, for any attributes A and B, we should have  $A \dot{\cup} B [\acute{I}]S A$  and  $A \dot{\cup} B [\acute{I}]S B$  and, for any C, if  $C [\acute{I}]S A$  and  $C [\acute{I}]S B$  then  $C [\acute{I}]S A \dot{\cup} B$ . In other words,  $[A \dot{\cup} B]S$  should be taken to be the largest part (w.r.t.  $\acute{I}$ ) of S included in both [A]S and [B]S. By the first equation

in (\*) above, the same must be true of  $[A]S \cap [B]S$ . Consequently, for any parts  $U, V$  of  $S$ ,  $U \cap V$  should be the largest part of  $S$  included in both  $U$  and  $V$ .

Similarly, now using the conventional meaning of " $\cup$ ", we find that, for any parts  $U, V$  of  $S$ ,  $U \cup V$  should be the smallest part of  $S$  which includes both  $U$  and  $V$ .

We shall suppose that there is a vacuous attribute  $\wedge$  for which  $[\wedge]S = \emptyset$ , the empty part of  $S$ . In that case, for any attribute  $A$ , we have

$$[A]S \cap [\emptyset]S = [A]S \cap [\emptyset]S = [A \cap \emptyset]S = [\wedge]S = \emptyset,$$

Consequently, for any part  $U$  of  $S$  we should require that  $U \cap [\emptyset]U = \emptyset$ , i.e. that  $U$  and  $[\emptyset]U$  be mutually exclusive.

It follows from these considerations that we should take the parts of a perceptual space  $S$  to constitute a lattice of subsets of (the underlying set of)  $S$ , on which is defined an operation  $[\emptyset]$  ('complementation') corresponding to negation or exclusion satisfying the condition of mutual exclusiveness mentioned above. Formally, a lattice of subsets of a set  $S$  is a family  $L$  of subsets of  $S$  containing  $\emptyset$  and  $S$  such that for any  $U, V \in L$  there are elements  $U \cap V, U \cup V$  of  $L$  such that  $U \cap V$  is the largest (w.r.t.  $\supseteq$ ) element of  $L$  included in both  $U$  and  $V$  and  $U \cup V$  is the smallest (w.r.t.  $\supseteq$ ) element of  $L$  which includes both  $U$  and  $V$ .  $U \cap V, U \cup V$  are called the meet and join, respectively, of  $U$  and  $V$ . A lattice  $L$  of subsets of  $S$  equipped with an operation  $[\emptyset]: L \rightarrow L$  satisfying  $U \cap [\emptyset]U = \emptyset$  for all  $U \in L$  is called a  $[\emptyset]$ -lattice of subsets of  $S$ .

We can now formally define a perceptual space, or simply a space, to be a pair  $S = (S, L)$  consisting of a set  $S$  and a  $[\emptyset]$ -lattice  $L$  of subsets of  $S$ . Elements of  $L$  are called parts of  $S$ , and  $L$  is called the lattice of parts of  $S$ .

The perceptual spaces that most closely resemble actual perceptual fields are called proximity spaces. These in turn are derived from proximity structures. A proximity structure is a set  $S$  equipped with a proximity relation, that is, a symmetric reflexive binary relation  $\gg$ . Here we think of  $S$  as a field of perception, its points as locations in it, and the relation  $\gg$  as representing indiscernibility of locations, so that  $x \gg y$  means that  $x$  and  $y$  are "too close" to one another to be perceptually distinguished. (Caution:  $\gg$  is not generally transitive!) For each  $x \in S$  we define the sensum at  $x$ ,  $Q_x$ , by  $Q_x = \{y \in S: x \gg y\}$ .

We may think of the sensum  $Q_x$  as representing the minimum perceptibility at the location  $x$ . Unions of families of sensa are called parts of  $S$ . Parts of  $S$  correspond to perceptibly identifiable subregions of  $S$ . It can be shown that the family  $\text{Part}(S)$  of parts of  $S$  forms a  $[\emptyset]$ -lattice of subsets of  $S$  (actually, a complete ortholattice) in which the join operation is set-theoretic union, the meet of two parts of  $S$  is the union of all sensa included in their set-theoretical intersection, and, for  $U \in \text{Part}(S)$ ,

$$[\emptyset]U = \{y \in S: \exists x \in U. x \gg y\}.$$

The pair  $S = (S, \text{Part}(S))$  is called a proximity space.

The most natural proximity structures (and proximity spaces) are derived from metrics. Any metric  $d$  on a set  $S$  and any nonnegative real number  $\epsilon$  determines a proximity relation  $\gg$  given by  $x \gg y \iff d(x, y) \leq \epsilon$ . When  $\epsilon = 0$  the associated proximity relation is the identity relation  $=$ : the corresponding proximity space is then called discrete. It can be shown that, if a proximity space  $S$  has a transitive proximity

relation, then it is almost discrete in the sense that its lattice of parts is isomorphic to the lattice of parts of a discrete space.

Given a perceptual space  $S = (S, L)$  we define an interpretation of the language  $L$  of attributes to be an assignment, to each primitive attribute  $A$ , of a part  $[A]S$  of  $S$ . Then we can extend the assignment of parts of  $S$  to all attributes as in (\*) above. Given an attribute  $A$  and a part  $U$  of  $S$ , we think of the relation  $U \hat{=} [A]S$  as meaning that  $U$  is covered by the attribute  $A$ . Now there is another relation between parts and attributes the manifestation relation  $MS$ —which reflects more closely the way compound attributes are built up from primitive ones.  $U MS A$ , which is read "U manifests A" or "A is manifested over U" is defined as follows:

$U MS A \hat{=} U \hat{=} [A]S$  for primitive  $A$ ,

$U MS A \hat{=} B \hat{=} U MS A$  and  $U MS B$ ,

$U MS A \hat{=} B \hat{=} V MS A \& W MS B$  for some parts  $V, W$  of  $S$  such that  $U = V \hat{=} W$ ,

$U MS \emptyset A \hat{=} ($ for all parts  $V$  of  $S, V MS A \supset V \hat{=} [\emptyset]U$  $)$ .

Thus  $U$  manifests a disjunction  $A \hat{=} B$  provided there is a "covering" of  $U$  by two "subparts" manifesting  $A$  and  $B$  respectively, and  $U$  manifests a negation  $\emptyset A$  provided any part of  $S$  manifesting  $A$  is included in the "complement" of  $U$ .

In general, the manifestation and covering relations fail to coincide in proximity spaces. The reason for this is that, while the latter has a certain persistence property, the former, in general, fails to possess this property. By persistence of the covering relation is meant the evident fact that if a part  $U$  of a space is covered by an attribute, then this attribute continues to cover any subpart of  $U$ . However, as we shall see, this is not the case for the manifestation relation: there are attributes manifested over a part of a space which fail to be manifested over a subpart.

Let us call an attribute  $S$ -persistent (or persistent over  $S$ ) if for all parts  $U, V$  of  $S$  we have

$V \hat{=} U \& U MS A \supset V MS A$ .

(Note that a primitive attribute is always persistent. More generally, it is not hard to show that the same is true for any compound attribute not containing occurrences of the disjunction symbol  $\hat{=}$ .) Let us call a space  $S$  persistent if every attribute is  $S$ -persistent (for any interpretation of  $L$  in  $S$ ). We now give an example of a non-persistent proximity space, a one-dimensional version of Brentano's chessboard.

Red Blue Red Blue Red Blue Red Blue

4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4

$U$

Consider the real line with the proximity relation  $\gg$  defined by  $x \gg y \hat{=} |x - y| \leq 2$ , and let  $R$  be the associated proximity space. The sensum at a point  $x$  is then the closed interval of length 1 centred on  $x$ . Suppose now we are given two primitive attributes  $B$  ('blue') and  $R$  ('red'). Let the  $B$ -part of  $R$  be the union of all closed intervals of the form  $[2n, 2n + 1]$  and let the  $R$ -part of  $R$  be the union of all closed

intervals of the form  $[2n - 1, 2n]$ . To put it more vividly, we "colour" successive unit segments alternately blue and red. Clearly, then,  $R$  manifests the disjunction  $R \dot{\cup} B$ . But if  $U$  is the sensum  $Q_1 = [2, 12]$ , then  $R \dot{\cup} B$  is not manifested over  $U$ , since  $U$  is evidently not covered by two subparts over which  $R$  and  $B$  are manifested, respectively—indeed  $U$  has no proper subparts.

Thus arises the curious phenomenon that, although we can tell, by surveying a (sufficiently large part of) the whole space  $R$ , that the part  $U$  is covered by redness and blueness, nevertheless  $U$ —unlike  $R$ —does not split into a red part and a blue part. In some sense redness and blueness are conjoined or superposed in  $U$ : it seems natural then to say that  $U$  manifests a superposition of these attributes rather than a disjunction. If we take the unit of length on the real line sufficiently small (or equivalently, redefine  $x \gg y$  to mean  $*x - y* \leq e$  for sufficiently small  $e$ ) so that each interval of unit length represents the minimum length discernible to human visual perception, we have (essentially) Brentano's chessboard in one dimension. In that case, the "superposition" of the two attributes blue and red turns out to be violet, which is what we actually see.

Actually, the covering of our proximity space by parts like  $U$  looks like this:

red blue blue red red blue blue red red blue  
 while Brentano's chessboard looks like this:

red blue red blue red blue red blue red blue  
 But the two arrangements are obviously isomorphic.

The concept of superposition of attributes admits a very simple rigorous formulation. In the example we have just considered, the part  $U$  manifests a superposition of the attributes  $R$  and  $B$  just when there is a part  $V$  of the space which includes  $U$  and manifests  $R \dot{\cup} B$  (in this case,  $V$  may be taken to be the whole real line). This prompts the following definition. Given a proximity space  $S$ , an interpretation of  $L$  in  $S$  and attributes  $A, B$ , we say that a part  $U$  of  $S$  manifests a superposition of  $A$  and  $B$  if there is a part  $V$  of  $S$  such that  $U \dot{\subset} V$  and  $V \text{ MS } A \dot{\cup} B$ . Now for any attribute  $C$ , it is readily shown that

$U \text{ MS } \emptyset \emptyset C \iff \hat{U} \text{ MS } C$  for some part  $V$  such that  $U \dot{\subset} V$ .

So the condition that  $U$  manifest a superposition of  $A$  and  $B$  is just

$U \text{ MS } \emptyset \emptyset (A \dot{\cup} B)$ .

It follows that a superposition is a double negation of a disjunction. In the human visual field, then, the attribute "violet" is the double negation of the attribute "blue or red". Similarly, the attribute "grey" is the double negation of the attribute "black or white", etc.

Finally, we discuss the relationship between these ideas and continuity. Let us call a proximity structure  $(S, \gg)$  continuous if for any  $x, y \hat{\in} S$  there exist  $z_1, \dots, z_n$  such that  $x \gg z_1, z_1 \gg z_2, \dots, z_{n-1} \gg z_n, z_n \gg y$ . Continuity in this sense means that any two points can be joined by a finite sequence of points, each of which is indistinguishable from its immediate predecessor. (Thus, in the case of our non-persistent proximity space above, continuity means that a red segment and a blue segment can always be joined by a violet line provided that the coloured segments are taken to be sufficiently small.) If  $d$  is a metric on  $S$  such that the metric space  $(S, d)$  is connected, then every proximity structure determined by  $d$  is continuous. When  $S$  is a perceptual field such as that of vision, the fact that it does not fall into separate parts means that it is connected as a metric space with the inherent metric. Accordingly every proximity

structure on S determined by that metric is continuous. Note that this continuity emerges even when S is itself an assemblage of discrete "points". This would seem to be the way in which continuity of perception is engendered by an essentially discrete system of receptors.

Notes:

1- Brentano, Franz, *Philosophical Investigations of Space, Time and the Continuum*. Barry Smith, translator. London: Croom Helm, 1988.

2-Bell, J.L., *A New Approach to Quantum Logic*. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 37, 1986.

Mulla Sadra's Epistemology and the Philosophy of Physics

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Abstract

In response to the philosophical speculation that has accompanied the empirical findings of twentieth century physics, the contemporary philosopher and mathematician Wolfgang Smith has introduced a distinction between what he calls the corporeal and physical worlds, the former being that which is accessible to us through our own senses and the latter being that which is accessible to us through the modus operandi of physics, and which most notably contains the entirety of what has come to be known as the 'quantum world'. Smith's conception is based in traditional metaphysics, and seeks to destroy once and for all the stranglehold that Cartesian dualism has had over Western thought until the present day.

This distinction between the corporeal and physical world is examined in light of Mulla Sadra's theory of perception, and similarly Sadra's philosophy is evaluated in light of the distinction that Smith makes between the world of sense perception and the world accessible through measurement. Of particular importance is the role of the intermediate or imaginal world as a key to understanding both what Sadra has to say about perception as well as Smith's own radical and philosophically powerful approach to deciphering such phenomena as non-locality and the so-called state vector collapse. The possibility of incorporating Smith's views about physics into the Sadrian world-view is considered.

There is a fundamental difference between our common experience of the world and our encounter with that same world as seen through the lenses of scientific observation. For example, when one sees a red billiard ball, he sees a spherical red object. After subjecting this object to various sorts of measurement and observation, he is able to form a picture of its quantitative attributes. He is thus able to say that this thing is a rigid sphere with such and such a radius, of a certain density, possessing a determinable mass. The difference between these two billiard balls is that the first is directly perceptible by us, while the second is only accessible to us through the methods of scientific observation. In his book *The Quantum Enigma*, the mathematician and philosopher Wolfgang Smith discusses, among other things, our perception of objects (such as the billiard ball), and seeks to prove the error of Cartesian bifurcation<sup>1</sup>, which considers objects in the world to only possess quantitative measurable attributes, the qualities we associate with these objects being relegated to our own subjective world, or to the status of "secondary qualities". Using Smith's critique of the Cartesian dualism as a starting point, this paper will be a brief discussion of this realm of quantity as seen in the light of Mulla Sadra's theory of perception.

\* \* \*

The ball we perceive is what Smith calls the corporeal object, for which there exists a corresponding physical object. According to this terminology, the corporeal world is the world of perceived qualities, while the physical world is that of measured or measurable quantities. When we learn that the ball has a certain mass, we do not perceive this directly (although this too can be perceived in a certain qualitative manner) but do so by reading a corporeal pointer on a corporeal scale. We are able to perceive this reading, not by virtue of any quantitative attribute, but because, for example, the pointer and the numbers on the scale are black on a white background. All these are the qualities of the objects in question. It is thus pointless to speak of the primacy of measurable quantities, since we have no access to the results of our measurements without the perceivable qualities. To paraphrase Smith, no one, not even a scientist, has ever seen a rigid sphere of homogeneous density with radius  $x$ , and no one ever will. Ours is the world of the red ball, regardless of the measurements made on it by modern science. The corporeal world is the only door to the physical, and if one wishes to have any knowledge whatsoever of physical attributes, it must be accepted that we actually perceive the qualities of things, and that a real connection is made between the subject and the object. This explanation completely overturns the primacy of extension and refocuses our attention on quality, and in one stroke takes the self-proclaimed monopoly on knowledge of things "as they are" away from the scientist.

In Mulla Sadra's theory of perception<sup>2</sup>, when man looks out upon the world, what he perceives falls into two categories: forms (*suwar*) and meanings (*ma'ani*). The faculty that perceives forms is the *sensus communis* (*al-hiss al-mushtarak*), which functions to gather together the information brought in by the five external senses. Through this faculty we are able to perceive whole images or whole impressions. The forms perceived through the *sensus communis* are preserved in the imagination (*al-khayal*), also called the form-making-faculty (*al-musawwirah*).

As for meanings (*ma'ani*), they are perceived by the faculty of apprehension (*al-wahm*). The apprehension perceives meanings that are not the immediate content of sense perception. Sadra gives the example of the enmity a sheep perceives in a wolf, or the love one person perceives in another. For their part, these meanings are stored in the memory (*al-hifz*).

The faculty-of-disposal (*al-mutasarrifah*) is that power in man that takes apart and combines the forms and meanings it finds in the imagination and the memory. By virtue of this faculty one can inwardly put wings on a horse, or see the horse without its tail. "When the soul makes use of this faculty through the intermediation of the faculty of apprehension, it is called the imaginal-faculty (*al-mutakhayyilah*), and when it uses it through the intermediation of the intellectual-faculty it is called the faculty-of-thought (*al-mufakkirah*)."<sup>3</sup> For Sadra, the faculty of apprehension is none other than "the essence of the intellectual-faculty being put into relation with a particular individual, its connection to him, and its governance for him. The intellectual-faculty connected to the imagination (*al-khayal*) is apprehension, just as its objects are the universal meanings put into relation with the forms of individual entities of the imagination."<sup>4</sup> The apprehension by definition deals with meanings in particular things, while the intellectual-faculty (*al-'aqlah*) deals with meanings as such.<sup>5</sup> As we shall see, the role of the faculty-of-disposal, which is polarized into the imaginal-faculty and the faculty-of-thought, must be made clear if one is to have a meaningful understanding of the practice of science.

\* \* \*

We have already explained that the human observer, in conducting his scientific investigation, has access only to the corporeal world of qualities, the physical world being available to him only by virtue of its effects in the former. This act of perception itself is, in Sadrian epistemology, the domain of the five external senses and the *sensus communis*. When one speaks of perceptible qualities and measurable quantities in light of the distinction between the corporeal and the physical, one is saying in effect that sense perception (*al-hiss*) has access only to the former and not to the latter. It is through this act of sense perception that the human observer has any access whatsoever to the external world, to the world of the objects that he studies.

In order to understand how the human observer finds the physical attributes of an object, it is necessary to look to the faculty of apprehension. As we have noted before, according to Sadra the apprehension is that faculty in man which is able to perceive meaning in the forms it is presented with by the *sensus communis* or by the imagination. Enmity and love are not qualities that subsist in corporeal bodies *qua* corporeal bodies, but they nevertheless can be perceived in them and associated with them through the faculty of apprehension.

When one looks at our red billiard ball, one sees that it is spherical in shape. It is not, however, a sphere in the strictest sense, as it is not possible, by the very nature of the corporeal world, for a perfect sphere to be present within it. When we draw a triangle on paper, we are in reality not drawing a perfect triangle, no matter how fine our line or how precise our measurement of its angles. The line will always have some width, and upon inspection we find that this line is hardly smooth and regular. What we have drawn is a triangular shape, and yet we say that we in fact perceive a triangle, just as we can see a sphere in the billiard ball. In both cases, the perception of the geometric form is not a function of the faculty of sense, but rather of the faculty of apprehension. The sphere and the triangle belong to the domain of meanings, not of sensorially perceptible forms. This same principle holds true for any geometric shape in any corporeal object we observe. We perceive squares, cones, lines, and points in corporeal bodies by virtue of the presence of these forms in the intellect, which, when put into relation with an individual, becomes his faculty of apprehension.

Moving beyond merely the shapes of things, let us suppose that we throw this billiard ball in order to observe the effect. Repeating this act many times with multiple billiard balls, we find that the shapes of all the trajectories accord with the same type of mathematical formula. Standing at the proper vantage point, an observer can directly perceive the parabolic arc the billiard ball follows each time it is thrown. The parabola is perceived through the faculty of apprehension; one sees it in the corporeal world, but it is not a corporeal entity. Sadra mentions the similar example of a falling drop appearing as a line to an observer, which he uses as a proof for the existence of the *sensus communis*. The point he is trying to prove is that the faculty of sight as such only perceives a drop, and that the ability to see the falling drop as a whole is a function of the *sensus communis*. This must not be misconstrued as meaning that it is through the *sensus communis* that we perceive a line, that is, a perfect geometric line. It is the faculty of apprehension that perceives this meaning in the trajectory of the falling drop. This same reasoning holds for the parabolic arc traced out by the ball, although it is at a slightly higher level of mathematical complexity. Of course many more mathematical "meanings" can be derived from our study of the flying billiard balls, but regardless of the type of experiment we choose to perform, in each case we will discern a certain content within the corporeally perceived objects which is indicative of a mathematical idea, which is none other than the faculty of apprehension perceiving meanings in the sensorial forms it has access to through sense perception and through its storehouse, the imagination. It should be noted the ability to derive mathematical formalism from our inspection of the world and to derive still further mathematical meaning from our existing knowledge of mathematics is the domain, not of the



apprehension, but of the faculty-of-thought, which as we know is the faculty-of-disposal coupled with the intellectual-faculty. It is by virtue of its being like "an intellect that has fallen from its elevation"<sup>6</sup> that the apprehension perceives these universal mathematical ideas in the particular objects of the world.

The situation becomes more complicated when we begin to deal with physical entities that do not have any corporeal counterpart. That is to say, a rigid sphere of homogeneous density occupies the same part of space and time that we associate with the red billiard ball. Even if no one happens to perceive it at some given moment, nevertheless the corporeal counterpart to the physical ball can always be perceived under suitable conditions. The case is different for the entities studied in modern physics: the electron, the photon, fields, and every object with which quantum physics is concerned are physical objects that have no corporeal counterpart at all. No matter what the conditions, the electron is an entity that is never perceptible by any human observer; it is something one only has access to through the *modus operandi* of physics.

For Smith, this presents no special difficulty, since both the rigid sphere of homogenous density and the electron both belong to the physical world. In fact, all of the objects of the physical world are nothing but aggregates of the sub-microscopic entities dealt with in quantum physics. The crucial point to be remembered, however, is that the corporeal object is not an aggregate of particles. The corporeal object is the object of our perception; it is only the physical counterpart that can properly be viewed as an aggregate of protons, neutrons, electrons, etc....

Now, it might appear on the face of it that in bringing to light the distinction between the corporeal and physical worlds in this way we have solved the problem of Cartesian bifurcation only to create another problem, namely that there now appear to be two objects that occupy the same region of space-time, each possessing qualities totally incommensurate with the other, yet somehow linked through our acts of perception. This almost sounds like a displaced bifurcation, but such is not at all the case, as shall become clear through considering what the physical world, from the perspective of the human observer, really amounts to.

Scientists rely on models when dealing with data that are not directly perceptible, or when observing the large-scale behavior of perceptible objects. Constructing a model necessarily entails giving some sort of form to quantitative data. There is, for example, the electron-cloud model of the atom, which is not a picture of an atom but rather a tool used to organize data involving the set of quantitative observations to which one assigns the name "atom", a tool which is not purely mathematical but involves the use of images from our world of perception (in this case a cloud) in order to clothe these mathematical meanings with form.

Let us come back to the example of a sphere. It is impossible for us to picture or imagine a sphere in our minds in the absence of certain accidents, what Sadra refers to in this context as *hay'at*, meaning "frames" or "forms". Try as we may, at the level of the imagination and apprehension we cannot picture a sphere without the aid, inwardly, of some sensible form drawn from the storehouse of our imagination. Indeed, we can perceive the intelligible sphericalness in this image we fashion, but that is not the same thing as that particular sphere itself, which falls short of the level of intelligibility precisely because it is one spherical object and not another; that it only possesses mental existence does not make it any less of a particular.<sup>7</sup> When we imagine the trajectory of the thrown ball, apart from the ball itself and its surroundings, we never imagine a parabola as such. At best, we imagine something like a

thin black line on a white background, but then we have already gone beyond the level of pure meaning and have coupled it with accidents.

Let us consider the case of light. As a physically measurable entity, light can be viewed as a wave, not because it is perceived as such, but because upon measurement it displays wave-like characteristics. When we say wave-like we mean that it resembles, in some basic way, the behavior of a perceptible, corporeal thing we call "wave". However, light can also be viewed as being composed of particles, again not because it is perceived as particles but because upon measurement it displays particle-like characteristics, those of corporeal particles. Taken together these two points of view represent the well-known wave/particle duality of quantum physics, which is not limited to light, and which will serve well to illustrate the undervalued role of the imaginal faculty in the practice of physics.

When a physical entity corresponds easily to a sensible object, this process of "reifying" a mathematical meaning presents no great problem, as the corporeal counterparts are clearly in view. The case of light "waves" or light "particles" is very different. The mathematical meaning called a light wave has no corporeal referent, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that there is no corporeal object whose corresponding physical object strictly speaking is a light wave or a light particle (a photon).

Physicists cannot, therefore, upon pain of absurdity, refer to photons as particles in the same way they refer to sand grains as particles. In the first case the scientist clothes a set of mathematical formulas with the form of a particle, which he draws from his imagination. This "particle" has the same ontological status as the black parabolic arc on a white background in our imagination; that is to say, it has no concrete external existence. Now, the sand grain is a particle that does possess external existence, and it is by virtue of the sand grain and other objects that rightfully bear the name "particle" that the scientist is able to go into his imagination and draw out an image that seems to fit best with his data. The fact that photons are not truly particles is brought out by the fact that light does not always behave like a stream of particles, but sometimes as a wave. When a physicist calls light a "wave", he goes through the same process, drawing upon his imagination to clothe his mathematics with form. The truth of the matter is that from the very start light was never a particle nor a wave. Seen in this way, the paradox of the so-called wave-particle duality disappears, because we have never really left the world of mathematics.<sup>8</sup>

This process of fashioning imaginal models out of mathematical data is a legitimate and necessary practice of science. The problem is one of philosophy, not of scientific method. Only in a perspective where qualities are deemed secondary to the practice of "real" science can one lose sight of the fact that it is the corporeal world that possesses primacy, acting as our door to the physical, and moreover providing us with the raw material -- consisting of the images such as "particle" and "wave" -- that enables us to work more easily with the mathematical formalism we derive from our observation of the corporeal world.

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By way of conclusion, it is necessary to point out that although the strictly mechanistic conception of the universe has been proven false beyond a shadow of a doubt by the discoveries of physics over the course of the last century, the prevailing scientific world-view, which has been almost completely adopted by the public at large, teaches that physicists are currently engaged in a pursuit to find the "fundamental building blocks of matter". Using the term such as "building blocks" is problematic enough, as we have seen, but what of matter? The very notion of matter as this is understood in the

modern context is part and parcel of the bifurcationist world-view, which sees a world of pure extension "out there", which is somehow made of this elusive entity. The truth, however, is that no one really knows what matter refers to in the context of modern science. It denotes no measurable quantity, and is really nothing more than a symbol of the reign of quantity under which the modern world lives; "matter" is a philosophical question, not a scientific one.

Sadra tells us that we can only ever know form, and here we refer not to form as opposed to meaning but to form as opposed to matter; it is that by which a thing is what it is.<sup>9</sup> The "matter" (al-maddah) of Sadrian metaphysics and indeed of pre-modern philosophy in the West is not the undefined "matter" spoken of in modern science; it is pure potential actualized through form. We only know the forms of things, never their matter. In this sense one can say that mathematics also consists of form, but form uncoupled from matter. For a hundred years all physicists have been doing is discovering mathematical form and structure; the search for matter can only be in vain, since for the scientist the only escape from the ocean of mathematical form beyond his direct perception is the dry land of our corporeal world, which consists, not of matter, but of forms belonging to the realm of quality.

Thus, at this level of reality, the corporeal world is the world of forms, but this does not mean that the physical world is the world of matter. When we say physical realm we are really talking about mathematical form in the corporeal world. The quantitative attributes of the physical realm are nothing more than the mathematical description of the behavior of corporeal objects. Thus our physical billiard ball, that so-called aggregate of particles, is nothing more than the sum-total of mathematical entities, arrived at much the same way one adds algebraic formulas together to arrive at a more inclusive formula.<sup>10</sup>

This metaphysical perspective puts man back at the center of his own world of perception, the only world, one might say from Sadra's perspective, that God meant for him to live in and experience. It takes nothing away from the mathematics of physics but the confused ontology that has come to be associated with it. Instead, this mathematics is viewed as a description of the laws eternally present in the Divine Intellect which govern the corporeal realm. It becomes clear that one does not have to be a physicist to have a meaningful understanding of what the physicist does. Physicist and layman alike live in a world that is never reducible to numbers, a world that is impossible to leave except through the practice of bad philosophy.

Notes:

1-Smith, Wolfgang, *The Quantum Enigma*, Peru, Illinois 1995. See also his *Cosmos and Transcendence*, chps. 1-2, as well as "Bell's Theorem and the Perennial Ontology," *Sophia*, summer 1997, pp. 19-38, and "The Extrapolated Universe," *Sophia* (forthcoming). For a critical look at his work, see S. H. Nasr, "Perennial Ontology and Quantum Mechanics: A review essay of *The Quantum Enigma*," *Sophia* (Summer 1997) pp. 135-157.

2-This paper deals mainly with the inward faculties of perception, or al-madarik al-batiniyyah. See Mulla Sadra, *al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah fi'l-manahij al-sulukiyyah* (Mashhad 1981) pp. 193-195, *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad* (Tehran, 1976) pp. 242-252, *al-Hikmat al-muta'aliyah fi'l-asfar al-'aqliyyat al-arba'ah* (Beirut 1981) v. 8. pp. 205-220. See also J.W. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne* (Princeton 1981) pp. 136-137, and F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Albany, New York 1975) pp. 221-229

3-*Al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*, p 249

4-Asfar, v. 8 pp. 216-217

5-see Asfar, v. 8, pp 216-218

6-see next note

7-In a section entitled "On the Kinds of Perception", which clarifies this point and others, Sadra writes, "Know that there are four kinds of perception: sense perception, imagination, apprehension, and intellection. Sense perception is the perception of a thing existent in matter that is present with the perceived thing as frames (hay'at) particular to it (i.e. the perceived thing) and sensible with it, namely place, time, position, quality, quantity, and so forth. As regards some of these qualities, this thing is not separate from their like in external wujud, and no other thing shares them with it . . . That by which sense perception takes place and that which is essentially sensible and essentially present in the perceived thing is the form (surah) of that thing, not itself . . . It is necessary that what is realized in the sense be its form uncoupled (mutajarradah) from its matter, yet sense perception does not uncouple this form completely. Imagination, too, is the perception of this thing with the aforementioned 'frames', because the imagination does not imagine except that which it senses . . . Apprehension is the perception of a non-sensible meaning -- indeed intelligible -- which it however does not conceive universally, but in relation to a particular sensible, and for this reason no other thing shares it, owing to the fact that it is related to an individual thing. Intellection is the perception of a thing with respect to its quiddity and its logical definition, not with respect to any other thing, irrespective of whether this thing is considered by itself or with some other perceived quality . . .

There must needs be uncoupling in any perception; these perceptions are ranked in their uncouplement. The first has three conditions: the presence of matter to the organ of perception, the enclosure of the 'frames', and the perceived object's being particular. The second (imagination) is free of the first condition, while the third (apprehension) is free of the first two. The fourth (intellection) is free of them all.

Know that the difference between perception through apprehension and that through intellection is not essential but is something external to it, and which consists in relating to it a particular and its non-existence. In reality perception is of three kinds, just as the worlds are three. It is as though apprehension is an intellect that has fallen from its elevation." Asfar, v.3 pp 360-362

8-This is far from being the only apparent paradox in physics. The problems raised by the uncertainty principle and Bell's Theorem, the latter which suggests simultaneous connections over great physical distances, are among them. For an introduction to modern physics as well as discussions of the philosophical implications of these discoveries, see *The Quantum Enigma*, pp 115-136, D. Bohm and B. Hiley, *The Undivided Universe: An Ontological Interpretation of Quantum Theory* (London 1993); G. Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, (Quill Marrow 1979); S. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York 1988); D. Mermin, "Is the Moon there When Nobody Looks? Reality and Quantum Theory," and A. Shimony "Metaphysical Problems in the Foundations of Quantum Mechanics," in *The Philosophy of Science*, Boyd, Gaspar, and Trout eds (Cambridge, MA 1991)

9-For an example of Sadra's discussion regarding the perception of form, see Asfar, v. 3 pp 300-321, and also *Risalat ittihad al-'aql wa'l-ma'qul* in *The Complete Philosophical Treatises of Mulla Sadra* (Tehran 1999) esp. pp 75-76, and *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, pp 221-225

10-"[T]he notion of macrosystem . . . belongs to the practical or pragmatic realm; it has to do with degrees of approximation and the feasibility of certain simplified models. In reality, however, every physical object constitutes a microsystem - by virtue of the fact that it is composed of atoms and fundamental particles. The microworld, thus, so far from constituting a subdomain, coincides actually with the physical universe in its totality . . .

It follows . . . that the so-called large-scale objects of physics are in reality just as strange as the electron or quark . . ." The Quantum Enigma, pp. 47-48

Faith and Perception in Mullâ Sadrâ's Doctrine of the Sirât: Proofs of Islamicity

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Abstract

The notion that "Islamic philosophy" is not really Islamic but is rather Greek philosophy written in Arabic has remained prevalent in Western scholarship to this day. This determination, however, is often arrived at without much examination of the later tradition of Muslim philosophers, particularly those associated with the "School of Isfahân." Furthermore, most of the study of the teachings of this School has tended to focus on broad issues of metaphysics, ontology, cosmology, etc. Little has been written on elements of religious praxis that clearly demonstrate the Islamic character of this later philosophical tradition. It is our intention in this paper to make a contribution to this process of determining the Islamicity of later Muslim philosophy by focusing on Mullâ Sadrâ's understanding of the Qur'anic doctrine of the sirât and how one can practically move across it in the next life. Sadrâ provides us with discussions of this issue in the *Asfâr*, *al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* and *al-Hikmah al-'Arshîyyah*, where drawing upon the Qur'an and the teachings of the Shi'ite Imams, he offers a glimpse of what we might say is Sadrâ's practical spiritual advice for disciples traveling the path to God. In these texts he relates how a soul's very ability to stand upon the sirât in the next life is determined by its obedience to the laws of Islam and the Imams. Yet, this obedience, while essential, does not necessarily allow one to progress along the sirât, only to gain a certain foothold. To move forward requires the ability to view the length and breadth of the sirât that is afforded only by the presence of the lights of true faith and mystical vision. In this way the practice of the exoteric religion and the vision afforded by faith are linked in the doctrine of the sirât providing proof of the truly Islamic character of spiritual wayfaring in the philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ.

The study of philosophy is often understood as a mental pursuit. This attitude is especially prevalent from the Renaissance onward -- within the context of Western philosophy -- as the pursuit of "wisdom" (that is, "sophos") became more and more detached from the issue of active "virtue" (that is, "philo" or "love", which was the original Pythagorean concomitant of all true wisdom). Philosophy, in other words, became gradually "desacralized" and detached from questions of virtue.

This general trend within the history of Western philosophy is not what occurred within the history of Islamic philosophy. Within Islam, one sees a tendency in the opposite direction. In other words, the earliest works of philosophical import in Islamic culture are more "Greek" in nature, not that they ignore issues of virtue or religion, of course, but the virtues of which they speak -- as, for instance, in the case of al-Fârâbî's *al-Madîna al-Fâdila* -- are really the virtues of Greece, primarily the virtues of social organization. Furthermore, T. Izutu has remarked that, contrary to what is generally thought, Islamic philosophy did not actually end in the 12th century with the death of Ibn Rushd. Rather, this event signaled the true beginnings of an "Islamic philosophy," i.e. -- a philosophy oriented around Qur'anic or Islamic virtues,<sup>1</sup> what H. Corbin has called a "prophetic philosophy" in Islam.<sup>2</sup> This view is often passed

over silence by many scholars, such as M. Fakhry in his *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (Columbia University Press, 1983), if not outright opposed by others, such as D. Gutas in his work, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (E.J. Brill, 1988). In our opinion, perhaps the most important manifestation of a truly "Islamic philosophy" is found in the writings of Sadr al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî (d. 1640), known as Mullâ Sadrâ. Sadrâ's philosophical compositions combine theory and "praxis," that is, metaphysics and virtue, and this virtue is an Islamic virtue -- not Greek -- based upon the notion of the sirât al-mustaqîm, following the straight path.

Perhaps the principal doctrine within this philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ is the doctrine of substantial motion (al-haraka al-jawhariyya). In this doctrine, Sadrâ asserts a teaching which he says is not new, but was mentioned by some of the pre-Socratic philosophers. The doctrine pertains to the essential or innate motion of all that exists below the level of the archetypal realities (i.e., the Platonic forms or al-a`yân al-thâbita). By virtue of this principle, Mullâ Sadrâ says all of existence is in constant motion by its very nature, without the need of an impetus bestowed from the "spheres" of the heavens. Through this innate motion all things in the world "become", that is, their being or wujûd is continually intensified or de-intensified, and this substantial motion is the very motion or flow of being through the heavenly archetypes. From Sadrâ's perspective, the distinctions which we find between things or people in terms of attributes or qualities, such as intelligence or beauty, are all the result of varying degrees and intensities of being, brought about by substantial motion. Therefore, one could say that not only are some people, for instance, more intelligent than others or more physically fit than other, but some people simply "are" more than others due to the intensity of the motion of wujûd within them.

Of course, the quest of the philosopher is for truth, at least traditionally, and within the philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ, "being", "reality" and truth ultimately correspond. The question then arises of how one attains to the true or the real. How does one intensify the substantial motion of one's being, that it may resonate with the truth? The answer to this is through the virtues, the Islamic virtues, and specifically, the virtues of the Prophet of Islam and the Shi'ite Imams. Mullâ Sadrâ draws heavily on the Qur'ân and hadith to describe this "path" of the intensification of one's being, and in so doing, combines his metaphysics with an Islamic praxis which is not seen to the same degree in the earlier Islamic philosophy of al-Kindî, al-Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ. This paper proposes to delineate this human, practical side of Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine, and thus to provide clear proofs of the essential Islamic nature of the teachings of one of the major figures or the history of later "Arabic" philosophy. We hope to show that far from being just Greek ideas re-configured in Arabic, later Islamic philosophy developed, at least in the case of Mullâ Sadrâ, a philosophical language, based upon Islam, which sacralized philosophical discourse through the attainment of the virtues of the sirât al-mustaqîm.

We should begin with a further examination of the issue of substantial motion. Mullâ Sadrâ relates this substantial motion to God's "existentiating command." For Mullâ Sadrâ substantial motion is the flow of being (wujûd) inherent in the command to exist given by the Creator, by which all things come to persist in their various states, both in this world as well as the world to come. This divine command is immutable and unavoidable so far as creatures are concerned. All "beings" must respond to it, and the command itself corresponds to the Qur'ânic verse XVI: 40, "Kun fa yakûn," (When Allah says, "'Be' and it is"). This command is technically known as al-hukm al-takwînî (existentiating judgment) in the philosophical vocabulary of Mullâ Sadrâ.<sup>3</sup> Yet within this motion of being there is another motion. In addition to the existentiating command based upon substantial motion, there is also a second command given by God. This is al-hukm al-tadwînî (recorded judgment),<sup>4</sup> and it corresponds, in the case of Islam, to the Book of God and the Sunna, i.e. -- to following the prescriptions and prohibitions laid down in revelation. This command, unlike the "existentiating judgment" which is universal for all things that have

existence, only relates to those creatures that have free will, i.e. -- humans,<sup>5</sup> and although it too calls for obedience, obedience to it is not ontologically required of it, due to the freedom given to each man's will such that he may obey or disobey this judgment. Yet Mullâ Sadrâ is clear in stating that this "recorded judgment" has a great impact upon the substantial motion of men and the divine "existentiating judgment" depending upon their faith in and willingness to adhere to its injunctions.

It is here within a discussion of "proper action", what we can call virtue or praxis, that we may begin to see the manner in which Mullâ Sadrâ most clearly departs in his philosophical enterprise from Greek thought. Therefore, we will now attempt to determine where the elements of Islamic praxis, which we alluded to in our introduction to this essay, enter into the ultimate goal of Sadrâ's philosophy. Let us first examine some basic Greek ideas on such practical matters that we may contrast them with Mullâ Sadrâ's thought in order to demonstrate the truly Islamic nature of his philosophy.

For the major Greek philosophers (and we will refer only to Pythagorus, Plato and Aristotle) philosophy and proper action or virtue were deeply related, if not synonymous. There was for them no philosophy without proper action, and specifically no philosophy without the habits of moderation, order and reasoned living. We can see this clearly in the "Golden Verses" of Pythagorus, where he outlines the principles which must inform the daily life of his disciples. These principles require, in addition to the performance of the ritual honoring of the gods --giving heaven its just due, all kinds of forms of moderation and temperance, or we might say "order," in the various aspects of daily life and ones relations with others. Plato as well demonstrates similar concerns in *The Republic*, chapter XIV, where he discusses the need to maintain, within the individual, a proper harmony between the faculty of reason, the "spirited elements" of man's nature and the bodily appetites, where the habit of a life determined and balanced by reason "... sets [ones] house in order... bringing into tune those three parts like the terms in the proportion of a musical scale."<sup>6</sup> Aristotle also emphasizes the importance of a life "moderately furnished" and "lived temperately,"<sup>7</sup> so as to create that balanced state of affairs which is most conducive to that which is best in man, i.e. -- the practice of reasoned contemplation. For each of these philosophers, proper conduct or virtue is a kind of rational harmony which avoids extremes, and these notions constitute the essential elements of virtue and comportment for the practitioner of Greek philosophy in order to achieve what Aristotle, for instance, spoke of as *udaiuovia* or true happiness.

When we turn from Greek thought to Mullâ Sadrâ's philosophy we do not see a simple reiteration of these virtues. No doubt, moderation and rationality are present in Sadrâ's thought, yet the very definition of what is "moderation," for example, has been transformed by Sadrâ into a Qur'ânic Shari'ite context which also includes the teachings of the Shi'ite Imams. Furthermore, "rationality" has been dethroned from its place as that highest faculty in man and sine qua non through which he is able, as Aristotle says, to share in that "good state" that "God is always in,"<sup>8</sup> and has been replaced by faith (*îmân*) and the light of gnosis (*ma`rifa*).

It is within Mullâ Sadrâ's discussion of the phenomenon known as the *sirât*, that "path" or "bridge" which is said in the Qur'ân to lead to Paradise and span the pit of Hell, that his philosophy most clearly transcends the Greek virtues of moderation and reason. Just as with the Greeks there was no philosophy without virtue -- one might say, no theoretical science without a practical science that could generate the necessary elemental conditions for *theoria* -- so too with Mullâ Sadrâ philosophy depends upon a proper practical active formation which undergirds it, but now this formation is *dîn al-islâm*. In fact, the very reason why the issue of virtues is so emphasized specifically in Sadrâ's discussion of the *sirât* is because, from the Islamic point of view, the journey of a soul along the *sirât* in the next life reveals, in a decisive manner, the ultimate quality or virtue of the life it has lived here in this world.

But the sirât is not only the path which souls traverse in the next life. It is also the very path of religion, as Sadrâ says, "The sirât is the form in which guidance is brought into being so long as you are in this world."<sup>9</sup> The form of this guidance is also clearly Muslim. In order to show this, we must elaborate on the topic of motion or haraka alluded to earlier. We have said that there is both an existentiating judgment and a recorded judgment within the ontological make-up of the Sadrian cosmos. We also said that corresponding to the existentiating judgment of God is what is called substantial motion (haraka jawhariyya) which gives being to all things. But there is also, according to Sadrâ, another motion which corresponds to the recorded judgment of God, although this motion belongs to man's will rather than to God's will. This motion is called by many terms in Sadrâ's philosophy, such as willful motion (haraka irâdiyya), accidental motion (haraka `aradiyya), as well as voluntary motion (haraka ikhtiyâriyya), and it is that impetus by which souls are able to return to God in a manner pleasing to Him. In speaking of this motion in the *Asfâr* Mullâ Sadrâ clearly identifies it with the practice of the religion of Islam. He says:

... it is an accidental (`aradiyya) motion according to a mode of soul in respect to religious impetus (bâ`ith dînî), and it [this motion] is walking upon the way of unity (tawhîd) and the way of the those who profess divine unity (muwahhidûn) among the prophets (anbiyâ') and friends of God (awliyâ') and those who follow (atbâ') them. It is the intention in His saying, 'Lead us along the straight path' (sirât al-mustaqîm).<sup>10</sup>

Here Sadrâ, besides emphasizing the import of practicing the religion of Islam, speaks of this motion by which one does so as "accidental" motion. He does this in order to emphasize its ontological precariousness, i.e. -- it depends upon an accidental condition (man's will to act properly or not, to act Islamicly or not) which like all accidents, in the technical sense of the term, may or may not exist.

In addition to these more general charges to tawhîd and following the prophets Mullâ Sadrâ also quotes frequently from the hadith of the Shi'ite Imams to clarify his positions on issues related to the sirât. In *al-Hikma al-`arshiyya* he cites the following ahâdîth walawiyya:

Abû `Abdallâh (the Shiite Imam Ja`far al-Sâdiq)--May peace be upon him!--said: "The Path [sirât] is the Way to true inner knowledge of God the Exalted. And there are two Paths, one in this world and one in the other world. As for the Path that is in this world, it is the Imam who must be obeyed: whoever truly knows him in this world and strictly follows his guidance will pass over that Path which is a bridge across Gehenna in the other world....

Likewise (the Imam Ja`far) is reported to have said, concerning God's saying -- May He be exalted! -- Guide us on the Straight Path (1:6), that "It is the Commander of the Faithful [Alî ibn Abî Tâlib] and true inner knowledge of him."

And (it is reported) from the Imams -- May peace be with them -- (that they said): "We are the Gateways to God, and we are the Straight Path".<sup>11</sup>

Sadrâ uses these and other ahâdîth in both *al-Hikma al-`arshiyya* and his *tafsîr* (within the discussion of Qur'ân 1:6) to justify his position that "every soul is in some respect a 'Path' to the other world; just as in another respect it is what is traveling the Path."<sup>12</sup> But what is important for the issue which concerns us is the fact that Mullâ Sadrâ feels the need to justify his views on the sirât vis-a-vis the teachings of the Imams themselves. At another point in the `Arshiyya, where he speaks of man's ability to obtain true inner knowledge of the soul (ma`rifat al-nafs) -- that soul which as we have just mentioned constitutes



both the "thing" traveling upon the sirât and the substance of the sirât itself -- he is even more categorical regarding the necessity to follow the guidance of the Imams,

For this knowledge (ma`rifa) can only be acquired through illumination from the Lamp-niche of Prophecy and through following the lights of Revelation and Prophethood and the lanterns of the Book and the traditions that have come down (to us) in the Path of our Imams, masters of guidance and infallibility....13

Thus there can be little doubt as to the general practical requirements that Mullâ Sadrâ demands from those who would follow his philosophy. His is a way following the guidance of the Islamic Sharî'a and the Imams, not Greece.

It is evident thus far that man's total journey upon the sirât is based upon a voluntary motion determined by the intensity of his adherence to the religion of God and his obedience to the Imams. But Mullâ Sadrâ is even more specific than this in terms of the issue of that praxis or virtue by which, in the first place, we are able to come to even stand upon the sirât of the next world; for this sirât of the next world is a very precarious matter. Following Qur'ânic statements Mullâ Sadrâ says that the sirât, as it manifests itself in the after life, has two aspects: it is "sharper than a sword" and "thinner than a hair." Sadrâ says that related to these two aspects of the sirât are, respectively, the practical faculty and the speculative faculty within man. These faculties correspond, though not without important differences, to Aristotle's division of the sciences into the practical and the theoretical. In the *Asfâr*, Sadrâ describes the practical faculty and the perfection of conduct associated with it in what seems to be a typically Platonic fashion. He says,

As for the practical faculty: In the regulation of the three powers, sensible, irascible and estimative...it [the practical faculty] obtains for the soul a state of moderation between extremes...[and] The absence of extremes, called justice, is the beginning of deliverance (khalâs) from Hell.14

This appears to be simply a reiteration of the Greek virtues of moderation and justice particularly as found in Plato's *Republic*, however, this quotation must also be seen in relation to (1) Mullâ Sadrâ's statements above concerning dîn al-islâm and (2) notions of moderation, temperance (hilm), balance (mîzân), justice ('adl), etc., already presented within the Qur'ân, Hadith and the Sharî'a in innumerable examples. There is no doubt that the style of language which Sadrâ uses here is Greek, however the spirit of what he says is hardly un-Islamic. This is made even more clear when we examine the last sentence of the quotation and how Mullâ Sadrâ sees this moderation or "absence of extremes" as being only a partial element in the successful journey of a soul along the sirât in the after life. As we shall see, this journey along the sirât requires, in addition to such moderation, the much more important elements of faith (îmân) and gnosis (ma`rifa).

Mullâ Sadrâ says in the quotation above that the "absence of extremes" is the "beginning of deliverance." By this he means, moderation of conduct only places one upon the sirât. For it is not to be taken for granted in the Qur'ânic descriptions of the sirât, which Sadrâ of course accepts, that every one who stands upon the sirât in the next world will remain on it to its paradisaic end. The Qur'ân tells us that many fall from the sirât in the next life, and so reaching it does not guarantee successful travel upon it all the way to Paradise. Mullâ Sadrâ makes this clear by saying that the absence of extremes is only a "beginning of deliverance." An absence of extremes only allows us to "stand" upon the sirât, not necessarily to progress along it. The idea that moderation is only a beginning is confirmed in another comment from Sadrâ regarding the "Path of this world,"

The "Path of this world" is an expression for the attainment of psychic harmony and a habitual state of moderation, between excess and deficiency, in the practical intellects use of the (soul's) appetitive, irascible, and estimative powers. (This is) so that one will be neither profligate nor sluggish and indifferent, but continent and modest; neither rash and precipitate nor cowardly, but courageous; and neither sly nor foolishly simple, but prudent and wise....Now moderation between violent extremes (of these powers) is tantamount to their very absence from the soul. In this way the soul may become as though it had no trace of those psychic attributes deriving from connection (with the body) and no station in this world....Then the soul becomes like a mirror prepared (tasta`iddu) to receive the self-manifestation of the form of the Truly Real.<sup>15</sup>

Here again we see moderation in conduct portrayed as only a start, a preparation for true spiritual journeying, and again this conduct is defined as following the Sharî'a and obedience to the Imam. Thus, he continues,

And that [i.e. -- the state of preparedness brought about by moderation] can only be attained by following the religious Law (Sharî'a) and submitting (tâ`a) to the Imam who must be obeyed -- for this is what is meant by the "Path of this world" being the Imam.<sup>16</sup>

We should note that despite his praise for a soul preparing itself with the virtues of moderate character Mullâ Sadrâ still has not informed us definitively as to the trajectory of such a soul once it has left the earthly plane and arrived at the sirât of the next world; he has only told us (1) that such a soul is made ready to receive real truth, which it does not have as of yet, and (2) that that particular soul may not experience pangs of separation from earthly life brought about by its necessary passage out of this world into the next.

The reason why Mullâ Sadrâ has not yet spoken of the positive trajectory of a moderate/shari`ite soul in the next life is because that positive trajectory is dependent upon something more than just "moderation." It requires a special kind of guidance, but not a guidance which comes from performing proper acts and being obedient to commands. It requires a guidance which comes from within, from faith (imân) and gnosis (ma`rifa), which Sadrâ says function as lights through the various eschatological states after a soul has reached the sirât in the next world. What should be clear thus far is that Sadrâ's definition of virtuous moderation is not simply a Greek notion but is specifically determined by Islam, the Sharî'a and the Imams. What we will now attempt to show is that the place of this moderation within the total economy of Sadrâ's philosophy is also determined by Islam, particularly by the Qur'ânic idea of the pre-eminence of faith above all good acts. Here we find Sadrâ making the classical distinction between those who are simply "Muslim" and those who are "Mu'min." Being obedient to laws and orders only brings one to the threshold of truth, only "prepares" one for it. To actually experience the truth, to journey to Paradise and have the vision of God, requires faith and inner knowledge, and these two are essential elements of the second faculty of man according to Mullâ Sadrâ, the speculative faculty, to which we shall now turn our attention.

The speculative faculty in Mullâ Sadrâ's philosophy is that faculty which corresponds to the second of the two qualities of the sirât as mentioned in the Qur'ân, the quality of the sirât as being "thinner than a hair."<sup>17</sup> This faculty is also the source of what Mullâ Sadrâ terms "precise insights" (al-anzâr al-daqîqa) which are "in [their] precision and subtlety thinner than a hair,"<sup>18</sup> thus allowing those who possess them to actually travel upon the sirât despite its relative thinness. However, these insights must not be confused with the purely rational operations of mind extracting universals from particulars which is the

means of knowing in the Aristotelian speculative sciences. Instead, such Sadrian insights combine elements of rational precision along with spiritual intuition and faith. Thus Sadrâ says,

The sirât has two aspects: one of them is thinner than a hair and the other is sharper than a sword. Deviation from the first aspect necessitates falling from the fitra, [as God said] "Verily, the ones who do not believe in the next world fall from the sirât [XXIII: 74]."19

In this quotation Sadrâ shows us a relationship between belief or faith and the "thinner than a hair" aspect of the sirât. It is faith which keeps one on the sirât, able to go forward. Therefore, with only proper acts of moderation and obedience to ones credit the ultimate trajectory of a soul actually inclines towards Hell. In fact, the most hopeful thing that can be said of such souls, from Sadrâ's point of view, is that they cannot achieve true perfection. He alludes to this in speaking of the term `adâla which, in Sadrâ's technical vocabulary, refers simply to moderation in the various aspects of practical wisdom. He says, "`Adâla is not true perfection, because that [i.e. -- true perfection] is limited to the light of knowledge and the strength of faith (îmân) and gnosis (ma`rifa)."20 However, at worst the fate of the ones who perform proper acts without faith is to fall from the sirât into Hell, as stated in Qur`ân XXIII: 74.

As for those who do possess faith, i.e. -- their speculative faculty is functioning (to whatever degree). They run the gamut from the prophets, to the sâdiqûn, to the `âbidûn, to the disgraced believers and all those in between.21 Mullâ Sadrâ says that each one of these groups has their "light" by which they are able to travel the sirât to the meeting with God: "the believers do not proceed to the meeting with God except by the power of their lights and insights."22 He also says that these lights are in proportion to the intensity of their faith and their certainty derived from ma`rifa. Thus he says, "the degrees of the blessed are dissimilar in the dissimilarity of the lights of their knowledge (ma`rifa) and power of their certainty and faith (îmân)."23 It is these lights which Sadrâ says illuminate the perceptions of the faithful. He notes that for some of the faithful the light which they possess is immense and for others much smaller,

...one of them is given a light like the great mountain.... [One] is given his light like a palm tree in his right hand...Until the last of them is a man given a light to the extent of his big toe. It shines on a moment and dies out, and when it shines in front of his foot he walks and when it extinguishes he remains standing.24

So without the light of faith and certitude the actual traveling along the sirât seems an impossibility, it cannot be done by the merits of proper conduct alone, lest one arrive at the sirât of the next world and have no light by which to perceive the way to proceed.

\* \* \*

In conclusion, Mullâ Sadrâ's entire discussion of the success or failure of a soul's journey in both this life and the next depends upon the images of Islamic eschatology and the virtues associated with the practices of the religion of Islam, as well as the virtues particular to following the Shi`ite Imams. Therefore, it can hardly be said that this is not an Islamic philosophy. While it is true that he seems to adopt certain formal elements of Greek philosophy, such as the emphasis upon moderate conduct and the distinctions between accidental and substantial motion, and the practical and speculative faculties, nevertheless these elements are defined by Sadrâ within the context of Islamic ideas about human virtue, the function of faith and the perceptions and rewards accorded to a soul in the afterlife.

Notes:

1-The Concept and Reality of Existence, Toshihiko Izutsu, Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971, p.58-59.

2-See the numerous references to this idea in Histoire de la philosophie islamique, Henri Corbin, Paris: Gallimard, 1964.

3-Sadr al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî, Tafsîr al-qur'ân al-karîm (7 vols., ed. Muhammad Khwâjavî), Qum: Intashârât Bîdâr, n.d., v. 1, p. 112.

4-Ibid., p. 112.

5-Ibid., p. 111.

6-The Republic of Plato (trans. F.M. Cornford), London: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 142.

7-Introduction to Aristotle (ed. by Richard McKeon), New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1947, p. 536.

8-Ibid., p.286.

9-Sadr al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî, al-Hikma al-muta`âliyya fî'l-asfâr al-`aqliyya al-arba`a (9 vols., ed. Muhammad Khwâjavî), Beirut: Dar lhyâ' al-Turâth al-`Arabî, 1990, v. 9, p.290.

10-Ibid., p. 274.

11-All quotations from The Wisdom of the Throne, James Winston Morris, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 191-192.

12-Ibid, p. 193.

13-Ibid., p. 131.

14-al-Hikma al-muta`âliyya, v. 9, p. 285.

15-The Wisdom of the Throne, p. 194.

16-Ibid., 194-195.

17-al-Hikma al-muta`âliyya, v. 9, p. 285.

18-Ibid, p. 285.

19-Ibid., p.285.

20-Ibid., p. 285.

21-Ibid., p.287.

22-Ibid., p. 286.

23-Ibid., p. 286.

24-Ibid., p. 286.

Democracy: As Seen in the Political Philosophy of Imám Khumayní

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## Abstract

Understanding Imám Khumayní's political philosophy, as an entity, is not feasible unless one gains a proper insight into each of the numerous, essential and fundamental blocks which, together, constitute and define his political legacy. This paper – the first in a series – targets his concept, and model, of democracy – comparing it with definitions offered by Western scholars – integrating it with other vital 'ingredients' which pivot the late Imám's political thought – namely, 'Wiláyat-i Faqíh', freedom and republicanism. It concludes that the origin of government and law ought to be, according to the Imám, both divine and human in nature; and this may be executed, democratically as well as Islamically, by means of 'competitive elitism', 'governmental periodicity' and a 'divine-human government'.

## Introduction

The late Imám Khumayní - founder of the Islamic Republic of Irán - is re-known as a distinguished scholar in different fields of Islamic Sciences including philosophy, law, jurisprudence, tafsír etc. Moreover, he is considered as a revolutionary figure who had succeeded to lead a victorious revolution against a powerful Imperial government which was supported by a superpower. Unusually, however, he is not yet known as a theorist within the domain of political philosophy. Whereas in addition to his theory on Wiláyat-i Faqíh - i.e. supremacy of a religious leader over government - he has expressed numerous other fundamental political principles - such as the nature of Man, origin and objectives of the State, legitimacy, social contract, rule of law, genres of government, democracy, constitutionalism, freedom, justice and many more - without which, a correct understanding of principles like Wiláyat-i Faqíh would not be properly attained.

This article attempts, albeit concisely, to explain one of these fundamental principles, namely the concept of democracy.

## The Concept of Democracy

The 'Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics' defines democracy as the 'rule by people'<sup>1</sup> as a matter of fact, democracy was viewed negatively - with respect to government - both in ancient Greece and in 18th century Europe where it had re-appeared; after all, its fascination arises from the explicit meanings that it embodies. The history of democracy (as an idea) is complicated in nature and implicative of different contexts; there exists a vast spectrum on that score.<sup>2</sup> The advantages of democracy should not be negated solely on the basis that it bears contradictions with regards to its definition and structure. As for

Imám Khumayní, he extols democracy and offers an Islamic model of it, labeled 'true democracy'. He does, of course, condemn other models of democracy:

We should act on the basis of justice. We shall teach them the meaning of democracy. Western democracy is corrupt and so is the eastern one. True democracy is the Islamic one. This is democracy; not that which the West - who are in favour of capitalism - have, nor what the East - who have put people through overwhelming suppression - have.<sup>3</sup>

In discussions concerning the meaning of democracy, three general concepts have emerged with respect to the form of government i.e. (a) in terms of the sources of power of government; (b) in terms of the goals which government seeks and (c) in terms of the policies adopted in the formation of government.<sup>4</sup>

#### People's Will: Origin of a State's Power

Some authorities define democracy as a form of government arising from the will of people<sup>5</sup> i.e. rather than making political decisions directly, they do so by means of selected representation who, subsequently, become accountable to them.<sup>6</sup> According to this viewpoint, it follows that democracy is used in the sense of 'majority rule' since the exercise of people's views is outwardly impossible.<sup>7</sup> Schumpeter terms this approach 'classic democracy'<sup>8</sup> and criticizes it.<sup>9</sup>

The Imám recognizes the authority of people and regards the government as the product of the people's will. People have the right to determine a political regime, approve constitution and choose the leader, president or representatives of the legislative body.

Concerning the determination of a political regime, Imám Khumayní states:

I ask everyone to vote for the Islamic Republic; however, you are free to vote... you have the right to register for an imperial regime, democratic regime or whatever else on the ballot; you are free.<sup>10</sup>

Concerning the approval of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, Imám Khumayní states:

The validity of the 'Council for Establishing the Constitution' is actualized by means of their appointment by the people; the criterion is the nation's vote. At times, the people vote directly and (at) other times, they choose representatives to vote on their behalf. In any event, the right belongs to the people themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Emphasizing the selection of governmental authorities, i.e. the leader, president, and representatives of the legislative body, he states:

The Wiláyat-i Faqíh - or supreme religious leader - is an individual whose morality, 'patriotism', knowledge and competency are evident to the people; and it is the people, themselves, who choose such a person/figure. <sup>12</sup> It is the people, again, who ought to manage the disciplinary, administrative and other affairs of their government. The people have the right to elect their president; and this is how it should be. According to human rights, it is you, the people, who should determine your destinies. <sup>13</sup> The Majlis (Iranian Parliament) lies on top of all other institutions and this very Majlis is - nothing but - the embodiment of the people.<sup>14</sup>

Elsewhere, Imám Khumayní incorporates sovereignty with the common masses and rejects the notion of it being confined to a specific stratum of society:

Elections aren't restricted to any, specific, people be they the clergyship, political parties etc.; they belong to all people. The peoples' destinies are in their own hands .15 Today, elections are situated in the hands of the people. During elections, all citizens are equal to one another, be he/she the president, the prime minister, the farmer working on his/her farm or the bázárí. In other words, each person is, unreservedly equated with one vote.16

Moreover, Imám Khumayní approves of the 'rule of majority'17 and the concept of 'representative democracy'18 Thus, Imám 'authorizes' democracy in terms of the origin of a government's power and he defines it as being the formation of government based on the will of the masses. Note, that Imám Khumayní's perspective differs from that of pure democracy and liberalism in that the people - according to him - ought to execute their authority in a particular manner i.e. the will of the masses ought to be bound by divine will; and this binding is materialised/manifested by the guardianship of the Wiláyat-i Faqíh over the government. As the Imám Khumayní states:

Without a Wiláyat-i Faqíh, a government becomes despotic. If it does not accord with God's command and the president is not elected under the order of a faqíh, it - the government - becomes illegitimate; and its despotism is a result of it being illegitimate. Obeying this (form of government) is on par with obeying despotism.19

From what has been mentioned thus far, one may conclude that the Imám Khumayní believes in 'divine-human rule' to which he has labelled 'Islamic Democracy'20 Bearing in mind that democracy - according to some authorities21 - is in possession of degrees, one can, accordingly, label 'Islamic Democracy' as 'democratic' and it is even possible - according to those authorities22 who believe in the synthesis of democracy and non-democracy - to label it as 'semi-democratic'.

Democracy: Freedom and General Welfare

Some define democracy as being that governance through which one can achieve one of the following values: equality, freedom, developing personal behaviour, general welfare, the achievement of aims 23 etc.; the distinction of democracy lies in its giving value to an aim or goal, which may be obtained by means of a people's government, hence freedom and equality.24 According to this theory, a democratic government is one which optimally provides general welfare, in sharp contrast to a despotic government where the will of an individual or small group of individuals governs the (destiny of an) entire society.25 Imám appreciates democracy and defines it as that governance which leads to freedom, justice and general welfare. In one of his speeches which he made before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, he stated:

By the grace of the Almighty, we shall not cease fighting until we have overthrown the reactionary Imperialistic government and have established a just Islamic one. We shall continue on this route until a democratic government - in the true sense of the word- has taken over the despotic regime.26

Elsewhere, he has stated :

In an Islamic republic, there is freedom; there is independence; people, in all walks of life, ought to live in comfort within an Islamic republic. In an Islamic republic, Islamic justice is materialised/manifested.27

Here, Imám is distancing himself from pure democracy by proposing certain restrictions for freedom. He believes that democratic freedoms depend on the principles of the Holy religion of Islám; as he has said

Freedom is bound to laws;<sup>28</sup> and freedoms granted should be carried out within Islamic laws and the Constitution, in the best possible way.<sup>29</sup>

Hence, on introducing the notion of an Islamic Republic, Imám Khumayní is proposing divine-human rule as its basis/pivot.

#### Democracy: Free and Competitive Elections

Schumpeter regards the above two theories on democracy as inaccurate and defines democracy in terms of the method and mode through which institutions function. He argues that the democratic method is that which consists of a series of systematic and organised arrangements (regulations) - which form the domain of political decision-makings - by means of which an individual may acquire the power of decision-making via competitive elections and the votes of people.<sup>30</sup> Here, the fate of the democratic citizen is, solely, the right to, periodically, elect the government which, subsequently, acts on behalf of its citizens. The essence of democracy, according to this version, lies within the citizens' power of being able to substitute one government with another and thus protecting oneself from one important potential danger i.e. were elected decision-makers to transform themselves into any form of irrevocable power etc. As long as people have the capacity to alter their governments and as long as they have a choice - in election - of at least two, different, parties, then the threat of despotism can be kept safely under control.<sup>31</sup>

After the second world war, a discussion had emerged between outstanding theoreticians concerning the definition of democracy i.e. defining it on the basis of the sources or goals of a government or - as figures such as Schumpeter believed - in terms of the method of governance. In the 1970s, the argument terminated, with Schumpeter as its victor. The scholars had made a distinction between the pure, mental definitions - and the ideal concepts - of democracy on the one hand, and the empirical, descriptive and institutional definitions on the other. They concluded that only the latter definition may be seen to be sufficient and, consequently, be put into practice. As a result, many American authorities had abandoned the theoretical discussions on democracy based on general hypotheses etc. and had attempted to understand the genres of democratic institutions, together with the quality of their functions and the causes of their evolution and devolution.<sup>32</sup> Here, democratic governments are placed alongside totalitarian and traditional authoritarian governments in order for them to be compared and contrasted; democratic governments, here, by nature, comprise of the following features :

1. free elections
2. competition between at least two different parties aiming to acquire power
3. periodicity of governments and their being able to be shifted from hand to hand
4. rule of the elite

Imám has not described or analysed parties or democracy itself within, then, existing democratic governments; hence, nothing may be ascribed to him on the subject of 'experimental' democracy. However, one may compare his notion of good governance with the methods of rule within democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian governments.



Concerning free elections, he considers people as being free with respect to elections, especially since the freedom to vote is a phenomenon which had been existing since the beginning of Islam. Thus, he repeatedly demanded the religious scholars ('ulamá) and people to look after their free elections carefully and not to allow authorities to prevent such free elections:

When the time of referendum is announced (to determine the new government, in Irán, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution), my vote is for the Islamic Republic. Those who follow Islam, ought to seek (for) an Islamic Republic. However, in practice, people are free to ask for an imperialistic or western mode of government. The freedom to vote has existed in Islam from the very outset.<sup>33</sup> The 'ulamá and people are obliged to refuse anyone from obstructing peoples' freedom to vote freely.<sup>34</sup> Today the elections are in the hands of the people. No one has the right to order another with respect to elections. In Islám, an authority may not order one with regards to one's choice of representative.... because people are free.<sup>35</sup>

Concerning the necessity of competition amongst political groups that are both Islamic and revolutionary, together with the advantages of pluralism, the Imám Khumayní has said:

Divine parties invite people towards God and not towards nature...parties need not be either all good or bad...rather, the criterion - which is important - is the idea of a party per se.<sup>36</sup> In an Islamic state, ijtihád (the process of deriving divine laws by means of argumentation and reasoning) ought to be open to all; the Islamic revolution and state, by its very nature, demand that even ijtihádí ideas which seem to be opposing one another - in various fields - ought to be put forward freely and, that, no-one has the right or power to obstruct it. <sup>37</sup> Proper criticisms lead to a society's development. No-one has the right to regard him/herself free from criticism. Naturally, true criticisms are inherently different to those motivated by political ambitions/behaviour. If a person or group aim to get rid of or, even, destroy a member of the government (of the Islamic Republic), it will be Islám and the revolution which will suffer before actually causing harm to anyone or anything else.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the periodicity and modification/alteration of an Islamic government, together with the necessity for it's non-permanent nature, he states:

The imperialistic method is based on a principle of non-communication. An authority ought to be in the hands of the people; this is a rational matter. Any rational Man would accord to this fact. Within republic states, the right to vote is solely due to the people i.e. the people can say No! to that government which - according to them - has committed wrong actions. Within an Islamic Republic, and the system of a Wiláyat-i Faqih, the situation is even more clear i.e. Islám has delineated certain abilities required from he who possesses authority over a people; hence, once any of these requirements are seen to have been lost, the person's governance automatically terminates.<sup>39</sup>

In brief, Imám was of the viewpoint that experts - in all fields, namely political, social, religious, military, economic etc. - ought to govern i.e. that governance per se is a technique which must be upheld by groups of experts in different fields. In this respect, he states:

When we declare that the right of governance belongs to 'just Islamic mujtahids', a question sometimes emerges within the minds of people whether these just mujtahids are, in fact, competent enough to supervise and administer military, political and economic affairs. However, this argument is irrelevant for we know that the administration of affairs - in every state - is carefully executed under the

supervision of a number of experts. Even during the time of Imám 'Alí's government, this great person did not carry out and execute all administrative affairs.<sup>40</sup>

In summary, the Imám had approved of democratic methods and institutions. He describes Islamic government as being democratic from an institutional standpoint; this view had led to his theory on 'competitive elitist democracy'.

## Conclusion

After analysing present democracies, Imám had classified them into:

(a) totalitarian democracy, and

(b) liberal democracy;

Imám rejected both systems and proposed a model of 'Islamic Democracy', which is based on the will of the masses, as well as the will of Almighty God. He regards this model as 'true' democracy.

Imám has elaborated on different dimensions of the essence and nature of this true democracy. On the subject of the source of governmental power, he believed that an Islamic Republic would be ideal and exemplary i.e. where a republic is shaped by the will of a free people, the government becomes democratic, in nature. In his opinion, it is the people who have the right to determine one's government, approve one's constitution and select one's leader, president and members of parliament; and since a complete consensus of a nation and the direct interference of people in administering governmental affairs are, both, inherently impossible, he puts forward the concept of 'majority rule' and 'representative democracy'. On the other hand, since people ought to, in principle, obey the divine law - within an Islamic system - the will of the people, therefore, is confined by the will of the Almighty; hence, in this version of democracy, that which is advocated by Imám is a 'divine-human rule'.

On the question of what aims and goals a democratic government seeks to achieve, the Imám responds by defining democracy as a system that provides freedom, justice and general welfare. Notice that Imám has distanced his belief and definitions from the former despotic regime's concept of 'private space'; rather, he restricts people's freedom by means of execution of the divine law, thus keeping aloof from any form of liberal regime. Therefore, the Imám believed in a 'divine-human government'.

On the subject of method and institutionalisation of government, Imám approaches the notion of 'competitive elitism' to a great extent i.e. he accepts competitive free elections and governmental periodicity to be held by political, religious and economic elite etc. He approves of experimental democracy and, firmly, rejected regimes based upon totalitarianism and despotism.

As a final word, it is worth noting that although Imám was sensitive towards adding the term 'democratic' to 'Islamic Republic of Iran', he, nevertheless, commended its principles within his political philosophy.

## Notes:

1-The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics, (ed.) Lain Mclean, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.129.

2-David Held, *Models of Democracy*, (Britain: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 14.

3-Sahifeh-e-Nur, by The Centre for Cultural Documents of Islamic revolution, vol. 5, (Tehran: Irshad Ministry, 1982), p. 238.

4-Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave, Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p.8.

5-Jean Louis Quermonne; *Les Regimes Politiques Occidentaux*; (Pares: Seuil, 1986), p. 15.

6-Carl Cohen, *Democracy*, (New York: The University of Georgia Press, 1973), chapter 7.

7-Ibid., chapter 6.

8-J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976), p. 250.

9-Ibid., pp. 268-256.

10-Sahifeh-e-Nur, p. 220.

11-Ibid., vol. 7, p. 122.

12-Ibid., vol. 10, p. 155.

13-Ibid., vol. 5, p. 105.

14-Ibid., vol. 17, p. 160.

15-Ibid., vol. 18, pp. 245 and 246.

16-Ibid., p. 203.

17-Ibid., vol. 11, p. 76.

18-Ibid., vol. 7, p. 122.

19-Ibid., vol. 9, p. 251.

20-Ibid., vol. 5, p. 238.

21-Keneth A. Bollen, " Political Democracy: Conceptual and Measurement Traps", *A studies in Comparative Development* 25, (Spring 1990), pp. 13, 14, 18, 20-23.

22-Huntington, p. 14, 15.

23-Held, p. 16.

24-Cohen, chapter 10.

25-Mclean, p. 135.

26-Sahifeh-e-Nur, vol. 2, pp. 62, 63.

27-Ibid., vol. 5, p. 279.

28-Ibid., p. 227

29-Ibid., vol. 12, p. 180.

30-Schumpeter, p. 250.

31-Held, p. 253.

32-G. Bringham Powell, Jr., *Contemporary Democracies*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 2-7.

33-Sahifeh-e-Nur, vol. 5, p. 130.

34-Ibid., p. 122.

35-Ibid., vol., 18, pp. 203,204.

36-Ibid., p. 17, pp. 132,133.

37-Ibid., p. 21, pp. 46,47.

38-Ibid., p. 48.

39-Ibid., vol. 3, p. 141.

40-Imám Khumayní, *The book of Trade*, vol. 2, (Al-Najaf Al-Ashraf: Al-Adab Publication, 1976), p. 498.

Perception: A Way to Perfection in Sadra

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Abstract

It was customary for almost all the Muslim thinkers in the past to render the meaning of the Divine Scripture and the Prophetic sayings either in the form of conformation to, or confirmation of, their system of thought, whether be it theological, philosophical or mystical. Although the method and the terminology they have employed seemed far distinct from those of the so-called professional exegetes (mufasssiran), they claimed, with no less vigor than the latter ones, proximity and fidelity to the spirit of the religious text. Among the later Muslim philosophers probably it was Sadra, who, having benefited

immensely from his vast Islamic heritage and modeled his metaphysical system in a quite novel fashion upon the foundations of that heritage, has distinguished himself with one quality: the synthesis or the unity that he has displayed in all his intellectual endeavors, as remarked by several scholars of Islamic philosophy. The same is true of his interpretation of the Qur'an, as well. The present paper, concentrating mainly on the exegetical accounts that Sadra suggests with regard to the possible meanings of few verses of the Qur'an, especially in reference to the light-verse (24:35), will examine first as to the nature of perception (*idrâk*) and its various forms, and then the role it plays in the developmental stages of the soul, leading it to the perfection (*kamâl*). Sadra draws a distinction between the perfection of the body and that of the soul and asserts further that, before understanding how the latter attains perfection one must observe carefully how the former is perfected. The notion of "perfection" as espoused by his predecessors, like Ibn Sina, who in turn had borrowed from Aristotle's concept of "entelechy", which mainly refers to the actualization of a certain "preparedness" (*isti`dâd*) of the material intellect (*`aql hayûlânî*), has very little to offer to Sadra. For everything, including the soul, according to him, there is a specific natural journey towards perfection. The perfection of the soul, however, comes about as a result of its active perception and creation of forms and not because of the occurrence (*husûl*) of those forms in the soul as understood by Ibn Sina. The philosophical and mystical dimensions of the soul's perfection, along with the heart and its states, are to be explained in detail against the background of Sadra's commentary on the light-verse. Furthermore, the subject will be delineated more profoundly by means of additional arguments to be drawn from the relevant passages of the philosopher's magnum opus, *Asfâr*.

The place the Qur'an takes up in Sadra's entire corpora and the role it plays therein, are indisputably immense. It is in fact, apart from the intellectual heritage he took over from his predecessors, one of the essential factors that contributed substantially to the formation and consummation of his overall philosophical system. As compared to many of the Muslim philosophers prior to him, probably with few exceptions, such as al-Ghazali, Sadra's engagement with and employment of, the Qur'an seems to be quite distinct. For this Divine Scripture seems to penetrate almost in all the aspects of his ideas, whether be it metaphysical, epistemological or eschatological. The present paper, however, will not concern itself with this important issue, which, despite several academic writings that are available and that partially touch the subject,<sup>1</sup> deserves on its own an extensive serious research. It will rather attempt to analyze one specific verse, known as the light-verse (*al-Nur 24: 35*), in connection with Sadra's theory of perception with the help of further readings from his other major works.

To begin with, Sadra's recourse to the Qur'an, as far as his philosophical writings are concerned, has, among others, at least one discernible aim: to support and justify his views on the revelatory grounds through his own hermeneutics that allows him to conform those views to the spirit of the Divine Text. In so doing, he appears to be fairly consistent, especially in his analyses of the verses that are susceptible of various interpretations. As is expected of any other Islamically oriented philosopher, Sadra too misses no opportunity to render the verses of the Qur'an, wherever possible, within the context of his own philosophy, if not necessarily in conformity with it. The interpretation Sadra suggests to the meaning of the seventy-second verse of the Surat al-Ahzab may be given as an example to illustrate this point more concretely:

"We indeed offered the Trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were scared of it. But man assumed it. He has proved a tyrant and a fool." (33: 72)

The term trust (*al-amanah*), which has been interpreted in most of the classical exegeses of the Qur'an as "obedience" (*al-ta`ah*) and "obligations" (*al-fara`id*), is rendered explicitly by Sadra, in consistent with

his system of thought, as "existence" (al-wujud). What is intended by "trust" in the verse, Sadra asserts, is "existence", for every existing being (mawjud), other than man, has a static (thabit) existence, which is neither transformable nor changeable from one state to another or from one mode of existence to another. Man, however, inasmuch as he is human, is in a constant progressive development from one state of existence to another and from one mode of creation (nash`ah) to another. In this development man does not remain fixed in any particular stage, because, Sadra stresses, existence is a trust in his hand that will lead him to the people to whom he belongs, on the day of his encounter with and arrival in God.<sup>2</sup> Of course, such an interpretation, though apparently very liberal and fresh, is far distinct from the conventional exegesis. Yet, it is by no means untenable. On the contrary, it fits quite well into Sadra's metaphysical framework, by serving, not only as a legitimate textual ground for its validity, but most importantly as a source for its further elaboration.

Keeping in mind all these preliminary remarks, we can now proceed to deal with the main subject of our paper, that is, Sadra's theory of perception in the context of his commentary on the light-verse. It must be pointed out at the outset that Sadra, in addition to his separate treatise devoted entirely to the interpretation of the light-verse,<sup>3</sup> also discusses it at various levels in his other major works,<sup>4</sup> some of which will be consulted in due course of our survey.

In his Commentary on the verse in question Sadra, having at first reviewed in a detailed and critical fashion on the possible meanings of the term "light" (nur), which were proposed by the Muslim thinkers before him, especially those of the Peripatetics, Illuminationists and Sufis, takes up at the end the definition of al-Ghazali, for he finds it compatible with the general understanding of what he calls "the imams of wisdom." According to al-Ghazali, "Light is that through which things are made manifest."<sup>5</sup> This definition as such implies two possible understandings of perfection, as far as the nature of light and its application are concerned. Light can be related to a thing either in a real sense or metaphorically. In the latter sense there are both a giver and a receiver of light, whereas in the former there is only giver. When light is taken in its metaphorical sense, it can be applicable to a number of things, physical and spiritual alike, by way of figurative extension (tajawwuz) or derivation or comparison (tashbih). But such an ascription, Sadra states expressly, is not possible at all to God, who is both a pure Being and a sheer Light.<sup>6</sup> In saying so, he takes light in a deeper sense than even al-Ghazali's, in whose eyes it is simply "something that makes things visible." As for our philosopher, Sadra, however, it is also "a perfection of being," insofar as it a being. Besides, existence and light are identical in meaning (ma`na) and reality (al-haqiqah), but different in name. Therefore, existence is good and perfection of every being.<sup>7</sup>

As far as God's Essence is concerned, Sadra declares, existence and light are one and the same thing. With this fact in mind, one can understand better the meaning of God's speech: "God is the light of the heavens and earth." This would mean, according to him, that God as Existence and Light is so manifest that no veil or barrier can ever conceal Him.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Ibn Sina or many other Peripatetic thinkers and Muslim theologians, Sadra, like one of his Ottoman contemporaries, Isma`il Ankaravi (d.1041/1631)<sup>9</sup> states very forcefully that light is, in the true sense of the word, the very reality of God, merely because what exists in reality is He, the Truth, and no other, and the existentiality of other things is due to His Existence, just as the luminosity of other things is due to His Luminosity.<sup>10</sup>

Having thus identified light and existence in God's essence as one and the same thing, Sadra now moves to examine the remainder of the verse in question in conjunction with such identity. He basically offers two different interpretations for it, one of which pertains to the microcosmic world, namely the physical human body (al-alam al-insani al-badani) and with which we shall be dealing very shortly. The other

pertains to the macrocosm that consists of the two worlds: that of the horizons (alam al-afaq) and that of the souls (alam al-anfus). What mainly concerns our topic here is the first interpretation, which I may call "epistemological," on account of its significant relevance to Sadra's overall theory of knowledge, as developed in detail in his al-Asfar. But, a brief examination of his second interpretation, which I may term "cosmological," due to its operation within the world of the intellects and the souls, will certainly help us understand better the first one.

In reference to the world of the horizons, the niche (al-mishkat) in the verse, Sadra begins to explain, stands for the world of corporeal bodies (al-ajsam), the glass (al-zujaj) for the Throne (al-`Arsh), the lamp (al-misbah) for the Supreme Spirit (al-Ruh al-A`zam), the tree (al-shajarah) for the universal prime matter or hyle (al-hayula al-kulliyah), and the oil of the tree (zaytuha) for the world of the psychic spirits (al-arwah al-nafsaniyyah). The tree, namely the universal prime matter, which is in itself an intellective and angelic entity, is actually the material of the realities of the physical bodies, as well as their various forms. It cannot be assigned, though, to any particular place, since it is somewhere between the ending point of the world of spirits and the starting point of the world of the corporeal bodies. That is why, God has described it as neither of the east, i.e. the world of intellects and spirits, nor of the west, i.e. the world of bodies and apparitions.

As for the phrase, "light upon light," Sadra refers it first to the light of Divine Mercy and Divine Knowledge and then to the light of the Supreme Spirit and the Active Intellect. In other words, one of them is the light of the Active Intellect and the other is the light of the Universal Soul, which is in turn the light of the Throne. So both of them would make up "light upon light. In the same context, Sadra further explicates the last part of the verse that "God guides to His Light whomever He wills" as an indication to God's bestowal of existence, which takes place through the effusion of the Merciful's light from the Throne to the earth.<sup>11</sup>

Sadra's other macrocosmic interpretation, which operates within the world of the souls, as he himself acknowledges, rests heavily on Ibn Sina's al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat. It can be summarized as follows:

The rational soul, in its ascent to the Divine World, has to traverse various stages of progress. When looked at from this point of view, the niche is to be taken as the primary intellect (al-`aql al-hayulani), owing to its tenebrous essence, although it is receptive to the intellective lights depending on the varying degrees of their preparedness. The glass refers to the intellect in habitués, because of its lucidity as being better receptive to light, similar to the shining star. The olive tree represents the cogitative faculty (al-quwwat al-fikriyyah) and reflection (al-fikr), since it is prepared to receive light by itself. It is a blessed tree because it bears the definitions of things and the conclusions of veritable demonstrations. And it is neither from the orient nor from the occident, since reflection takes place in the scope of universal meanings and mental notions. Moreover, rational premises can be related altogether neither to the occidental domain of the material sensible beings, nor to the oriental realm of the Active Intellects. As for the oil, it stands for intuition (hads), because it is more proximate to the source of light than the olive tree. Although the fire, namely the Active Intellect has not touched it, it is about to shine forth by itself and thereby intellect in actuality. "Light upon light" refers to the acquired intellect (al-`aql al-mustafad), because the intelligible forms are a light and the soul that receives them is another light. As to the lamp, because it is luminous in its essence and is in no need of acquiring a light, it is the intellect in act. The Active Intellect kindles the intellect in act, just as the fire flames the lamp in the niche.<sup>12</sup>

The two macrocosmic exegeses above, one pertaining to the world of horizons and the other to that of the souls, also appear in another treatise of Sadra, but rather in a merged Gnostic discourse profoundly blended by Ibn Arabi's mystical terminology. The relevant parts of this work are to be furnished below in an intelligible rendition, so that one may observe the differences and similarities between the two texts.

You should know that the Throne is the locus of the Lord's self-disclosure, while the Ka`bah is its landmark (ma`lamuhu). God calls His servants to [witness] His self-disclosure through their hearts, as He calls them to [witness] His landmark through their bodies. Once you have comprehended this well, you should know that the Throne is the very heart of the world, which is the Grand Man (i.e. macrocosm: al-insan al-kabir), while the Footstool (al-kursi) is his chest. For what is meant here by the immaterial heart is the rank of the governing soul, which is also the percipient of intelligibles. The pine-like heart is the locus of its manifestation. In the same way, what is intended by the immaterial chest is the rank of the animal spirit, which is also the percipient of particulars. This bodily chest is its locus of manifestation. The way the human soul mounts on its heart through deliberation can be related to the way that the Merciful sits on His Throne through divine intervention (al-`inayah) and mercy. Such analogy can even be extended to the relationship between the pine-like heart and the pine-like Throne. Similarly, how the animal sentient soul exerts control in the chest that encloses the substance of the liver as the abode of the natural blood circulating throughout the entire body may be related to the way that the angelic faculty (al-quwwatu'l-malakiyyah) exerts control by God's permission in the Footstool that surrounds the substance of the seven heavens along with their operative lights (bi anwariha al-nafidhah). As a whole, the particular chest is analogous to the corporeal Footstool. Understand what I have so far said to you and ascertain as to what the truth is, for the adherence to the truth is the most appropriate.<sup>13</sup>

Know that God most High, having deposited as a whole in [the world of] man all the faculties of the world, brought him into existence after the existence of all things, which had been included [essentially and universally] in him. [As God states] "(He) Who made all things best which He created, and He began the creation of man from clay." (32: 7) That is to say, God brought into existence (awjada) in [the world of] man all the simple things and composites of this world, as well as all that is related to the spiritual entities, creations and this worldly beings. Man, therefore, inasmuch as it contains in himself all the powers of this world, is like an epitome or a transcribed copy of a [Great] Book whose word is little and whose meaning is, though, deep. Or it is like the cream of milk, the fat of sesame, and the oil of olive. "The similitude of His [God's] Light in the heart of the believer is like the niche in which there is a lamp, which is in a glass," as recorded in the reading of Ibn Mas'ud. The niche is the human body, the glass the animal spirit, which is equivalent to a mirror because of its purity. The oil is the sacred faculty, which is the finest (afdal) of the modes of the prime intellect. As for the prime intellect, it is the first degree of the rational soul and the last degree of the sensible soul (al-nafs al-hassah). The blessed tree is the cogitative faculty (al-quwwatu'l-fikriyyah), which is the finest mode of the faculty of imagination (al-quwwatu'l-khayaliyyah).<sup>14</sup>

Now we can turn to Sadra's first interpretation, which we have already characterized as his epistemological interpretation. In what follows, we shall submit a general rendition of the relevant pages from his Tafsir, along with further accounts that are taken from his other works.

It must be noted that Sadra lays the same emphasis that he has already put in connection with the meaning of the aforementioned verse of "trust," on the soul's essential and substantial transformation towards perfection in his epistemological interpretation of the light-verse. Everything, he asserts, is, as a consequence of the Creator's wisdom, subject to a specific natural journey of evolutionary ascent towards "the ultimate good" (al-khayru'l-aqsa) and "the most splendid goal" (al-maqсад al-asna). Let us



take for instance, he continues, nourishment, which undergoes, like the nourished, through various stages of evolvement. At every stage and world it enters it is called by a specific name pertaining to it. In the lowest level of all it is merely an element (*`unsur*). After having gone through changes, it turns a composite inanimate body, like grain, bread, and oil. Then, with the application of several administrative actions, it becomes blood and a sound mixture. Soon after, it becomes flesh, cartilage and muscle; then a warm subtle vapor. Afterwards, it becomes a sentient and sensible form; then an estimative or intellective form. This process, Sadra remarks, goes on as far as to the degree of witnessing the divine lights and seeing the divine attributes and the Lordly Names.

It is within this evolutionary scheme that Sadra expounds the light-verse in conjunction with his epistemology and that he places each technical notion of the verse in such a way that it corresponds to and labels the relevant level it ascends. This whole process of evolution runs in various levels, some of which pertain to the world of "creation" (*al-khalqiyyah*), and some others pertain to the world of "command" (*al-amriyyah*). And in accordance with each level that it ascends to or "with every new garment (*kiswah*) it dresses and every new mode of being it attains, it assumes a specific name appropriate to it."<sup>15</sup>

If explained within the above-delineated evolutionary framework of Sadra, the intended meaning of the light-verse is to be comprehended as follows. The olive tree in the verse comes to signify food and nourishment which man eats and takes into his abdomen. The niche symbolizes the human body on account of its gloomy or tenebrous nature. And it receives light in an unevenly manner due to the differences on surface and holes in it. As for the glass, it stands for the heart because of its being a cavity for the animal spirit, which is represented in the verse as the fat of the oil. The lamp denotes the psychic spirit (*al-ruh al-nafsan*), enlightened by the light of the human soul. This spirit, owing to its utmost proximity to the world of the Unseen and that of the *Malakut*, its oil nearly shines forth, even though no fire has touched it from outside. This is also due to the fact that the essential causes (*al-`ilal al-dhatiyyah*) are not things external to the essences of the effects (*dhawat al-ma`lulat*). Besides, the psychic spirit, which receives the light of the human soul, does not need a cause external to its essence, even if it is in need of being illuminated by the Active Intellect. For it is as if it were self-sufficient and independent of such an external cause.<sup>16</sup>

The glass representing "the heart" is described in the verse as "a shining star," because, Sadra proceeds to explain, it is illuminated by and filled with the light of the animal spirit. And this spirit is being kindled from the blessed tree, because its material, just like the oil which is obtained from the olive after forceful pressings, comes originally from the nourishing trees and plants after numerous transformations. By this verse God has set a parable for the people who have faith in Him and who have advanced various degrees with respect to gnosis (*`irfan*) and ascent to Him. The highest level of perfection one could attain is the point at which one would become "the Perfect Man" (*al-insan al-kamil*), after having traversed through all the intermediary stages commencing with that of "food" or "nourishment" as symbolized by the "olive tree" and culminating in "arrival in Him," typified as "light upon light."<sup>17</sup> Hence, in Sadra's view, the rank of the Perfect Man, who is the most noble creation and servant of God, is the utmost perfection. (See Annex 1)

Sadra, having discussed at length the evolvement of the soul in terms of transformation to perfection, sets out now to describe the basic features of the human soul, together with those of the human body, in a systematic way. His exposé of this subject reflects more or less a general summary of his predecessors' account of the human soul and body, especially the one that Ibn Sina has detailed in the psychological part (*al-Nafs* or *De Anima*) of his *Kitab al-Shifa'*. The noticeable difference, along with

some other divergent points related to the faculties and the function of the soul, is that Sadra puts relatively more emphasis on the heart than Ibn Sina, mostly because of his Gnostic and mystic orientation, even if he does not appear to be one of the fervent advocates of Sufism. The first organ, he begins, that is generated in the body is the heart, which is also the last organ to be decomposed. In this fleshy heart there arises the initial mode (nash`at) of the human faculty, which has various degrees in its ascent toward perfection. The heart, which is in reality an animal body, is used by the soul through the medium of the subtle vapors emitted from the former (i.e. the heart). The rest of all of the physical organs are created in the service of, and for the protection of, the heart. This is why it is located in the middle of the body.

The first subtle vapor that generates from the heart is the animal spirit (al-ruh al-haywani) or the vital spirit. Then another spirit originates from it, which is subtler than the former; this is the psychic spirit (al-ruh al-nafsani), which is followed by the vegetative soul (al-nafs al-nabatiyyah), that is the faculty and principle for nutrition and reproduction. Then comes the animal soul (al-nafs al-haywaniyyah).

Out of the animal soul is generated the first faculty, that is, the tactile faculty, which is followed by the emergence of the sensible souls (al-nufus al-hissiyyah) according to their levels.<sup>18</sup> At this point one would distinctly note Sadra's careful characterization of Ibn Sina's sensible faculties (al-quwa al-hissiyyah or mudrikah) as the sensible souls, which in fact exhibits how consistent he is within his own epistemological system. For, as will be seen shortly, what is active, according to him, in the process of perception and the creation of knowledge is the soul, and not the faculties of the soul as conceived by many of the Peripatetic thinkers, including Aristotle and Ibn Sina.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, naming the so-called perceptive faculties "souls" appears to Sadra more convenient, as far as the act of perception is concerned.

In like manner, Sadra also specifies the other two faculties that are generated in the animal soul as "the imaginative souls" (al-nufus al-khayaliyyah) and "the estimative souls" (al-nufus al-wahmiyyah), instead of calling them "imaginative and estimative faculties." As Sadra himself articulates:

[In the animal soul] are generated in order the sensible souls together with its levels, the imaginative souls together with its levels, and then the estimative souls together with their levels. These are the utmost degrees of the animal soul, inasmuch it is associated with animality. Then is created the angelic rational soul (al-nafs al-natiqah a-malakiyya), which is one of the immaterial lights of God, issued forth from the horizon of the world of the hereafter.<sup>20</sup>

The rational soul, Sadra continues, has various degrees, the first of which is the primary material intellect (al-`aql al-hayulani). It is this intellect that serves as the seed of the tree for the intellect and gnosis and as the grain of the fruit for the Gnostic knowledge and faith. Out of it there emerges the preparatory intellect (al-`aql al-isti`dadi), which is followed by the intellect in act (al-`aql bi'l-fi'l) and then the acquired intellect (al-`aql al-mustafad), and finally the Active Intellect (al-`Aql al-Fa`aal). Amongst all of these it is the Active Intellect, which is related to pure intelligibles and lights and from which effuses the existence of realities and innermost natures (asrar).<sup>21</sup> (See Annex 2) On the origination and the progressive stages of the rational soul Sadra up to now may appear to follow, in technical sense, the footsteps of his predecessors in philosophy if we put aside the discreet elaboration and markedly visible modification that he has made on certain points. But it is not altogether clear why Sadra in most of the time clings literally to Ibn Sina's conception of the soul. Is it because he really genuinely adopts such conception? As will be seen in the succeeding lines, Sadra's overall epistemology does not permit an affirmative answer to this question. What seems to be very attractive to Sadra at this

point is not Ibn Sina's theory of the soul, but rather his explanation of it in terms of perfection. That is to say, the rational soul, after having been generated as a subtle vapor in the fleshy heart, has gone through various stages of development from the vegetative soul, the animal soul and then all the way to the highest intellect. This process is definitely a transformation of the soul from one state to another, or in Sadra's own terms, from one mode of existence to another. For him, it is not the faculties that perfect the soul, as conceived by Ibn Sina. On the contrary, it is the soul itself, which is subject to transformation, and hence can achieve perfection. In what follows we shall provide a lengthy excerpt from Sadra's another treatise entitled *Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, where he at first terms the rational soul "Adamic soul" (*al-nafs al-Adamiyyah*) and then delineates its transformative perfection in a rather physiological language.

The Adamic soul, so long as it remains an embryo in the womb, is found at the level of the vegetative souls. As soon as the infant comes out of the belly of its mother, it attains the status of the other animal souls and it remains as such until the time of [its] formal maturity (*al-bulugh al-suri*). After that, it becomes a rational soul, although it possesses [potentially] preparedness for ascent to the utmost limit of the sacred soul and the intellect in act. When it reaches the age of forty, which is the time of spiritual maturity (*al-bulugh al-ma'nawiyyah*), it becomes a sacred soul, provided that it is favored by the Divine help (*al-tawfiq al-ilahi*).

The embryo, during its stay in the womb, is actually asleep and potentially animal [soul].<sup>22</sup> When it comes out of the belly of its mother prior to [its formal] maturity, it is actually animal [soul] and potentially human [soul]. Once it reaches the limit of the formal maturity, it is a human in actuality and an angel in potentiality.<sup>23</sup>

It is obvious then that Mulla Sadra is concerned first and foremost with the transformation of the soul towards perfection, not with the detailed features of its faculties nor yet with its constitution. Under whichever appellation we might call it and whatever adjective we might ascribe to it, be it rational or Adamic, it makes no difference at all for Sadra, for it is nothing but the reality of the human being. He seems to underscore this point in another place of the above-cited work, where he declares that the human soul comprises three parts, each of which belongs to a different realm of being. The first one consists in the substances of this world; the second in the world of isthmus (*barzakh*); and the third one in the sacred world. To put it in other way, it is merely a nature (*tab`*) in the first world, a soul in the second, and an intellect in the third world if it is to be expressed in terms of philosophy (*al-hikmah*) and a spirit in the nomenclature of the Shari`ah. If you so desire, Sadra proclaims, you may call the first one "chest," the second "heart" and the third "light."<sup>24</sup>

Since it is the sole reality of the human being, Sadra adds, it is a single species in the present mode of being, whereas in the second mode of being, i.e. the world of isthmus, it is susceptible of numerous species, even limitless in number, though it may generally fall under four genera. For it would become either one of the genus of the angels if it were to be predominated by the traits of knowledge and wisdom; or one of the genus of devils if it were to be overpowered by carnal appetites and lusts; or one of the genus of beasts if it were to be overwhelmed by the traits of anger, vengeance and passion for leadership.<sup>25</sup>

Let us revert again to Sadra's exegesis of the light-verse. If we recall, he has outlined the degrees of the souls and intellects, in terms of transformation towards perfection. He now goes on to further delineate the importance of these evolutionary stages for the perfection of the human being. Sounding like a Sufi this time, he indicates that man is as if he is on a journey (*suluk*), traversing through those degrees, until

he ascends up to the utmost border from which he has initially descended. In his wayfaring as such, every station he arrives at has its own particular medicaments and nutrients, so to say. Some of these stuffs that nourish and strengthen him come from the side of the bodies and bodily things, some from that of the senses and sensible things, some from that of fancies, imaginary things, conjectures, and beliefs, some from that of the intellects and intelligibles, and some from that of witnessing and the witnessed. All in all, so long as man abides in this corporeal world, he must receive nourishment suitable to what is nourished in terms of form, matter and faculty. In other words, the form is nourished by the form, matter by matter, faculty by faculty and sense by sensible. Besides, for every organ there is a certain portion of appropriate nourishment.<sup>26</sup>

Having said so, Sadra draws at this juncture an analogy between the function of the nutritive faculty (al-quwwatu'l-ghadiyah) in the body and that of the intellective faculty (al-quwwatu'l-'aqlah) in the soul. Just as the former, he remarks, strengthens the body of the human being by means of the physical nourishment, so too the latter substantiates (tajawhara) his soul and essence through the intellectual materials and knowledge-laden (ilmiyyah) nourishment.<sup>27</sup> There is also a parallelism, Sadra elaborates further, between the body and the soul in general in the same sense. The way the body is made perfect by what perfects it and by what strengthens it in its magnitude and capacity to its utmost level, is similar to the way that the soul is perfected in terms of spiritual (nafsaniyyah) and intellectual nourishment.<sup>28</sup>

From this specific point onwards, Sadra begins to discuss the function of the soul in conjunction with the roles of its faculties in the process of perception. The soul, by virtue of its perceptive faculty, brings to itself a sensible form. Then the first action it performs is to strip off the form, through its governing (mutasarrafah) faculty, from the impurities and excessive parts of matter. This kind of action of the soul is called "sense perception" (al-ihsas), which is in fact an active operation (tasarruf) on the part of the soul and a passive perfection of the senses.<sup>29</sup>

The soul exercises another operative action over the form; it detaches it this time in a rather complete way to the extent that it divests the material coverings from it. This is called "the imagination" (al-takhyil) and "the representation" (taswir). The form at this point is both a perfection and a nourishment for the imaginative faculty. And its relation to the faculty of imagination, Sadra stresses, is exactly as the relation of the sensible to the senses.<sup>30</sup> The soul, furthermore, executes another action over the form, that is, removing it from the matter and all its accidents. Yet, whenever it is related to a particular matter, it still has a sort of attachment to the matter. This action is called "the estimation" (tawahhum).<sup>31</sup>

If the soul, right after its act of estimation, performs another action over the form, it then denudes it from all the traces of matter and its accidents, as well as all its attachments and affiliations. So that it becomes a pure kernel, quite intelligible to the innermost intellect, which is in fact one of God's angels. Since it has been purified from all its material and accidental associations, it is now ready for intellection. This is, as Sadra states, the wisdom of God, "Who created an intellective faculty, which performs an activity over the sensible and renders it intelligible (ma`qul) and intellecting ('aql)."<sup>32</sup>

Of course, this intellective faculty is nothing other than the rational soul, which is considered by Sadra, as has been observed so far, to be an active agent in perception. The faculties, such as imaginative and estimative, may seem to be functional only in appearance, or rather in a passive manner. As Sadra clearly points out in somewhere else, whenever the soul concerns itself with a sensible entity, it directs the relevant sense to that sensible, so that the sense at once brings it to the soul in no time and without

any effort and defiance. In addition, the senses cannot even know if the sensible has ever an existence outside. This is strictly the prerogative of the soul."<sup>33</sup>

Besides, all of the five senses or faculties, Sadra indicates, are obedient and subservient to the rational soul, just in the same way as, for example, the angels are obedient to the Lord of the worlds. They, unlike human beings who are endowed with volition, have no choice on this score. Obedience to God is definitely a necessary act on their part.<sup>34</sup>

Even Sadra goes one step farther and completely disregards Ibn Sina's theory of abstraction, which attributes to the external and internal faculties of the soul a significant instrumental role in sense perception and hence in the acquisition of knowledge. In contrast to Ibn Sina's view that the faculties detach the images from the external objects and transmit them to the internal faculties and thereby to the intellection of the rational soul as immaterial forms, Sadra maintains that it is the rational soul itself that performs all these actions in such a way that it commands the sense involved to bring to the sensible form to itself. In such process, the soul is an active agent, while the faculty is a passive obedient and subservient to the former. Then one of the vigorous grounds for Sadra's rejection of Ibn Sina's theory of abstraction is that the soul in the case of abstraction is all the time static and at rest, while its precepts are being transmitted and transformed by the faculties.<sup>35</sup> Such a theory no doubt renders the soul inactive and inoperative; therefore it is not acceptable to Sadra, in whose eyes the soul as the real functional agent is always in a state of existential transformation.

Again, he rejects the commonly held view that the soul is one in essence and degree and that the perceptibles are diverse in existence and different in abstraction and corporeality. This is not admissible to Sadra who contends that every perceptive faculty, during its actual perception, becomes in fact the very form it perceives.<sup>36</sup>

More precisely speaking, Sadra ascribes to the human soul two different movements, one descending downward and other ascending upward. The former happens during its perception of the sensibles, whereas the latter occurs during its apprehension of intelligibles. As he explicates:

As a matter of fact, the human soul, when perceiving the sensibles, descends to the level of the senses. Consequently, it becomes the very essence (*`ayn*) of the seeing faculty during its vision and the very essence of the hearing faculty during its hearing. And this goes on so in the rest of the senses, until [the lowest faculty, that is] the faculty which spreads out motion through the muscles. In like manner, the human soul, during its perception of intelligibles, ascends towards the degree of the Active Intellect and becomes united with it in such a way that is known to those who are deeply rooted in knowledge (*al-rasikhun fi'l-`ilm*).<sup>37</sup>

According to Sadra, it is in the very nature of the human soul to perceive all the realities of the creation and unite itself with them in an immaterial union. Again, it is in its nature to become a simple intellect, knowing and intellecting. "The form of every intelligible being, as well as the meaning (*ma`na*) of every corporeal existent, are found in it in a way higher than they are in their physical existences."<sup>38</sup> The soul is unified with every sensible and intelligible form that it actually perceives. Even this very union would make it necessary for the soul to unite with the Active Intellect. Sadra seems to reinforce this view in his *Risalah Ittihad al-`Aqil wa'l-Ma`qul*, where he declares:

O clever and intelligent person! Look into the entity of the soul and observe carefully its various developmental stages as well as its existential modes. The soul, at every stage of its development, is a

being that is united together with the group of the existents of the same existential stage. That is to say, together with the body it is a bodily nature; together with the sense it is a sense; with the imagination it is an imagination; with the intellect it is an intellect. This is why God has stated in the Qur'an: "no soul knows in what land it will die." (31: 34) When it is united with the nature, it would become the very essence (*`ayn*) of the limbs. When united with the sense in actuality, it would become the very essence of the forms imagined by it. This [process] goes on likewise until it [i.e. the soul] actually ascends as high as to the station of the intellect, where it becomes the very essence of the intelligible forms, which actually occur in it.<sup>39</sup>

If we put together all what Mulla Sadra has stated up to now concerning the nature of the soul and its way of perception in a short summary, we can highlight the following distinctive points:

Firstly, the soul is a bodily material that is originally emerged as subtle vapor in the fleshy pine-like heart. Though it is in its essence a spiritual entity without any extension, it, however, contains in itself universally all the faculties of the macrocosm. Secondly, the soul that exists in actuality by itself is also a substantial perceiving being. Because it can by very nature perceive, it resorts to its faculties not for seeking help from them but just for preparing the occasion for its actual realization of the perception of forms. Thirdly, when it is actively engaged in the act of perception, it enters, so to say, into a state of transformational change either in a descending movement in the case of sensibles or in an ascending movement in the case of intelligibles. During this process, it is united with every form it perceives and every intelligible it apprehends. Because of such immaterial union, it even becomes the very essence of the faculty at the moment of perception and the form or intelligible itself which it has actually perceived. All of these bring about the perfection of the soul, as well.

The question still remains to be answered is the loci or substrata of the forms, if there is any. In other words, where do these forms reside before and after perception? Are they inherent in the external objects? Where are they actually found? Sadra provides no explicit answer to this question in his Tafsir of the light-verse, although he there seems to allude implicitly to the effect that they are not existent essentially or inherently in the physical objects, but rather accidentally. His major purpose, as it appears, in the present work is not to discuss this issue in its entirety but mostly to demonstrate the self-sufficiency of the soul and hence its perfection, in connection with the in-depth meaning of the verse under study. Since this particular issue has been examined in a detailed form within the context of *al-Asfar* by the late Fazlur Rahman,<sup>40</sup> and also by a few contemporary researchers,<sup>41</sup> we will deal with it rather briefly in reference to other writings of Sadra and from the perspective of the soul's perception.

In the epistemology of the Peripatetic thinkers, there are, generally speaking, three elements that take part in any operation of perception: the object, the sense organ or the faculty, and the soul. It is the function of the faculty to contact first the object and then abstract the image therefrom on its own and transmit it to the reception of the other intermediary faculties for further processes until it becomes a pure form that can be intellected by the rational soul. As we have already remarked, such is not the case with Sadra, who contends that, though the sense organ plays a role of mediation in the act of perception, the perceptible forms which are to be used in knowledge are not externally existent forms, and nor do they yet come to inhere in the sense organ at the time of perception. The sense organ's intermediary involvement with an object is just for the sake of preparing, as Fazlur Rahman aptly puts it, "an occasion for the projection of the form from the soul."<sup>42</sup> To be more precise, according to Sadra, in sense perception the soul itself creates a form corresponding to the external material object, whenever that object affects the respective sense organ. For instance, the object we touch affects our tactile organ, which thereby prepares a suitable condition for the soul, which consequently creates a

perceptible form corresponding to the form of that object. Otherwise, it is not the case that the forms are inherently imprinted in the objects so that the sense separates them from there. This Sadra elucidates with specific examples:

The forms to be sighted are not imprinted in the objects of vision, nor are they found as images on the surfaces of those objects or in their very depths, as alleged by the Naturalists. Nor do they yet come into existent, as espoused by the mathematicians, out of the ray of the sight and become unified with the external individuals. Even they are not existents, as the Illuminationists have maintained, in the world of images. On the contrary, they are in fact existent in this world, though not essentially, but accidentally. And the existence they have is a sort of shadow for the existence of the external individual outside, not in a different realm of creation.<sup>43</sup>

Since these forms do not really exist in the objects outside, it is no longer plausible for Sadra to speak of the soul's "receptivity," but definitely of its "creativity," since it is the creator or actualizer of the perceptible forms, per se. Nor is it appropriate to use Ibn Sina's technical notion of "occurrence" (husul) of forms to the soul. The latter could only be possible if we consider it in strictly Sadra's doctrine of unification (ittihad), as he himself explicates it as follows:

But the soul "receives" its forms, which are already deeply rooted in it, by recalling (al-hifz) them and summoning (al-istijab) them forth (out of itself). Now there is no inconsistency between the soul's "receiving" (qabuluha) these forms and its actualizing (fi'luha) them, (since) at once and in a unified manner it both actualizes (or creates fa'ilah) and receives the forms and images (al-amthal) (in its modality of being). And all knowledge of the (noetic, intelligible) First Principles and Their attributes, inasmuch as it is in this unified manner, occurs both in the soul and by the soul (i.e. by means of its activity), since the soul's "receptivity" here does not have the meaning of a potential preparedness (al-quwwatu'l-isti'dadiyyah) and possibility (of receiving only one specific form, which is the case with the receptivity of materials in the external world).<sup>44</sup>

As expressly indicated by Morris, "the essential creativity of the soul (khallaqiyat al-nafs) in its acts of perception is one of the most basic principles of Sadra's epistemology."<sup>45</sup> In Sadra's own technical terminology, we may conveniently combine both the creativity and receptivity of the soul in a unitary principle, as he himself unites between the actually sensible form and actually perceiving soul. As a matter of fact, one can multiply the number of such identities: existence and light; knowledge and existence; sensible and the sentient; imaginable and imaginative; intellect and intelligible. All of these unions come about as a result of substantive transformation, which ultimately leads to a certain degree of perfection in existence.

Even this very union of the soul with every intelligible form it actually perceives necessarily unites it with the Active Intellect, too.<sup>46</sup> A union as such has a transcendental dimension in Sadra's system. The passage below affords an explanation for such dimension:

The wisdom behind it [union: ittihad] is that once God brought into existence "an intellective unity," that is the world of intellect, and "a corporeal plurality," that is the world of sense[s] and imagination in order, the Divine solicitude (al-'inayatu'l-ilahiyyah) required that "a unitary mode of being" (nash'atun jami'atun) be created, through which all that is in the worlds can be apprehended. Hence He invested it [the soul] with a subtle faculty that fits in its essence this 'all-comprehensive unity." By means of such suitable faculty, it can apprehend that "unity," that is the Active Intellect. [He also invested it with another corporeal and material faculty that corresponds in its essence to the corporeal plurality, so that

it perceives it inasmuch as it is. However, since the soul, due to its defects and deficiency, is overtaken in the early stage of its creation by the corporeal plurality, its intellective unity remains a potential entity, while its corporeal plurality becomes an active entity. But, once its essence has been strengthened and its actuality intensified, the side of unity prevails it. Consequently, it becomes both an intellect and an intelligible, after becoming a sense and a sensible. So, the soul experiences a substantial movement [or transformation] from this first of being to that of the second and so on and so forth.<sup>47</sup>

To put in a nutshell, in any kind of perception there is a kind of transformation in which the percipient agent is transformed from its level of existence to the level of that which is perceived, while being united with it. As far as the soul is concerned, since it operates as a chief active agent and since it is in its unity "the total of all the faculties,"<sup>48</sup> then all these transformations take place within the soul itself and hence is the source of all perfections (al-kamalat) and effects (al-athar). Rather, faculties are simply the modes (shu`un) or manifestations (mazahir) of the soul.<sup>49</sup> That is why, Sadra is very persistent in his thesis that "the only perfection of the soul comes about, in so far as the soul actualizes (or creates taf`alu) these forms and makes them "perceptible" (mudrikatan) to itself."<sup>50</sup> It is the soul, par excellence, that attains perfection not only by exerting control over the senses and faculties but also acting upon the sensibles and thereby rendering them within itself both intelligible (ma`qul) and intellecting (`aqil).<sup>51</sup>

#### ANNEX (1)

^

#### EVOLUTIONARY PERFECTION

^

Witnessing the Divine Lights (Light upon Light)

^

Estimative and Intellective Form

^

Sentient and Sensible Form

^

Warm Subtle Vapor

^

Flesh and Muscle

^

Blood and Healthy Mixture

^

Inanimate Body

^

Element

^



## Nourishment and Food (Olive Tree)

### ANNEX (2)

#### THE SOUL AND ITS DEGREES

al-Ruh al-Haywani \-----  
Faculty of Touch

al-Ruh al-Nafsani \-----

Sensible Souls (al-Nufus al-Hissiyyah)

al-Nafs al-Nabatiyyah \-----

al-Nafs al-Haywaniyyah ----- \-----

The Angelic Rational Soul

(al-Nafs al-Natiqa al-Malakiyyah)

Imaginative Souls (al-Nufus al-Khayaliyyah)

Estimative Souls (al-Nufus al-Wahmaniyyah)

The material intellect (al-`aql al-hayulani)

The intellect in aptitude ((al-`aql al-isti`dadi)

The intellect in act (al-`aql bi'l-f`il)

The acquired intellect (al-`aql al-mustafad)

The Active Intellect ((al-`Aql al-Fa`al)

#### Notes:

1-Mohsen M. Saleh, "The Verse of Light: A Study of Mulla Sadra's Philosophical Qur'an Exegesis," Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1994; S. H. Nasr, Sadr al-Din Shirazi and His Transcendent Theosophy (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1997), see esp. chapter 7 "The Qur'anic Commentaries of Mulla Sadra. pp. 123-135.

2-Mulla Sadra, "Fi Dhayli Ayat al-Amanah," Majmu`a-i Rasa'il Falsafi Sadr al-Muta'allihin (The Complete Philosophical Treatises of Sadr al-Din Muhammad al-Shirazi), ed. Hamid Naji Isfahani (Tehran: Intisharat-i Hikmat, 1999), p. 361.

3-The full text of this Arabic treatise, together with its Persian translation, is available in new print: Sadra, Tafsir-e Aya-e Nur, trans. and ed. Muhammad Khuwaja. Tehran: Intisharat-i Mawla, 1362. Henceforward it will be cited as Tafsir in this paper. The work has also been translated fully into English by M. Mahmoud Salih in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. See for its bibliographical information above n. 1.

4-See for instance his al-Asfar, 1 / 18, 22, 104; 3 / 513; al-Waridat al-Qalbiyyah fi Ma`rifat al-Rububiyyah (Divine Inspirations Concerning the Divine Knowledge), ed., trans., and annotated by Ahmad Shafi`iha, Tehran: Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1979, pp. 85-86; al-Mazahir al-Ilahiyyah, ed. S. Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, Danishgah-e Mashhad, n.d. pp. 25-26.

5-In al-Ghazali's definition there appears a rather gnostic expression, "yankashif", meaning "unveiled." instead of "yuzhar" (made manifest) which Sadra cites in his Tafsir. See al-Ghazali, *Mishkat al-Anwar* (The Niche of Lights), trans., introd. and annotated by David Buchman. (Pruvo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), p. 19; Sadra, Tafsir, p. 142.

6-Sadra, Tafsir, p. 147.

7-Cf. Ibn Sina's figurative attribution of light to God as "good and the cause that leads to good." Idem. *Fi Ithbat al-Nubuwwat*(Proof of Prophecies), ed. with introd. and notes by M. Marmura, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1991), p.49.

8-Sadra, *al-Mazahir al-Ilahiyyah fi Asrar al-Ulum al-Kamaliyya*, p. 25. This work is to be cited henceforth as *Mazahir*.

9-Ankaravi too composed an Arabic commentary on the light-verse, with the title of *Misbah al-Asrar*, which has already been prepared by the present author for publication in a critical edition together with an English translation. At present the work is in print.

10-Sadra, Tafsir, p. 148.

11-Sadra, Tafsir, p. 162; Cf. Saleh's English Translation, pp. 151-152.

12-Sadra, Tafsir, p. 164; Cf. Saleh's Translation, pp. 153-4. See also for Ibn Sina's own version of the above interpretation, *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat ma'a Sharh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi*, ed. S. Dunya (Egypt: Dar al-Ma`arif, 1957-1958), vol. 2, pp. 364-367.

13-Sadra, *al-Mazahir*, p. 54.

14-Ibid., p. 52.

15-Sadra, Tafsir, p. 162.

16-Ibid., pp. 162-163.

17-Ibid., p. 162.

18-Sadra, Tafsir, p. 160.

19-Ghazali's terminology seems to bear a somewhat resemblance to Sadra's, as he terms them the sensible spirit (*al-ruh al-hassas*) and the imaginal spirit (*al-ruh al-khayali*). Id. *Mishkat*, p. 36.

20-Sadra, Tafsir, p. 160; cf. Saleh's Translation, p. 143.

21-Ibid.

22-One may also render it as "actually dormant and potentially alive."

23-Sadra, *Risalah Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, pp. 290-291. Cf. *Asfar*, vol. 8, p. 245.

24-Sadra, Shawahid, p. 291.

25-Ibid., p. 292.

26-Sadra, Tafsir, pp. 160-161.

27-Ibid., p. 161.

28-Ibid.

29-Ibid.; Saleh's Translation, p. 147.

30-Sadra, Tafsir, p. 162.

31-Ibid.

32-Ibid.

33-Sadra, Shawahid, p. 315.

34-Ibid., p. 313.

35-Sadra, "Risalah Ittihad al-`Aqil wa'l-Ma`qul," Majmu`a-i Rasa'il Falsafi Sadra al-Muta`allihin (The Complete Philosophical Treatises of Sadra al-Din Muhammad al-Shirazi), ed. Hamid Naji Isfahani, (Tehran: Intisharat Hikmat, 1999), p. 74.

36-Ibid.

37-Sadra, Shawahid, p. 292.

38-Sadra, Ittihad, p. 98.

39-Sadra, Ittihad al-`Aqil wa'l-Ma`qul, pp. 74-75.

40-Idem. The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra (Albany: SUNY, 1975), pp. 210-229.

41-See, for insatnce, Mohammad J. Zarean, "Sensory and Imaginal Perception Acording to Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi (Mulla Sadra) 1569-1640," M.A. Thesis (Montreal: McGill University, 1994; Sayyed M. R. Hejazi, "Knowledge by Presence (al-`ilm al-huduri): A Comparative Study Based on the Epistemology of Suhrawardi (d. 587 / 1191) and Mulla Sadra Shirazi (d. 1050 / 1640)," M.A. Thesis (Montreal: McGill University, 1994.); Ali Mesbah, "Human Cognitive Development in the Transcendental Philosophy of Sadr al-Din Shirazi and the Genetic Epistemology of Jean Piaget," M.A. Thesis (Montreal: McGill University, 1994.)

42-Idem. The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra, p. 224.

43-Sadra, Shawahid, p. 292.

44-Sadra, Kitab al-`Arshiyya (Isfahan: Intisharat-i Mahdawi, 1962), p. 68. The quotation has been taken from James W. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 244-245.

45-Idem., op. cit., p. 244, n. 293.

46-Sadra, *Ittihad*, p. 98.

47-Sadra, *Ittihad*, p. 75.

48-Sadra's own expression is: "an-nafs fi wahdatiha kullu'l-quwa." *al-Asfar*, 4 / 1, pp. 51, 120-123. One can compare this with Suhrawardi's statement, "nur isfahbad his jami`u'l-hawass," (the Isfahbad light, i.e. the rational soul is the sense of all the senses." *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, p. 227.

49-Sadra, *al-Asfar*, 4 / 1, pp. 136-136.

50-Sadra, *al-Arshiyah*, p. 68; Morris, *Wisdom*, p. 245.

51 Sadra says: "this is the wisdom of the Creator." *Tafsir*, p. 162.

The Place of Prophecy in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy of Perception

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Abstract

For Mulla Sadra the station (maqam) and way-station (manzil) of every human being corresponds to the quality of his faculties of perception. In the final mashhad of ash-Shawahid ar-rububiyya, "On Prophethoods and Sainthoods", he outlines four way-stations of man which correspond to four levels of perception. In the first three levels, man perceives only through the faculties of sense, imagination (khayal) and estimation (wahm). Due to his lack of perception, he is like a worm, a dumb beast or, at best, an intelligent beast. Only in the fourth way-station is man truly human, for he is able to see beyond the perceptual forms offered by the faculties of perception. To reach beyond such forms, one must, however, perfect the corresponding faculties. The station in which these faculties have been perfected is referred to by Mulla Sadra as "the station of angels." Those who have reached it have reached the limit of human perfection; they are the prophets and saints. For both prophets and saints the faculties of perception have been mended and therefore aid, rather than hinder, "seeing things as they are in themselves" through the intellect. Prophets and saints are able to witness archetypal realities without the intermediaries of study or reflection. Through intensity of hads (metaphysical intuition), the intellect is joined to the heavenly realm (malakut) such that intelligibles are perceived with speed and clarity. All stations and way-stations below this are thus defined by an inability to perceive which results from a paucity of hads. The path of spiritual perfection is thus the path of perfecting the faculties of perception until one is able to see beyond the perceptual forms of sense, imagination and estimation to the intelligibles perceived through the intellect. One who has attained to this, be he a saint or a prophet, perceives the intelligibles in the sensibles and orders the sensibles in accord with the intelligibles.

Prophecy (nubuwwa) is a philosophical problem particular to Islamic philosophy. As there was no claim to prophecy which informed the ancient Greek understanding of the world, the issue was not addressed by Greek philosophy. And as the Christian tradition concentrated its intellectual efforts upon explicating the nature of Christ and the Trinity, Christian theology never developed a detailed explanation of prophecy itself, but instead developed Christology and Trinitarian theology. Therefore, when Islamic philosophers examined this issue, they tread upon virgin philosophical territory. Earlier Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sina and al-Farabi remained close to their peripatetic roots, treating prophecy in the context of a rational understanding of man's cognitive faculties in which the acquired intellect (al-`aql al-mustafad) is infused with the intelligible realities (al-ma`qulat) through connection (ittisal) with the active intellect (al-`aql al-fa`al). They thus explained prophecy as a perfection of the passive intellect.

Though the philosophy of Mulla Sadra employs the same model and many of the same technical terms, he diverges from his philosophical predecessors, presenting philosophy not only as a perfection of perceptual faculties, but as perfection in being (wujud) -- the prophet being the most perfect of creation through which creation is ordered and maintained. He is thus the summit of creation, and only by understanding the prophetic function can man understand himself. As the Islamic philosophical tradition maintains, "Philosophy issues from the niche of prophecy." In Sadrian philosophy, philosophy and prophecy have the same fundamental objective: "to know things as they are in themselves." In the beginning of the Asfar Sadra writes, "Know that philosophy is the perfection of the human soul to the extent of human possibility through perception of the realities of existent things as they are in themselves and judgement of their existence verified through demonstrations, not derived from opinion and tradition." 1 He then relates this to the famous prayer of the prophet Muhammad, "Lord show us things as they are!" and to the prayer of Abraham "Lord give me wisdom!"2

The final end of prophecy and philosophy is thus the same; on the highest level, that of the intellect (al-`aql), the prophet and the philosopher perceive intelligible realities without intermediary. But in ash-Shawahid ar-rububiyya Sadra provides important information on the other dimensions of prophecy which establish a clear break between prophecy and philosophy. The true philosopher participates in the perfection of the intellect, but unlike the prophet his faculty of imagination (khayal) is not perfect. Through the perfection of the intellect and the faculty of imagination the prophet transfers intelligible realities into imaginal representations which reveal the true nature of reality for all human beings. The philosopher, however, has only the perfected intellect by which he witnesses the true nature of reality. So although he can know things as they are in themselves, without the assistance of revelation he will not know how to live in complete conformity with reality. The prophet is thus a vehicle for revelation, whereas the philosopher can only partake of inspiration (ilham).

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Mulla Sadra's most focused treatment of prophecy is found in the last chapter of ash-Shawahid ar-rububiyya fi l-manahij as-sulukiyya (The Lordly Witnesses Concerning the Paths of Wayfaring) entitled, "On Prophethoods and Sainthoods." Commonly referred to simply as the Shawahid, this work is considered by many to be Mulla Sadra's last philosophical work and most mature philosophical expression. It is divided into five large chapters entitled "Loci of Witness" (mashahid (s. mashhad)), which are described in Sabzawari's commentary as "the meeting point of self-disclosure and the podium of manifestation, all of which shapes the heart into a locus of manifestation, a locus of witnessing and a locus for the self-disclosure of the light of being, even in knowledge, for the subject of divine wisdom is the reality of Being ..."3 Each locus is divided into several smaller "Witnesses" (shawahid (s. shahid)),

which serve as indications and clarifications. And each Witness is composed of many "Illuminations" (ishraqat) which are "like the varieties of self-disclosures and the branches of inspirations."<sup>4</sup>

The last locus of Witness is devoted to prophecy. It is divided into two Witnesses and nineteen Illuminations dealing with topics ranging from the degrees of humanity to the affirmation of prophecy, to the secrets of the religious law and its outward (zahir) and inward (batin) aspects. The core of Sadra's theory of prophecy is contained in the first three Illuminations of the first Witness in which he presents prophecy in relation to the stations (maqamat) and ranks (darajat) of humanity. The rest of the chapter can therefore not be understood without a solid grounding in the principles established here and summarized in a "footnote from the throne" with which he closes the third Illumination.

The ten Illuminations of this first Witness elucidate the nature of man and the hierarchy of human states, prophecy reigning supreme. The nine Illuminations of the second Witness are, however, more dispersed, dealing with disparate issues that are connected to the more central themes of the first Witness. This paper will therefore focus upon the first Witness, where the core of Mulla Sadra's philosophy of prophecy is to be found.

The first Illumination, "On the rank of the prophet in comparison with the ranks of man," presents the four way-stations (manazil (s.manzil)) of man. In the first way-station, man is of the rank of sensible things and his ruling property (hukm) is as that of a worm which only acts in accord with what is in its immediate range of sense perception. In the second way-station, man acts in accord with the images preserved after they are absent from the senses. Here his ruling property is as that of dumb beasts who react not only to the senses, but also according to images of sensorial things which they have preserved, but are nonetheless unable to make discernments so that they flee from most animals, whether they pose a danger or not. In the third way-station, man is of the rank of the things perceived by the faculty of apprehension (wahm) which is like a fallen intellect, in that it organizes all the faculties below it and thus functions like the intellect in relation to them, but cannot perceive the intelligibles perceived by the intellect except in so far as they are bound to particularity. The faculty apprehension in animals is thus like the intellect in man. So this is the way-station of brutish humans who are like perfect beasts such as horses, which, unlike dumb beasts, are able to distinguish between that which bears harm and that which does not.

The fourth way-station is that of the human world. At this level man is able to perceive things which are hidden to the senses, to imagination (khayal) and to the faculty of apprehension. This is the world of the spirit (ar-ruh) referred to in the Qur`anic verse, "So I blew into him from my spirit" (15:29). Although the first three way-stations are technically part of the human world, it is only when man arrives at the fourth way-station that he becomes a spiritual being and thus deserves to be called "human" (insan). Regarding the capacities of one who has achieved this, Sadra writes:

In this world the doors of the heavenly realm are opened to him and he witnesses the spirits disengaged (mujarrad) from the covering of these receptacles . . . [i.e.,] the sheer realities disengaged from the apparel of clothing and the covering of images which are the various forms which the companions of the nocturnal ascensions among the prominent masters of the [spiritual] paths have witnessed.<sup>5</sup>

Sadra believes that this is the rank to which Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras, Empedocles and Aristotle attained. Whereas the coming and going of the sensory world, which is more immediate for those in the first three way-stations, is akin to walking on the earth, the inmost reality (sirr) of the human world is as

the likeness of walking on water. Beyond this there is a level where the likeness is as that of walking on air; this is the world of angels.

Mulla Sadra thus sees three worlds -- sensory, human and angelic -- which comprise all the degrees, stations and way-stations of man and correspond to the faculties of sense, imagination and intellect. Between these worlds lies the world of the Satans which corresponds to the things perceived by the faculty of apprehension (al- mawhumat). This, however, is not a world in the same sense as the others, because the faculty of apprehension to which it corresponds is dependent upon imagination and the intellect and thus has no reality apart from them. As Sadra writes:

. . . the faculty of apprehension has no world outside of the three worlds because what is perceived by the faculty of apprehension is not other than what is perceived by the imagination and the intellect. It is only something going back and forth between the two with no established position. So it is the same for the ruling property of its world. The inclination of the Satans, their progeny and their band is towards perdition and passion -- towards the fire of evils.<sup>6</sup>

The defining characteristic of every human being is thus the quality of his perception, and it is only in the last world, that of the intellect, that one perceives well enough to be truly guided and is thus truly human. As Sadra writes:

All of these worlds are way-stations of guidance, but the guidance which is related to God is found in the last world which is the world of spirits . . . So the station (maqam) and the way-station, both high and low, of every human is in accord with his perception . . . so man is between being a worm, a beast, a horse or a Satan. Then, when he passes beyond that, he becomes an angel.<sup>7</sup>

Among the angels there are stations and ranks. The first three of which are: 1) earthly angels, 2) heavenly angels and 3) those who are brought near (al-muqarrab), whose attachment to heaven and earth has been broken and who are "devoted to beholding the lordly presence and are perpetually in the abode of subsistence (baqa`)" while all else progresses towards annihilation (fana`).<sup>8</sup> According to Mulla Sadra, this is one of the meanings of the Qur`anic assertion "All that dwells upon the earth is perishing yet still abides the face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid" (55:26).

Here Mulla Sadra employs the well known Sufi stations of annihilation and subsistence, which for many Sufis constitute the final two stations of the spiritual path. But rather than seeing them as separate stations of spiritual perception, Sadra represents them as two aspects of the same station. And rather than making subsistence the highest station, he sees a station which surpasses both annihilation and subsistence. This is the station of the elect among the angels. As Sadra writes, "From the rank of the angels one ascends to the rank of the lovers among them who are intent upon being in the proximity of His Honorableness, devoted to beholding the beauty of the Divine Presence, glorifying the face [of God] and calling Him holy without abating."<sup>9</sup> "This is the utmost limit of human perfection which is the station shared by the prophets and saints."<sup>10</sup>

As the stations and way-stations of man correspond to his capacity for perception, to reach the limit of human perfection is to have mended the three faculties of perception: intellect, imagination, and sense. Every perceptual form (sura idrakiyya) is a kind of existence (wujud), and for each existence there is a faculty, a preparedness (isti`dad) and a perfection. There is therefore a corresponding perfection for the faculties of perception. The perfection of the human intellect is to witness the angels who have been drawn near (to God). Rather than using imagination to discuss the next level, Sadra speaks of the form-

bearing faculty (al-musawwar), which is the imagination considered in its function of preserving perceived forms. The perfection of the form bearing faculty is witnessing the archetypal forms (al-ashbah al-mithaliyya) and encountering things unseen. On the lowest level, that of the senses, perfection demands intensity of influence over bodily matter, the submission of the base faculties to the sense faculty and the compliance of the bodily components with the sense faculty. The perfection of these three faculties of perception is the mark of prophecy;

Whoever achieves the level of bringing together the perfection of these three configurations has the rank of the divine vicegerent and is worthy of being the head of mankind. So he is a messenger of God to whom revelation comes and who is supported by miracles as an aid against enemies and he has three endowments.<sup>11</sup>

These three endowments (khasa'is) correspond to the three levels of perception. The first endowment is that the soul be pure in its capacity for consideration and have a strong similarity to the "Great Spirit" such that it can connect to it without great effort or reflection (tafakkur). This is the best part of prophecy because it is that which leads to "knowledge of things as they are in themselves." <sup>12</sup> In a poetic commentary on the Qur'anic verse of light <sup>13</sup> which is borrowed from Ibn Sina's Isharat, Sadra says of this endowment, "The oil of his passive intellect is on the verge of being illumined due to the extent of his preparedness for the light of the active intellect . . . even though the fire of human instruction does not touch him with the flint of reflection and the fire-iron of frequent examination."<sup>14</sup> For Sadra, as for Ibn Sina, this capacity corresponds to "metaphysical intuition" (hads). Following in Ibn Sina's footsteps, Sadra notes that the prophet is marked by speed and intensity of hads, "From great intensity of hads in both quantity and quality there is speed of union with the world of the heavenly realm. In a short span of time, he perceives most of the intelligibles through hads in accordance with it with a noble luminous perceiving which is called his holy soul."<sup>15</sup> All other stations and way-stations of humanity are various degrees of the diminution and degeneration which result from a lack of hads.

One who transcends the lower degrees of hads and reaches the extremity of perfection attains to the holy soul and realizes the last of the intelligibles quickly, without the intermediary of instruction. He thus perceives the hidden things which most others do not. This is the level of both prophets and saints.

Whereas saints share with prophets in the perfection of the intellect, they do not share in the perfection of imagination. Through the perfection of this latter faculty, prophets witness the unseen Platonic forms and hear audible voices from the intermediary of the angels. The visions are of angels carrying the revelation, while the auditions are the commands of God. Through this second endowment, the prophets experience in wakefulness the world of the unseen which others encounter only in sleep.

Though Sadra does not specify, it appears that both prophets and saints can attain to perfection of the sense faculty. For it is through this faculty that both prophetic miracles (mu`jizat) and saintly miracles (karamat) are performed. When one possesses this endowment, the motive faculties of the soul are strengthened such that they have power over the materia prima (hayula) of the world. They can thus eliminate a particular form and redress matter in another form. For Sadra the power which the saint and the prophet have over the whole of the material world is akin to the power which each soul has over its own world. Just as every individual has some influence over the world, some souls have complete influence over principles and thereby become like the soul of the world itself.<sup>16</sup> This is a defining characteristic of prophecy, because the prophet gathers together the three "configurations" of the intellect, the spirit and the sense within himself. Sadra concludes the third Illumination with a "Footnote



from the throne" which elucidates the nature of this conjunction and serves as a summary of his understanding of prophecy.

The substance of prophecy is as if it were the gathering place for the lights of the intellect, the soul and sensory perception. So through his spirit and his intellect, he is an angel among those who are brought near, and through the visions of his soul and his mind he is a heavenly body raised beyond the blemishes of animals and a tablet preserved from the touch of Satans. Through his senses, he is an angel, a heavenly body and a king. For he is that which gathers together the three configurations in their perfection. His spirit is from the highest empyreal realm, his soul is from the intermediate empyreal realm and his nature is from the lowest empyreal realm. He is thus the vicegerent of God and the locus in which are gathered the manifest things of the divine names and the perfect words of God.<sup>17</sup>

In light of this, each endowment should be seen as the gathering together and actualisation of all the potentialities of its corresponding faculty and thus the perfection of that faculty. Through the perfection of each faculty of perception the prophet possesses all that is in the world which pertains to it. Through his spirit he possesses all that is perceived by the intellect, through his soul he possesses all that is in the world of imagination and through his senses he possesses all the sensibles of the sensible world. This concurrence is based upon the unity (ittihad) of the perceiver and the perceived which is central to Sadra's epistemology. As Sadra writes in *Kitab al-masha'ir*, "Every perceptual form, be it intelligible or sensible, is the unifying of being with the being of the one who perceives it ... every perceptual form -- let it be intellectual [form] -- its being in its intelligible self and its being for the one who intellects it is one thing with no variation." <sup>18</sup> The perfection of the faculties of perception is thus not simply intellectual perfection, but more importantly an ontological perfection; for "knowledge is nothing but the presence of being without any cover."<sup>19</sup> The prophet is more present than others and through his being present is able to make others more present to the reality of Being in itself and in its self-disclosure in contingent beings. Through the perfection and strength of his imaginal faculty he brings imaginables which are pure reflections of intelligibles to those who do not have a perfected intellect and are thus unable to witness intelligible realities. Through the religious law he gives human beings a way to actualise the potentiality of the soul by conducting themselves in a way which conforms to intelligible realities.

To discuss the relation between the worlds and their corresponding faculties of perception Sadra uses Qur'anic symbolism, portraying the soul as the preserved tablets (*lawh*) and the intellect as the divine pen (*al-qalam al-ilahi*). Through them we can understand the relation of engendered existents with their archetypal realities. Engendered existents are the things of this world which come from "exalted tablets" upon which they have been preserved. Their forms exist in the world of the "wise invocation" and they are "written by the First Real (*al-haqq al-awwal*) upon the tablets of heavenly souls."<sup>20</sup> As such, they do not follow immediately from the first principle, but come after "hidden likenesses" (*muthulun ghaybiyyatun*) which are for Mulla Sadra the Platonic forms.

This provides a metaphysical hierarchy for all existent things which is crucial to Sadra's epistemology. For man does not know through the mind, but rather through the soul and the spirit. The latter of which is equivalent to the intellect. The connection between the two is necessarily present in every experience of perception. But most humans are impaired such that they are not fully aware of this and thus do not directly participate in the soul and the spirit. For Mulla Sadra, the perception of any manifest thing through the senses is in fact the perception of the archetype which it reflects in the soul. One who has ascended to a higher station perceives all things in their principial reality through the soul and the spirit. To realize this mode of knowing is for the soul to ascend. As Sadra writes:

Ascension to it is due to the union of our souls with the exalted substances of the soul which comprise the temporal particulars from the universals as a reflection of people's perception. So they have universal controlling agents from which the particulars are configured such that they pour from the intellectual principles upon the tablets of exalted souls as modelled forms by which these souls are affected from the direction of their faculties of imagination.<sup>21</sup>

Through such union, the vision and admonition of the soul becomes sound and one encounters the things of the hidden world. This comes about in two ways. In the first, the lower sensations do not distract the soul from the higher perceptions and its imagination is strong such that it witnesses both the manifest and the non-manifest. Among such realizations are both those which are pure revelation and those weaker and thus more akin to visions seen in dreams. The latter is the realization achieved by those whose faculties are weaker but are nonetheless able to achieve union due to their capacity for study and the relative weakness of their impediments.

For Sadra, the human soul is by nature disposed towards union with intelligible realities. As he writes at the opening of the sixth Illumination, "On the difference between revelation, inspiration and instruction:"

. . . the human soul is prepared to receive the disclosure of the reality of all things -- both their necessities and their possibles. The soul is only veiled from them through external causes . . . like the obstructing barrier between the soul and the preserved tablet which is the substance engraved with all that God has decreed until the day of resurrection.<sup>22</sup>

Thus the prophet who, by definition, gathers together the perfection of the three worlds within himself and is able to perceive the things of all worlds as they are in themselves, is the true human, and all other states of humanity are a reflection of his state. The process of moving towards the fulfilment of the human state is thus one of unveiling or of disengaging; rather than of attaining attributes which improve one's state or dropping what is added. The veils which hide the true state are removed as the perceiver disengages from wujud to wujud and moves from world to world until the soul becomes intellect, intellector and intellected.<sup>23</sup> When the veils between the soul and the intellect vanish, "the realities of the sciences from the mirrors of the tablet of the intellect are disclosed to the tablet of the soul."<sup>24</sup> This occurs either through effort and reflection or through grace. The first constitutes study and instruction, what Sadra calls "the path of obtaining (iktisab)," while the latter is the source of both revelation and inspiration. In the *Shawahid* Sadra emphasizes the common source and goal of both paths and makes little comparative evaluation of the modes of instruction and grace, but in other writings, it is clear that he believes true knowledge ultimately comes through grace. In a passage on *nubuwwa* from *Mafatih al-ghayb*, he details the method by which one can arrive at the reality "whose essence is the simplicity of reality," through the use of independent reflections, which is the central tool on the path of instruction and obtaining, but remarks that such realization "is only the seed of witnessing -- it does not bring connection (wusul) to the root of roots."<sup>25</sup> So although he acknowledges both forms of realization, he gives preference to grace in which "the wind of divine blessings blows so that the veils are removed and the coverings lifted from the eye of his vision and some of what is established in the highest tablet is disclosed . . ."<sup>26</sup>

Such "blowing of the spirit," as Sadra calls it, is of two kinds: inspiration which pertains to saints and revelation which pertains to prophets. In both forms "It is to witness the angel which inspires realities

from God, and this angel is the active intellect which inspires the sciences in the passive intellect . . ."27 Sometimes it occurs through the dissolution of veils and sometimes it is like a sudden flash of lightening.

The path of inspiration corresponds to that of obtaining in its receptive nature, its locus and the manner in which it pours forth, but is separate in the manner of removing veils and in the direction it takes. Revelation on the other hand, is not separate from inspiration in anything except "the intensity of clarity and luminosity and witnessing the angel who informs the intellectual forms."28 Ultimately, all three are modes of the same process, " For the sciences . . . do not come to us except by mediation of the angels of the intellect -- which are the active intellects . . ." 29 The importance of this common source is that it provides an epistemology which allows legitimacy to all forms of intellectual and religious sciences or, as Sadra calls them, the "instructional sciences" (al-`ulum at-ta`limiyya) and the "presential sciences" (al-`ulum al-laduniyya).

A central feature of this discussion is Sadra's belief that perception (idrak) is equivalent to unity (ittihad) such that attainment to any type of knowledge constitutes an ontological transformation in which both the perceiver and the perceived ascend the path by which the creation of the worlds descended.

The world of the intellect is equivalent to the divine pen, while that of the soul contains both the preserved tablet (al-lawh al-mahfuz) and the tablets of erasing and affirming on which are written God's judgements. All existent things come from what the divine pen writes upon these tablets. Every existent thing thus results from the imprint of the intellect upon the tablet of the soul from which arise the material forms below. As Sadra writes, "existence is first intellectual, then of the soul, then sensory and then material."30

Human knowledge works to ascend the path by which existence descends. When one perceives a bodily existent, it registers in the senses, then in the faculty of imagination, and if he is at a higher level of knowledge, its principal intelligible reality will be perceived by the intellect. So that the ascent of knowledge is the inverse reflection of the descent of being and, as Sadra asserts, " . . . God is the origin and the aim." As one climbs the ladder of knowledge, perceiving higher realities, he also increases in being. This occurs because all existence is a face of the Divine, who is Absolute Being. The perception of any being thus constitutes a degree of unity with God; for "human perception of a form of the world at any level is his unity with it and his perception of its being (wujud)."31 The one who has ascended to the highest level, the intellect, is thus united with all things in principle; for he has reached the "lordly station" of which Sadra writes:

When the human has reached this lordly station, he ascends to what is in the divine decree and the lordly power and he witnesses the pen and the tablet as the prophet reported of himself that he travelled by night until he heard the scratching of pens -- as God says -- "in order to show him by our signs that He is the Hearing the Seeing" (17:1).32

Sadra's sees two levels of pens and two levels of tablets. The highest pen writes the realities of intellectual sciences upon the preserved tablet in an inscription which cannot change, while the lower pens write the divine judgements upon the tablets which are susceptible to abrogation. Nonetheless, these lower tablets have an exalted status, for it is from them that the religious laws and the books descend upon the messengers.33 Sadra makes his most definitive statement regarding the relation of these levels when he writes, "The relation of the highest pen to these pens is like the relation of our intellectual faculty to our imaginal and sensorial sensations and the relation of the preserved tablet to

these tablets is like the relation of the storehouse of our universal intelligibles to the storehouse of particular sensations."<sup>34</sup>

This relation is for Sadra the key to understanding the religious law; for all that is written upon the tablets and pages which contain the law is also written by the First Real with the highest pen. The religious law is thus a reflection of the principles in the intellect by which the world below, which is itself modeled upon the intellect, is ordered in accord with the intellect. The religious law is thus the means by which the continuity of the principle is preserved in the world of sensible realities. It is a metaphysical necessity because nothing, no matter how base, is completely removed from the worlds above which determine its reality. Or, as Sadra affirms, everything has a face, particular to it, which is turned to God.<sup>35</sup> In light of this, Sadra views obedience to the religious law as a means whereby one maintains the proper continuity of both his own nature and the world. For one who is completely obedient, "his act is the act of the Real, absent of any motive in his act other than the volition of the Real, and his volition is consumed in His volition."<sup>36</sup> To live in accord with the religious law is thus to live in accord with one's human nature, the pureness of which is the prophetic nature. It is to live in accord with the judgements written by the lower pens upon the lower tablets and thus to live in accord with the divine decree which is written by the highest pen upon the preserved tablet, for "the highest pen inscribes upon the preserved tablet the form of everything which flows from these pens -- both erasing and preserving."<sup>37</sup> The religious law is thus a mercy which works to rectify the human nature of he who is obedient to it, by making his being conform to the intelligible realities from which it flows.

As it is designed to conform to the human nature which is open to both the sensible and the intelligible - the outward and the inward, the religious law is also two. This dual nature of the religious law is its defining characteristic.

It is like a human individual who has an outward [nature] which is well known and an inward [nature] which is covered -- and he has a first which is sensible and a last which is intelligible. This latter is his spirit and his meaning. His outward abides through his inward and his inward is personified by his outward. His first is a sustaining shell and his last is a pure engendered core.<sup>38</sup>

The religious law is therefore less efficacious if one fails to approach both its outward and inward, both its letter and spirit. If one practices its rights and observes its stipulations seeking something for oneself, he is without the intention which conforms to the inward. Thus the religious law does not help him ascend, for he is using it to serve his own desires. For Mulla Sadra, such people are entrenched in " . . . the ephemeral sensible matters by which those who are ossified in form and separated from the spirit of certainty are deceived." On the other hand, one who is near to the sciences of realities, which pertain to the inward, but fails to observe the judgements which pertain to the outward, attains nothing. As Sadra writes:

When he wants to realize his disengaged form prematurely, before it is established, and speak wisdom before its maturity and completion without its ripening, there is no doubt that his reality (haqq) will come to nothing and his knowledge will disintegrate.<sup>39</sup>

The prophet is the vicegerent, who "is sitting on the common border between the world of intelligibles and the world of sensibles."<sup>40</sup> This two-fold nature of vicegerency is based upon the two-fold nature of the heart which has two doors: one opened to the world of the preserved tablet and the other opened to the cognitive and motive faculties. In so far as it is opened to the preserved tablet, the heart is oriented towards the intellect and in so far as it is opened to the lower faculties, it is oriented towards

the passions. The human being is thus the unique creature in whom both the intellect and the passions are mounted, while in the angels there is only intellect and in the animals there is only passion. This is why he is the one for whom there is a religious law which orders the passions in accord with the intellect.

Based upon this two-fold disposition, Mulla Sadra recognizes three types of human beings. The lowest are those who are devoted to the passions and thus "detained in the prison of the world, bound in its chains and manacles . . . to whom the door of the empyreal realm is closed and the doors of hell-fire are opened, save he who repents and reforms himself."<sup>41</sup> Juxtaposed to them are "those who are immersed in gnosis (*'irfan*) of God and his malakut, trembling with the invocation of God . . . these are the elect among the friends of God to whom the doors of the empyreal realm are open."<sup>42</sup> At the highest level is the prophet who is "sometimes with God through love for Him and sometimes with mankind through mercy and compassion for them."<sup>43</sup> The prophet is fully open to both the passionate and intellectual dimensions of his human nature and thus brings them together. Through his very being, he orders the sensibles in accord with the intelligibles from which they derive. Thus establishing the crucial link by which the lower is made to conform with the higher, and ultimately with the principle itself.

The heart of the prophet also has two doors, an inner door opened to the divine tablet by which he receives knowledge and a door opened towards the senses by which he is able to understand the human condition and thus guide men to good and repel them from evil.<sup>44</sup>

This is the highest degree of humanity,

This human has perfected his very essence . . . Through what God pours upon his heart and his disengaged intellect, he is a friend among the friends of God and a divine sage and through what pours from Him upon his faculty of imagination and storing forms, he is a messenger and a warner of what will be and a reporter of what was and what exists now.<sup>45</sup>

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Mulla Sadra's theory of prophecy borrows extensively from the psychological and "naturalized" understanding of prophecy developed in Ibn Sina's writings. But rather than maintaining Ibn Sina's more cognitive psychological explanation, Sadra portrays the psychological and intellectual dimension of prophecy as part of a greater ontological function. The prophet's ability to perceive the perceptual forms of intelligible, imaginal and sensible realities indicates both a perfected cognitive ability and a perfected being, for he can perceive all things as they are in themselves and thus is as he is in himself, the being of the perceived and the being of the perceiver being the same being with no variation. As the prophet is perfect in being, he is the locus through which it is kept in conformity with that source and through which it returns to its final end. Without prophecy there would be no intermediary by which the lower realms are maintained in continuity with the highest principle -- "the root of roots." There would thus be no creation.

The function of the prophet as messenger, warner and guide is the means by which God orders the creation. His position as vicegerent is not simply a representative function but a necessary ontological reality. It is the totality of which all other humans are a part and the source from which all the stations and way-stations of humanity flow forth. All humans thus partake of it to some degree, otherwise they would not be human. As one ascends the stations and way-stations, he becomes his true self and

partakes of the human reality to a greater degree. Not only does he perceive more, he is more. This is the path of philosophy. The one who has attained to the higher way-stations is the philosopher-saint. Like the prophet, he sees things "as they are in themselves," but unlike the prophet he does not see intelligible realities in wakefulness as in sleep and his imaginative faculty does not present intelligibles in a form which is accessible to many. With each step that he ascends he becomes more, for he perceives the higher intelligible realities and becomes fully present to them, for the being which is perceived and the being of the perceiver are one and the same.

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#### Notes:

1-Sadr ad-Din Shirazi. *al-Hikma al-muta`alliyya fi l-asfar al-arba`a al-`aqliyya*, vol. 1, part 1, Tehran 1387/1958, p.20.

2-Ibid. p.21.

3-Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzawari. *Ta`liqat bar ash-Shawahid ar-rububiyya*. Ed. Jalal ad-Din Ashtiyani. Tehran, 1981, p.384.

4-Ibid. p.384

5-Sadr ad-Din Shirazi. *ash-Shawahid ar-rububiyya fi l-manahij as-sulukiyya* Ed. Jalal ad-Din Ashtiyani. Tehran, 1981, p.339.

6-Ibid. p.339.

7-Ibid. p.339-40.

8-Ibid. p.340.

9-Ibid. p.340.

10-Ibid. p.340.

11-Ibid. p.341.

12-Ibid. p.344.

13-"God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The semblance of His light is that of a niche in which is a flame, the flame within a glass, the glass a glittering star as it were, lit with the oil of a blessed tree, the olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil appears to light up even though fire touches it not, light upon light. God guides to His light whom He will . . ." (24:35).

14-ash-Shawahid ar-rububiyya,. p.341.

15-Ibid. p.342.

16-Ibid. p.343.

17-Ibid. p.344.

18-Sadr ad-Din Shirazi, Kitab al-masha`ir, Ed. Henri Corbin, Tehran, 1982, p.51.

19-Ibid. p.50.

20-ash-Shawahid ar-rububiyya,. p.346.

21-Ibid. p.347.

22-Ibid. pp.347-8.

23-al-Asfar, v.3, p.362.

24-ash-Shawahid ar-rububiyya,. p.347.

25-Sadr ad-Din Shirazi. Mafatih al-Ghayb. Ed. Muhammad Khajavi. Tehran, 1984. pp. 483-4.

26-Shawahid. p.348.

27-Ibid. p.349.

28-Ibid. p.349.

29-Ibid. p.349.

30-Ibid. p.351.

31-Ibid. p.351.

32-Ibid. p.351.

33-Ibid. p.351.

34-Ibid. p.353.

35-Ibid. p.352.

36-Ibid. p.352.

37-Ibid. p.353.

38-Ibid. p.370.

39-Ibid. p.372.

40-Ibid. p.355.

41-Ibid. p.355.

42-Ibid. p.355.

43-Ibid. p.355

44-Ibid. p.356.

45-Ibid. p.356.

Mullâ Sadrâ on Imaginative Perception and Imaginal World

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Abstract

The question of perception constitutes one of the most complex and important sections of Islamic philosophical psychology particularly the imaginative perception (al-idrâk al-khayâlî). In this paper I will discuss the nature of imaginative perception, its various functions, and 'imaginal world' (âlam al-mithâl) from the point of Mullâ Sadrâ. It will include the issues concerning how the imaginative perception occurs, the organ of imaginative perception whether it is a part of the material physical brain or it is an immaterial psychic faculty, and its rule after the death of the corporeal body. It will also discuss in brief the macrocosmic Imaginal World, its nature, and its connection with the microcosmic human imagination according to Sadrâ. These issues addressed and demonstrated by him will be compared in brief with those of his predecessors from both Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools of Thought, and some conclusions will be drawn at the end.

A-1: Definition of Perception



The word idrâk (perception) in the early medieval Islamic dictionary of al-Jurjânî 1 has been given three definitions: (1) "thorough encompassing of the thing"; (2) "acquisition of a form for the rational soul"; (3) "conception of the reality of the thing alone without any negative or affirmative judgment on it". The term 'ilm (knowledge) is also defined by him as the "acquisition of the form of the thing in the intellect" which is one of the definitions of idrâk.

Mullâ Sadrâ defines idrâk as "meeting (liqâ') and arriving (wusûl)" and explains "when the intellectual faculty reaches the quiddity of the intelligible and attains it, this would be the perception for it from this aspect". This is the terminological meaning in philosophy according to him. He says further: "The real 'perception and meeting' is nothing but this very 'meeting', that is, the perception of knowledge".<sup>2</sup> In another place he says: "the knowledge and perception in the same sense are applied to various categories of perceptions such as, intellection, imagination, and sensory perception."<sup>3</sup> So, perception and knowledge according to Mullâ Sadrâ imply the same notion, which more or less agrees with the third definition of al-Jurjânî.

## 2. The inner faculties of the soul and the levels of Perception

According to Mullâ Sadrâ the human soul has five inner faculties. These faculties do not differ much from what Muslim Peripatetics enumerate and describe their functions following Aristotle except for the imaginative faculty. They are sensus communis, representative, estimative (wahm), retentive, and imaginative. The sensus communis is the inner sense upon which all the perceptions of the external senses converge. Imaginative faculty possesses three different functions: (1) as representative or passive capacity which is merely a storage in which the images of the external world are preserved and are projected onto the sensus communis as on a mirror. (2) As active capacity when it serves the estimative (wahm) faculty which in man creates partial images and also compels him to make judgments contrary to the demands of his intellect (nous). At this level the imagination can produce only what is imaginary, fantastic, or even absurd and grotesque images. (3) As active capacity when it serves the intellect (nous), then it is called mufakkirah meaning cogitative or meditative faculty. It is the means of entry into the Imaginal World (mundus imaginalis<sup>0</sup> about which we will discuss later. The images proceeding from the perception of both the later capacities of imagination are also projected on to the sensus communis.<sup>4</sup> In the following discussion we will look into the three capacities of the imaginative faculty and the nature of imaginative perception according to each capacity.

According to Mullâ Sadrâ there are four levels of perception: sensory, imaginative, estimative and intellective. Sensory perception is the perception of a thing existent in the matter, present before the perceiver with a form particular to it, sensible with 9the categories) such as "where", "when", "position", "quality", "quantity", etc. Imaginative consists of the perception of that thing with forms. The faculty of imagination imagines that object which has been perceived in sensory and imaginative states, and in the presence and absence of that object. Estimative constitutes the perception of partial notion in sensory form, and the intellective consists of the perception of universal notion, for instance universal love. He reduces four levels of perception to three: (1) sensory; (2) imaginative and estimative; (3) intellective, because both imagination and estimation pertain to the domain between the senses and intellect. The highest level of perception according to him is the intellective perception.<sup>5</sup>

## 3. The nature of the organ of imaginative perception

The faculty of imagination is a power of the soul that brings together sensory things, which have matter, shapes and forms, and intellectual matters which have no shape or form. In other words, it is cognitive

imagination, or intelligence with shapes, forms and extension but it is immaterial. Mullâ Sadrâ defines it as "an inner power of the soul which is other than the intelligence; it is other than the external senses; it has other world which is neither the pure world of intelligence, nor the pure material world of nature and motion (pertaining to the physical body). The place of its disposal is the whole body, its domain is the first part of the last cavity (of the brain), its instrument is the pneuma of the brain."<sup>6</sup> In other words, imagination is a level of being and consciousness of the soul that is situated between spirit or intelligence and body. It perceives ideas in sensory forms. This level of the soul has five inner senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. This psychic faculty of imagination, according to Sadrâ, is immaterial and he gives a number of demonstrations to prove its immateriality, some of which are as follows:

The forms which people see in dreams and what mentally disturbed witness, or the imaginative people imagine are existential affairs. It is impossible that their locus would be the brain which is a part of the material body. For the body possesses physical positions (such as place, time, quantity, etc.), whereas those forms do not possess the physical positions. Besides, the intuitive intellects have proved the impossibility of the imprint of something big in something small, such as the brain.<sup>7</sup> But they do exist however, and their domain is the soul, and they subsist by it by a different kind of subsisting than the physical one. (2)

If the imaginative forms were imprinted in the pneuma of the brain or in any sensory organ, as is the common view among the philosophers, then either every form would occupy a specific place which cannot be the place of the other forms, which is impossible because that would require a lot of space. But the inquiry shows that one man can memorize volumes (of works), witness multiple climes, cities and their wonders, and the forms of those things remain in his memory and imagination. It is known by intuition that the pneuma of the brain cannot fulfill that (function). Besides, if all those forms were to be imprinted in one locus then the imagination would be like the tablet in which the sketches of some over the other are inscribed without a thing being distinguished from them. But the imagination is not like that. It witnesses them as distinct from each other without any adulteration. So we learnt that the forms are not imprinted in the pneuma of the brain but they subsist by the soul in its imaginative power which has to be non-material.

If the imaginative faculty was a material body, then inevitably it had material extension. In which case if one imagines an extension and the imagination actualizes in it that extension, then it would entail the integration of two extensions in one and the same matter, which is impossible.

If the imaginative faculty was a material body then it would wear and tear, increase and decrease due to the presence or absence of nourishment, as is the case with the rest of the parts of the material body. In which case the imaginative forms would also go through the same process like its substratum-the faculty of imagination.<sup>8</sup>

In sum, the imaginative faculty according to Mullâ Sadrâ is a substance separate and independent from the matter of the physical body (jawhar mujarrad 'an mâddat al-badan); it subsists by itself by the essence of its source which is intellectual. Its connection to the brain is not a connection whereby it inheres in it. So the imaginative forms (suwar khayâlîyah) are not imprinted in some part of the brain. Nor are they stamped or impressed (muntabî'an) upon the imagination. Their peculiarity is "that they arise from the soul, they have no need of a material substrate to inhere. They require only an active subject (fâ'il) which produces them. They subsist in the imaginative power of the soul as the form of a work of art subsists in the artist, or a thing subsists through its author (active agent, fâ'il), not as an accident subsists in the substrate which is its passive receptacle (qâbil). This would not be the case if the agent productive of the forms were a psychic faculty linked to the physical matter and under the necessity to produce them through the instrument or an appropriate material receptacle. But if it is an immaterial faculty (mujarrad) then this faculty produces forms and images neither by means of an

instrument, nor by a receptacle pertaining to this material world. If the agent has no need of something in order to be, it is equally independent of that thing in respect of causing to be.<sup>9</sup>

B: The function of the imaginative faculty

1. The passive function of being the storage of imaginative percepts

Perception or knowledge of the external world, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, starts from the sensation and partial (not universal) representation (*tasawurrât*) of the external things by the physical senses which he calls "the spies who bring information from different directions and make them ready for the rest of the perceptions."<sup>10</sup> The traces of the sensory objects or sensibles consist of intelligibles in potency. They are preserved in the storage of the faculty of imagination and are the primary intelligibles which are common to all mankind. They constitute the primary notions, experiential, transmitted and accepted data,<sup>11</sup> etc.

This characteristic of perception by Mullâ Sadrâ does not differ much from the Avicennian and Suhrawardî's schools of thought. But Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine completely differs from both schools as to how the perception takes place. He relates various theories of perception from the earlier philosophers which he refutes by demonstration. Some of them are as follows:

The theory of "Abstraction" propounded by Avicenna. According to him: "every perception, be it sensory, imaginative, estimative or intellectual takes place by the abstraction of form from the matter. But it is in degrees." First of all the external sense organ abstracts the form from the matter. Then the faculty of imagination abstracts it further, so, that form is in it now without the matter and in the absence of the matter. Then the estimative faculty further abstracts it and derives the meaning which is not sensible but intelligible. But this meaning is particular and not universal, which is further abstracted by the intellectual power as universal that remains in the presence of the intellectual power.<sup>12</sup> The universal forms are as secondary perfection for man and do not bring any change in the essential substance of man. In other words, according to Avicenna each of the five senses perceives and abstracts the forms of the external existents independently and according to their own capacity. The perceptual images then imprinted in, or supervened upon the pneuma of the faculty of imagination which is material and its locus is the first part of the last ventricle of the brain.<sup>13</sup>

The theory of the perception of vision. According to Mullâ Sadrâ there are three different views regarding how the vision takes place. They are as follows:

First view: The physicists and Muslim philosophers who followed Aristotle in this theory especially Avicenna (d. 429/1037) have held that it is caused by the imprint of the form from the visible object in a part of the crystalline membrane (*al-rutûbat al-jalidiyyah*) of the eye which resembles a tiny hail-stone. It is like a mirror. When it faces an object which has color and light, an image of its form is imprinted in it. It is not that something separates from the colored-object and reaches the eye for the vision to take place. The conditions for the vision are: being face to face with the object of sight, and the mediacy of the transparent air.<sup>14</sup> The advocate of this theory cannot explain how the visual perception of a big thing takes place in the crystalline membrane of the eye except that a small form of it is imprinted in it, and it occurs through the intermediary of the pneuma flowing in the two nerves leading to the organ of sight just as one can see the form of one's face in a mirror smaller than one's face.

Second view: mathematicians particularly Ibn Haytham (d. 430/1038) have held that the vision takes place by the emission of rays from the eye. These rays are cone-shaped, their apex is in the eye, and their base is in the object of sight.<sup>15</sup>

Third view of vision: is that which was advocated by Shihâb al-Dîn al-Suhrawardî, the master of the Illuminationist philosophy (d. 587/1191). According to him the vision takes place neither through the emission of rays nor through the imprint of image in the eye. Rather, it takes place when the illuminated object is face to face with the organ of sight in which there is vitreous humor. If these conditions are found together no obstacle, then there occurs to the soul the knowledge of illuminative presence or awareness of the object of sight. That is to say, the soul when related to the object, grasps the reality of the object in a non-predicative way which is not based on concept and then later on assent; it perceives it as clear external vision. This view rejects the necessity of the transparent medium. Besides, Suhrawardî advocated that the imaginative faculty was material, hence the imaginative forms, which could be of great magnitude could not inhere in it. So where could they be treasured? His solution was that they were in the objective macrocosmic world of Image ('âlam al-mithâl) which is the intermediate world or isthmus (barzakh) between the physical material world and the world of Intelligence.<sup>16</sup>

Mullâ Sadrâ critiqued all these views of perception and advocated his own view which is as follows: the perception of the external physical world, for instance the vision, consists in the creation of an immaterial form resembling the external object by the soul through an illumination coming from the Angel who is the Active Intelligence, provided the organ of vision is sound and all the necessary conditions are realized. This form becomes present to the perceptive soul, the soul perceives it by the knowledge of illuminative presence, which means through its awareness of it. It subsists by it as the subsistence of an act with its actor, and not as something received is related to the recipient.<sup>17</sup> This form created by the soul does not remain in its presence as the secondary perfection, but the soul becomes that form, its status changes from not knowing to knowing. Hence, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, knowledge is being. So the subject of perception is the soul, the act of perception is by the soul, and the object of perception is form created by the soul by the external stimulus in the case of external knowledge.

Besides, in the act of perception there is the unification of the knower and the known (ittihâd al-'âqil wa al-ma'qûl). That is to say, the perceiver becomes completely unified and identified with the object of its perception so much so that there remains no differentiation between the two. This is knowing not from the outside as an object of knowledge but from the inside by the soul's becoming it. Therefore, the status of being and the status of knowledge is the same for the knowledge to be possible. This, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, applies to all kinds of perception including the imaginative perception.<sup>18</sup>

Further, criticizing the Peripatetic view of perception, he states: They hold that the faculty of sense separates the form of sensible exactly as it is from its matter together with its accidents. Then the faculty of imagination separates it further from the matter. This is the transference of imprints or impressions from sensible to imaginative and from imaginative to intelligible, which according to him, is impossible. Rather it is the soul which moves from one level of its being to another, from sensible to imaginative and from imaginative to intellectual and perceives the object of its perception or knowledge at whatever level of its being it is.<sup>19</sup> If it is at the sensory level it perceives it as sensible, if it is at the imaginative level it perceives it as imaginative object, and at the intellectual level as intelligible or universal.<sup>20</sup>

As for the external objects be they visible, audible, tactical, etc., and the affectations of the sense organs by them, they are merely a preparatory and provide the "occasion" for the creation of the perceptible image by the soul when the conditions for its perception are realized. For instance in the case of audition, it is not that the external sound produces the motion in the air which is transmitted through

the successive airwaves to the interior of the ear and thus the hearing takes place. The movement of the air and its airwaves are preparatory conditions for the sound to be heard, but they do not transmit the sound.<sup>21</sup>

When a new image is created by the soul, the earlier image of the same object of perception is not eliminated, rather, it is superimposed upon it, which in Sadrâ's language is called "dressing after dressing" (al-labs b'ad al-labs). So there are arrays of perceptual images for various represented qualities stored in the imaginative faculty. One might have even multiple arrays for each sort of sensory image.

The soul, according to Sadrâ, has no innate knowledge or innate ideas prior to its coming into creation as Plato has maintained. So knowledge or perception is not the recollection of ideas already existing in the soul. Rather the soul creates the knowledge. Now if the object of knowledge is the 'form created by the soul' then how do we know the external world, or whether there is an external world? Mullâ Sadrâ's response is: the external world is known accidentally, and indirectly. Its relation to the soul is the relation of the caused to the cause. Sadrâ does not hold that the soul arbitrarily creates the form of the external object. Rather, it is the form of the real object created by the soul.<sup>22</sup>

In sum, what is needed for the sensory perception to be completed is the psychic perception. The fact that the sensory organ is stimulated by something is only the occasion for the perceptible image of that thing to arise within the soul provided the soul is attentive to it and is aware of it. This creativity of the image by the soul does not add anything to the external object. But it only creates an image identical to it in its mental existence. For instance, a dog is perceived as a dog, a triangle is perceived as a triangle. But how about if a dog is perceived as laughing? Or the clouds are perceived as armies? Or the dialogues and images of fictitious nature going on incessantly in the mind in the waking as well as in the dream state? This according to Sadrâ is the play of fancy or imagination at the service of the estimative faculty, and not the real perceptual images of the external objects. How does this happen?

## 2. Production of imagery

When under the sway of the estimative faculty the imaginative capacity of the soul produces fantasy images, at times grotesque and despicable forms, devilish plays and perverted images, delusions and hallucinations. For instance when a dog is perceived as a laughing dog, or a stick is perceived as a snake this is imagery. During sleep when the imaginative power is affected by the organic activities taking place in the physical body then dreams which people see are mostly the imageries and fantasy. This happens when the imaginative capacity either through the external stimuli or in its absence separates, shuffles, distorts, and recombines parts of the sensory images drawn from its storage and recreates them. These images are projected on to the *sensus communis* and are seen 'out there' externally by the imagining person, or they are perceived mentally by his psychic faculties. Mullâ Sadrâ calls this the play of fantasy and deception (*talbîs*).<sup>23</sup> It may have some cognitive value but it is not what he, as well as the Romantics in the Western literary tradition have called the 'creative imagination' which is the non-discursive faculty responsible for the most profound artistic and scientific creative insights. Nor is it that which is the 'place' of manifestation for the Imaginal World about which Sadrâ and other visionaries, and in the Western theosophist tradition Emanuel Swedenborg (d.1772) for instance, have given some insight and its account. To which we turn now.

## 3. Creative Imaginations and the Imaginal World

The traditional hierarchy of being in the Islamic philosophical thought which Mullâ Sadrâ has followed consists of triple universe, the sensible physical world (mulk), the supra-sensible inter-world of the Soul (Malakût or barzakh) also called the Imaginal World ('âlam al-mithâl), and the world of pure Intelligences or angels (Jabarût). God who is pure Being is above these levels. To these three universes there corresponds the anthropological triad, body-soul-spirit whose corresponding organs of knowledge are: the senses, the imagination, and the intellect.

Suhrawardî is the first Muslim philosopher who determined in philosophical terms the function of the inter-world or the Imaginal World whose true reality, according to him, is perceived by the active imagination at the service of the intellect. He, and subsequently Ibn 'Arabî (d. 638/1240) gave it a grounding in the objective world and made it an indispensable part of the structure of cosmology and eschatology. It was, however, Mullâ Sadrâ who gave the first systematic and philosophical explanation of this world. It is a world of substantial and autonomous forms and images described as being "in suspense" (mu'allaqah). By this technical term it is meant that they do not have a material substrate (lâ fi mahall) in which they subsist in the manner in which accidents are immanent in a material body, for instance, the color green in a green body. Rather they subsist in the manner of images in a mirror where the substance of the mirror is not the substrate of the image.

This world is an intermediary between the world of Intelligence and the physical world and participates in both in being intelligible and sensible but without physical matter. So it is a barzakh, an inter-world between the two worlds having the characteristics of both. It constitutes cognitive Forms or images, hence called 'âlam al-mithâl the world of Image (or Imaginal World, mundus imaginalis). This world is a real world according to all visionaries and theosophists including Mullâ Sadrâ. It is a world which has cities, dwelling places, markets, rivers, trees, etc. The bodies in it are all imaginal and subtle. Some are jinn and devils. The inhabitants of this world are embodied spirits having shape, color, form, extension, movement and conscious beings but without physical matter. This is the world, says Mullâ Sadrâ, whose existence has been vouchsafed by the ancient philosophers and theosophists such as Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and others, and all the spiritual travelers in different communities. "I am among those" so says he, "who have conviction in the existence of the Imaginal World as the pillars of Philosophy and intuitive people have established, .... and as reported by Suhrawardî." But it is not the world of Platonic Ideas (muthul Iflâtunîyah). The latter are the stable entities of luminous intelligence; whereas the Forms of the World of Image are "Forms in suspense", some have no light. They are darkness and they constitute Hell, an abode for the evil ones, some have light, and they constitute Heaven, an abode for the felicitous souls who are mediocre in intelligence.<sup>24</sup>

The Platonic Ideas according to Mullâ Sadrâ are the divine Forms or angels proximate to God who are the differentiated knowledge of God. One of them is the Active Intelligence, which in theological tradition is called the sacred Father, the Holy Spirit Gabriel the angel of divine revelation. The ancient Persian sages called in Ravân Bakhsh (dator spiritis, Donor of spirit), the Persian Gnostics symbolically call it 'unqâ a mythological bird of Persian epic.<sup>25</sup> The proper organ for the vision of these worlds is the active imagination when it serves the intellect. Then there irrupts on it the visions from these worlds, and it projects these visions on the sensus communis which is like a mirror,<sup>26</sup> and the soul perceives them at its imaginative level. They are neither the imitative images (muhâkât) of sense perceptions, nor the imaginings, but the real cognitive images from the supra-sensible worlds.

The visionary event, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, manifests through various ways. It is either through visionary perception, such as the vision of the embodied spirits and spiritual lights, or for instance the angel Gabriel imaginalizing in the human form of an Arab called Dihya Kalbî to the prophet Muhammad;

or it is through auditory perception, and the Prophet is reported to have said that he heard the divine revelation revealed to him by Gabriel in sonorous words, or like the ringing of a bell, or like the buzzing of a bee and he perceived its meaning; or it could be by the way of odor, as the Prophet is reported to have said: "I inhaled the breath of the Compassionate on my right"; or it could be tactile, and this is the contact between the two lights or between the two imaginal bodies (of the subject and the object), as it is reported that the Prophet said: "I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form. He placed the palm of His hand between my shoulders, I found its coolness penetrating through my breasts, so I learnt what was in the heavens and in the earth"; or it could be by the way of taste, as it is reported in a Tradition of the Prophet that he said: "I saw that I was drinking milk until its abundance filled my nails. I interpreted that to be knowledge".

In some cases, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the imaginalized Form cautions the heedless of God to remember the Signs of God. Anyone who has the sickness of dropsy, or is suffering from the black bile, or from melancholia or other kinds of sicknesses, they are cured by his shadow. From him manifest the colors which are the essences of the colors but he has no color. Same is the case with the tastes and smells. The sciences and (creative) arts are perceived from his chant. The delectable musical tunes, wonderful melodies, organ music, ravishing music, etc., are derived from him.<sup>27</sup> Such visions and supernatural Forms are perceived either in the waking state, or in the state between sleep and waking or in the state of dream.

Discussing why some people perceive imaginal bodies (and not fictional) of devils and jinn in the isolated, deserted, uninhabited areas, Mullâ Sadrâ gives the following reason: the imaginative faculty is normally preoccupied with the input from the sensory perceptions. In the isolated, deserted areas its preoccupation with the input from the external senses is diminished. "And due to the bewilderment which occurs to the soul at the perception of things not familiar to it so what corresponds to its state, intention and wish is seen in the other world through the imagination which is one of the loci of their manifestation, and its projection occurs in the *sensus communis*."<sup>28</sup>

Mullah Sadrâ does not question the objectivity of these visionary, imaginal perceptions, imaginal beings, and people dead in this world alive in the next world imaginalizing in subtle bodies, and even alive in this world but appearing in the imaginal bodies, perceived either by the external senses or internal senses of the soul. That is because for him they are objective facts though different from the empirical objective facts. He himself had perceived many cognitive visions. According to him they suddenly irrupt and manifest to the active imagination when it is not distracted by the external sensory percepts and internal imaginings. These visions and Forms are then projected from it on to the *sensus communis* and perceived by the soul.

Even though the manifestation of imaginal percepts and beings is unconditional, but not many people could perceive them. That is due to the preoccupation of the imaginative power with the sensory percepts and inner imaginings. So in order to be receptive to this order of reality some spiritual discipline is required for it so that it does not waste away in fantasy. This discipline includes the severance from the accidental affairs of this world, its futile pleasures and fantasies. The memorization of the discursive rules and laws of essential and accidental notions and concepts, according to Sadrâ are not enough to be receptive to such events.<sup>29</sup>

C. Imagination as the body of resurrection after the death of the physical body.

Since imaginative faculty according to Mullâ Sadrâ is not an organic faculty linked to the material body, so it is not subject to perishing along with the body. Therefore, once separated from this world, the soul again has the perception of individual and conscious senses which are hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch. It also has a faculty of causing movement. This entire collection, however, is reduced to one faculty which is the Imagination and which is completely alive. Because it has ceased to disperse itself among the different thresholds which are the five senses of the physical body, and because it has ceased to be entreated by the needs of the physical body which is prey to the vicissitudes of the external world, the imaginative perception can finally demonstrate its essential superiority to sense perception. In it is stored the 'semantic effects'. I mean, whatever one has said or done whether internally or externally in this physical life has left its mark in it. It becomes a subtle or imaginal body of the soul, "woven" of man's actions. It is identical to the physical body in form. So once the soul separates from the physical body, it is not disembodied but is embodied by this imaginal body and travels to the Intermediate World (barzakh), the Imaginal World and enters a realm which conforms to its inner nature.

In this world there is no difference between the visual perception and the imaginative perception except the following, namely: that there is a continuous need for the corporeal organ and for the physical matter for perception. But at the moment when the soul departs from the world and sheds the material body, all aspects of potentiality, deficiency and imperfections disappear from the imaginative faculty. Through its sole power of creation (bi-mujarrad ikhtirâ' mutakhayyilah), it creates forms and reaps the harvest from the 'semantic effects' which it has sown whilst associated with the physical material body.

These imaginative forms have a strong mode of being, and a more intense efficaciousness than the forms of this world because they are of a more perfect simplicity and are not at all dispersed among the material things. So their concrete existence is identical with their existence as representative perception (wujûd sûrî idrâkî). Just as the pleasure which they procure is sweeter, so also is the suffering which they afflict is more violent.<sup>30</sup>

While discussing the respective positions of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius and Avicenna in their interpretations of Aristotle that only the souls which have attained the level of intellect in actuality will survive after death the rest will perish, Mullâ Sadrâ remarks: "There are imperfect souls who have not been able to attain the perfection of the intelligibles. There are also souls that have taken on the form of erroneous beliefs. To decide that all of these souls will perish is a thesis that arises from having totally ignored, (a) that the imaginative power is purely immaterial (tajarrud al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah), (b) that there exists an Intermediate World between the two worlds, the physical world and the world of Intellect" which is âlam al-mithâl the Imaginal World (mundus imaginalis).<sup>31</sup>

So the philosophy of imaginative perception and the philosophy of resurrection are two aspects of one and the same issue.

Without an ontology of the inter-World, that is the Imaginal World, one must either materialize the cognitive visionary Forms in one way or another as the theologians and literalist do, or escape into rationalizing as done by the philosophers.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, from Mullâ Sadrâ's point the imaginative perception is the initial capacity of imaginative power of the soul to form images and percepts. So, in the primary sense, it is the prime Agent of human



perceptions. It has the capacity to synthesize sensory forms into a coherent meaningful whole. It is not just a negative perception opposed to reason, but it has the positive characterization as well. It is the unitary faculty of the soul responsible for the production of sensible images, imagery and fantasy when under the sway of the estimative faculty, cognitive creative images when it serves the intellect, and perceives the Imaginal World and its inhabitants and supra-sensory beings when not distracted by the fantasy and its play, and external sensory images.

In one of his articles T. Izutsu remarks: "The age-old Aristotelian or scholastic definition of man as a "rational animal" seems to be fast losing its footing to be superseded by new ones standing on the ideas of symbolism like 'Man is a myth-making animal' etc." In conformity with the spirit of this general, markedly symbolist tendency of the contemporary thinking in science and philosophy he gives somewhat more wider and more general definition of man as "image-producing and image using animal" for 'symbol' and 'myth' are all special forms of image. <sup>32</sup> This to some extent is true in the case of Mullâ Sadrâ. The human mind creates images, imageries; it creates knowledge and becomes it. And like Romantics in the Western literary tradition, Sadrâ perceived the creative imagination at the service of the intellect responsible for the creative arts and deep scientific insights. But he has gone beyond these areas by giving an ontological grounding to the Imaginal World and has demonstrated the function of the creative imagination at the service of the intellect to be the locus of the manifestation for the visionary events. This was also done by his predecessors Suhrawardî and Ibn 'Arabî in the Islamic philosophical tradition. In the Western theosophist tradition Swedenborg gives insight into the perception of the Imaginal World.<sup>33</sup> But the difference between Mullâ Sadrâ and his predecessors is that he combines intuitive insights with philosophical demonstration which was not done by his predecessors so systematically and thoroughly.

Notes:

1-Al-Jurjânî, Sharîf 'Alî. Kitâb al-Ta'rifât. (Beirut, n.d.), pp. 6, 67.

2-Mullâ Sadrâ (Sadr al-Dîn Muhammad ibn Ibrâhim al-Shîrâzî). *Asfâr=al Hikmah al-Muta'âlîyah fî al-Asfâr al-'Aqliyah al-Arba'*, (Beirut, 1981), vol. 3:507.

3-Ibid, p.293.

4-Some note-worthy works in this area are: H. Corbin. "The Theory of Visionary Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy" trans. by L. Sherrard in *Temenos*, vol. 8: 224-237; Ibid. *Terre Célestial et Corps de Résurrection De l'Iran Mazdéen á l'Iran Shi'ite* (Paris, 1960); English trans. *Spiritual Body and Celestial earth from Mazdeen Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, by N. Pearson, (Bollingen Series XCI:2, Princeton, 1977); W. Chittick, *Imaginal World: Ibn al-'Arabî and the problem of religious Diversity*, (New York, 1994).

5-Mullâ Sadrâ. *Asfâr*, vol. 3:360.

6-----Ibid, vol. 8:214.

7-Ibid, pp. 226-227.

8-Ibid, pp. 227-228.

9-Mullâ Sadrâ's glosses on the margins of Sharh Hikmat al-Ishrâq by Dâ'ûd Qaysarî, lithograph edition (1313 A.H.), pp. 493, 509, 513. Also, see H. Corbin's analyses of some glosses pertaining to the present issue in his *En Islam iranien*, vol. iv (Paris, 1972), pp. 54-122.

10----- *Asfâr*, vol. 3:381.

11-*Al-Shawâhid al-Rubûbiyah*, ed. S. J. Âshtiyânî, (Mashhad, 1346 H.S.), p. 205.

12-*Ibn Sînâ*, Abû 'Alî. *Al-Mabd' wa al-Ma'âd* (Tehran, 1363 H.S.), pp. 102-103.

13-*Al-Ishârât wa al-Tanbîhât* with commentary by Nasîr al-Dîn Tûsî, (Tehran, 1378 A.H.), vol. 2:342.

14- *Al-Najât* (Qum, 1357 A.H./1938), p. 160.

15-Mullâ Sadrâ. *Asfâr*, vol. 8:179.

16----- *Mafâtih al-Ghayb*. Edited by Muhammad Khvâjû'î (Tehran, 1363 H.S.), p. 103; *Asfâr*, vol. 8:179; also Suhrawardî, *Shihâb al-Dîn*, "*Kitâb Hikmat al-Ishrâq*" in *Majmu'a Dovvum*, edited with introduction by H. Corbin (Tehran: 1952), pp. 215-216.

17----- *Asfâr*, vol. 8:178-180.

18-Nasr, S. H. "Mullâ Sadrâ: his teachings" in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part 1, edited by S. H. Nasr and O. Leaman (London, 1996) pp. 643-662. This article is a substantial summary of the major philosophical doctrines of Mullâ Sadrâ.

19-Mullâ Sadrâ. *Asfâr*, vol. 8:237-238.

20-This view is based on his doctrine of the intra-substantial motion. As is well known to the scholars of Islamic philosophy that Muslim philosophers especially Avicenna following Aristotle's natural philosophy accepted motion in the categories of quantity, quality, position and place, and denied the motion in substance which included the substance of the soul. Mullâ Sadrâ advocated constant motion or becoming in the physical body, in the soul, in the whole of the physical and even in the psychic or imaginal world.

21-Mullâ Sadrâ. *Asfâr*, vol. 8:160, 165, 172, 180-181; also F. Rahman, *Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albay, 1975), p. 222.

22-Mullâ Sadrâ. *Asfâr*, vol. 3:299; vol. 8:237; also F. Rahman, *op.cit.*, p. 224.

23----- *Ibid*, vol. 9:126; *Sharh Usûl min al-Kâfî*. Edited by M. Khvâjû'î (Tehran, 1367 H.S.), p448.

24----- *Asfâr*, vol. 1:302.

25-----*Ibid*, vol. 9:73, 142, 144.

26----- *Mafâtih*, *op.cit.* p. 229.

27----- Sharh Usûl, op.cit. pp. 453-458; Asfâr, vol. 9:144.

28----- Mafâtiḥ, pp. 229-230.

29----- Ibid. vol. 9:108.

30-Mullâ's glosses, op.cit. pp. 509; his Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-Karîm, edited by M. Khvâjû'î, (Qum, 1366 H.S.), vol. 1:298; Asfâr, vol. 9:372.

31-Mullâ Sadrâ's glosses, p. 493.

32-T. Izutsu. "Between Image and No-Image: far Eastern ways of Thinking" in Eranos, vol. 48 (1979), pp. 434-435.

33-See for instance his Heaven and Hell (London, 1966).

Mullâ Sadrâ and Perception

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Abstract

Mullâ Sadrâ defines knowledge as Existence and regards it as a degree of Existence. Sadrâ views the four kinds of perception (sensation, imagination, prehension and intellection) together with their different stages as a sole entity, which possesses strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, in the same way by which Existence and essence are united, knowledge is in unison with the known; knowledge is, in fact, the known per se. On the knowledge of possibilities and the knowledge of Man, he believed that there exists a union between the intellect and the intelligible. He regarded all perceptions by means of unification between the perceiver and perceived and he viewed intellection and knowledge by means of the unifications between intellect, intelligent and intelligible, and knowledge, knower, and known respectively.

Mullâ Sadrâ, the greatest Iranin-Muslim philosopher and founding father of Transcendent Philosophy was born in Shiraz in Iran in the year 1571 and died in 1641. His writings focus on philosophy, theology, logic and commentaries on the Qur'an and al-Usûl al-Kâfî. His most important philosophical writings include al-Asfâr al-Arba'at al-'aqliyyah (Four Intellectual Journeys), al-Shawâhid al-Rubûbiyya (Divine Testimonies), al-Hikmat al-'arshiyya (Wisdom from the Divine Throne), Kitâb al-Mashâ'ir (The Book of Metaphysical Science) and al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad (The Origin and the Return). There are a few translations of his works into English language such as professor James Morris's translation of al-Hikmat al-'arshiyya that is published as The Wisdom of Throne: An Introduction to the philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ (Princeton, 1981) and Dr Parviz Morewedge's translation of Kitâb al-Mâsha'ir that is published as The Metaphysics of Mullâ Sadrâ (New York, 1992). Mullâ Sadrâ is the supreme example of that class of philosophers who combine intellectual discipline with spiritual experience.

One can discuss the question of perception or knowledge from two fundamental dimensions i.e. epistemological and ontological.

Mullā Sadrā has analysed the concepts of perception and/or knowledge from many perspectives in different places of his "Asfār". In the chapters concerning ontology, he has examined whether Existence is objective or subjective and has defined one aspect of knowledge as being that of mental existence. In "The Ten Categories", he has discussed whether or not knowledge is a mental quality and, on the subject of the soul, whether it – the soul – has the power to attain to knowledge; these are mentioned throughout the chapters "Union between the intelligent and the intelligible" and "The knower and the known". In the third volume of his "Asfār", he has put forward an independent study with regards to knowledge and matters concerning it.

According to him, perception is a union whereby the faculty of intelligence meets up with the essence of the intelligible i.e. once this union is established, perception is achieved; he defines perception as the Existence and union of the perceiver and perceived.<sup>1</sup> In other words, this true union is perception and this is the same definition as knowledge.

There exist four kinds of perception:

(i) Sensation

(ii) Imagination

(iii) Prehension

(iv) Intellection

Sensation

Sensation is the perception of an existing thing in the material world that is directly present before the perceiver with all its distinctive characteristics.

Imagination

Imagination is the perception of a sensible thing together with all its distinctive characteristics; it (the imagined) is attained in the presence of (the thing's) matter (external world) and in the state of its absence i.e. the imagined need not be directly present before one.

Prehension

Prehension is that perceived intelligible within the boundaries of particularities, not universalization.

Intellection

Intellection is the perception of general concepts, meanings and substances and the reception of forms devoid of material dimensions.<sup>2</sup>

There are three pre-requisites to attaining sense perception:

(i) Material presence in front of the perceiving apparatus

(ii) The inclusion of the distinctive characteristics

### (iii) The particularisation of the perceived

Hence, the first condition doesn't exist with respect to imagination; moreover, the first two pre-requisites aren't necessary as far as prehension is concerned. Sadra regards knowledge – as with Existence – as un-need of definition.<sup>3</sup> On explaining knowledge, he states that knowledge means the presence of a thing qua that thing.<sup>4</sup> He generally criticized ibn Sina's and Shaykh Ishraqi's views on knowledge, believing that knowledge isn't a nugatory command – like that of the separation from matter – nor is it an affirmatory command; rather, knowledge is an existing command pertaining to an actual entity rather than a potential entity; even then, only pure entities are alluded to i.e. entities which are by no means mixed or associated with non-existence.

He regards knowledge and Existence as being in possession of degrees i.e. in the same way that some creatures are weak and miserly whilst others are strong and loyal, knowledge, too, possesses numerous degrees, some of which are weak e.g. sensation whilst some are trustworthy, such as the intellect. He sees knowledge as a method and way of existence<sup>5</sup> in that, similar to Existence, knowledge is in possession of different stages with respect to perfection and defection<sup>6</sup> and so perception also holds such degrees. In *Kitab al-Māsha'ir*, Mullā Sadrā argues that; “knowledge is nothing but presence of existence without any obstacles. Every comprehension is realized due to some mode of abstraction from matter and its obstacles. It is so, because matter is the source of privation and absence; since each part of the body is absent from the other components, and absent from the totality, the totality becomes absent from the totality. Thus, the more intense is each form, in the sense of degree of purity from matter, the more sound is its presence to its inner-reality. The most base is the presence of the forms of the sensibles to their inner-realities. Then, [flows] the forms of imaginable [entities] depending on their ranks. Subsequently, the forms of the intelligibles. The highest degree of intelligibles is the most forceful in existence -and that is The Necessary Existent".<sup>7</sup>

### Classification of Knowledge

Knowledge can be divided into the presence and acquired; according to Sadra, the groundwork of acquired knowledge is, in fact, based on presence knowledge. Acquired knowledge may be divided into representation and judgements; the former is sub-divided into universal and particular components. The latter components include sensory, imaginary and prehensive modes whereas universal representational knowledge – which is labelled as ‘intelligent concepts and intelligibles’ – is used as the pivot of important philosophical discussions.

Universal concepts may be categorized into three:

- (i) Primary intelligibles e.g. Man, whiteness etc.
- (ii) Secondary philosophical intelligibles e.g. rule of cause and effect
- (iii) Secondary logical intelligibles e.g. principle of non-contradiction

The occurrence and qualification of primary intelligibles are in the external world; however, the second group's occurrence is mental in nature even though its qualification is not (i.e. its qualified to be enacted in the outside world only). Concerning the logical secondary intelligibles, both their occurrence and qualification are essentially mental in origin.

He believes in the union between the intellect, the intelligent and the intelligible and also in the union between knowledge, the knower and the known.

Notes:

1-Mullā Sadrā, *Asfār*, vol.8 p.40

2-Mullā Sadrā, *Asfār*, vol.1 p.324

3-Mullā Sadrā, *Asfār*, vol.3 p.271

4-Mullā Sadrā, *Asfār*, vol.2 p.237

5-Mullā Sadrā, *Asfār*, vol.1, p.290

6-Mullā Sadrā, *Asfār*, vol.3, p.378

7-Mullā Sadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, English translation by Morewedge, P., P63

Philosophical Perception and Mystical Vision in Sadra within the Whiteheadian Context

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Abstract

Philosophy has a peculiar nature which distinguishes it from the rest of the branches of learning. This peculiar nature springs from its subject matter which can be loosely defined as 'study of systems'. In this sense a system is taken to be the 'architectonic unity, or "categorical scheme", to use Whitehead's term, reached discursively in the process of an attempt to understand existence'. In this sense the Whiteheadian idea of philosophy represents philosophy as "the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Whitehead readily attests the words of Henry Sidgwick that "it is the primary aim of philosophy to unify completely, bring into clear coherence, all departments of rational thought".<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I will try to apply Whiteheadian context to solve a puzzle in Sadra's mystical system and identify my method utilised in this context as 'system approach'. This puzzle, I shall argue, results from Sadra's conception of the philosophical perception of a given problem vis-à-vis the mystical vision. This approach requires an explication of 'philosophical perception' from the standpoint of Sadra's psychology, though it does not necessarily involve the philosophical problems arising therefrom. We are thus not directly involved in 'perception' as an epistemological or metaphysical problem. We are rather concerned with perception as a rationalistic methodological tool in constructing a philosophical system based on a mystical vision.

The philosophical approach and mystical vision are two ways of looking at reality, which coalesce in Sadra's system. In this sense, one may assert with cogency that the mystical approach is united with the philosophical perception in Sadra's theory of knowledge in such a way that he is at once enabled to construct his system on this basis, which can be depicted as ontologico-epistemological foundation. He argues at the outset of his *Magnum Opus* that his system comprises primarily of four journeys, each of

which has 'stations' (marhalah, in singular), comprising certain levels (tabaqat). This intellectual journey is required by an experiential method suggested by the mystical approach which may be described briefly as actually experiencing the truth as it is, and the disclosing of that experiential vision gives us his whole philosophical enterprise. In this disclosure one necessarily encounters the violation of a mystical principle; the principle that experiential states utterly evade conceptual communication. In other words, with reference to Sadra's system, one may cogently claim that the intuitive experience of wujud is ineffable, or incommunicable. How would Sadra defend himself if he claims that his system follows the path of the Gnostics? We shall try to see in what sense Sadra characterises his system to be hikmah muta'aliyah, namely following the mystic path:

Know that travelers (al-sullak) among the Gnostics and Saints have four journeys: one of them is the journey from the creation to the Truth; the second is the journey with the Truth in the Truth; the third journey corresponds to the first one, because it is from the Truth to the creation with the Truth; and finally, the fourth journey in a sense corresponds to the first, as it is with the Truth in the creation.<sup>3</sup>

In this way the starting realm of Sadra's system is underlined to be the creation; but creation as such is a multitude of things, what exactly is the true beginning? Just as the beginning realm of Sadra's system is determined by a mystical approach, so is this question settled by the same method: since the journey is towards the Truth (haqq), we must begin from that which leads more directly to the Truth and that which leads directly, or to express it mystically, without mediation to the Truth is the underlying reality of creation, wujud. Therefore, wujud is from the Truth and leads, just as it returns, without mediation, to the Truth. But wujud as understood in this context is not a mere concept, which arises in the mind, as we perceive the reality. This mental concept of wujud is the result of that very intuitive awareness of the reality and as such cannot be conceptualised, hence the distinction between the mystical intuition and the philosophical perception. Let us suppose that we now follow Sadra in his movement from wujud to the Truth. First of all, this movement is not only intuitive but existential as well, and as such it must be continuous and uninterrupted. But secondly and more importantly, the successive stages of this uninterrupted movement toward the Truth is not discursive, for if it is followed discursively it is possible that it may stop at one point of the existential movement, i.e. intuitive awareness, and begin at another, although this discursive movement within itself is also continuous and uninterrupted.

This is then Sadra's approach which unites two different traditions that do not correspond to each other at every point of the whole system. This discrepancy of both approaches is seen very clearly in his presentation of his system in the Asfar. We may show this discrepancy on the following table.

## JOURNEYS

### MYSTICAL VISION

### PHILOSOPHICAL PERCEPTION

#### The First Journey

From the creature to the Truth

General Metaphysics/Ontology

#### The Second Journey

With the Truth in the Truth

Natural Philosophy or Cosmology

The Third Journey

From the Truth to the creation with the Truth

Theology

The Fourth Journey

With the Truth in the creation

Philosophy of Man (psychology) and Eschatology

We may ask here whether the actual philosophical discussion at each level corresponds to the mystical vision which is said to be the model of the former. We may examine this with regard to each level. The first mystical journey is from the creature (khalq) to the Truth, which is the model of its rational counterpart at the philosophical level, and thus corresponds to general metaphysics as Sadra's ontology of wujud. We argue here that since this is the beginning of the system, it must overlap with the mystical movement, which has to be the same with regard to the point where the system ends. Thus the fourth mystical vision as an experiential state both logically and experientially also overlap. This journey is, we are told, 'with the Truth in the creation', which has its philosophical counterpart as 'Philosophy of Man (psychology) and Eschatology'. Truth in this context represents God as the object of experiential journey, but in the rational sense it refers to the fundamental reality par excellence underlying the whole existence. When this is held in mind, one can see that there is no discrepancy as far as the first and last mystical movements vis-à-vis their philosophical counterparts are concerned. But is it the same with regard to the second and third counterparts? I shall argue in this paper that because of the very nature of philosophical perception and the experiential movement, both logically and as far as the mystical vision are concerned they cannot overlap, and hence the apparent discrepancy. For, the second journey is said to be 'With the Truth in the Truth'. If 'Truth' represents God, then the philosophical counterpart has to be theology, whereas in the Asfar we find Natural Philosophy or cosmological problems in the second journey. We have argued that in the rational sense 'Truth' refers to the fundamental reality par excellence underlying the whole existence; and in this sense natural philosophy will correspond to the mystical journey in God, but then, how can Sadra reply to the charges that his system is a pantheistic construction? For if we do accept this conclusion, then theology and natural philosophy will have to be identical just in the same sense as the Hegelian logic and metaphysics are identical. Fazlur Rahman argues on this point that:

Sabzavari (1797-1872), the most illustrious commentator of the work [i.e., the Asfar], for example, has discussed the the nature of these journeys in terms of Sufi spiritual development ... but without reference to the actual content of the four parts of the Asfar. The problem remains unsolved since, on the one hand, the assertion of Molla Sadra himself that "I have arranged this work of mine in accordance with their (i.e., the Gnostics' spiritual or rational) movements into four journeys" cannot be ignored, while on the other hand, it is apparently impossible to fit the traditional four parts of the book



and certainly the actual title-description of the last three parts into the actual description of these journeys.<sup>4</sup>

The problem remained unsolved so far because the unity of both approaches, as outlined, has not been adequately brought fore in the Sadra studies. If the two methods of movement toward the Truth are evaluated from the perspective of what I call 'the system approach', the disparity found in the rational journeys of Sadra is also resolved. In order to demonstrate this, our attempt in this context shall utilize this approach developed on the basis of Whitehead's idea of philosophy as outlined here.

### The Whiteheadian Context

The human mind has such a nature that it cannot but perceive a certain problem within a 'scheme of constructive unity', which it forms for itself and/or acquires through education and socio-cultural environment. Because of this nature of human mind, scientific activities are carried out in such a way that when there is a sufficient amount of accumulated knowledge as a result of these activities, the scholars involved in that process begin to form this knowledge into a systematic whole, which we term 'system'. If we call that mode of philosophising, which is concerned only with certain problems in a discrete manner "problematic philosophy", then that mode of philosophising, which aims at capturing the scheme in which such problems are articulated, can be conveniently termed "systematic philosophy", or "philosophy of systems". In this sense, we take the system to be the 'architectonic unity, or "categorical scheme", to use Whitehead's term, reached discursively in the process of an attempt to understand existence'.

We find a complaint in Whitehead's remarks that "the philosophic process of assemblage should have received some attention from every educated mind, in its escape from its own specialism."<sup>5</sup> For, "the movement of historical and philosophical, criticism of detached questions, which on the whole has dominated the last two centuries, has done its work, and requires to be supplemented by a more sustained effort of constructive thought."<sup>6</sup> In this sense, we may argue that Whitehead entertains an idea of philosophy that represents philosophy as "the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted."<sup>7</sup> This is indeed the fundamental task that he assigns for philosophy. For, he would readily attest the words of Henry Sidgwick that "it is the primary aim of philosophy to unify completely, bring into clear coherence, all departments of rational thought".<sup>8</sup> What we call here the Whiteheadian context is summarised by his words defining the philosophical idea of system:

The complete pattern of general conditions, thus exemplified, is determined by any one of many select sets of these conditions. These key sets are of equivalent postulates. This reasonable harmony of being, which is required for the unity of a complex occasion, together with the completeness of the realization (in that occasion) of all that is involved in its logical harmony, is the primary article of metaphysical doctrine. It means that for things to be together involves that they are reasonably together. This means that thought can penetrate into every occasion of fact, so that by comprehending its key conditions, the whole complex of its pattern of conditions lies open before it.<sup>9</sup>

As Dorothy Emmet states, Whitehead indeed is following "the Platonic intellectualist tradition, that there is a real affinity between the Reason in us, and the structure, which is an objective Logos, in the nature of things."<sup>10</sup> This is why, again, he states in the Preface to *Process and Reality* that "the true method of philosophical construction is to frame a scheme of ideas, the best that one can, and unflinchingly to explore the interpretation of experience in terms of that scheme." We may argue in this

vein that the ontological perspective is the objective ground of a system constructed within the same scheme, as we shall also see in Sadra's system. Again, in order to justify this we merely presuppose, or to use Whitehead's statement, have 'faith' in that there is an order in nature. But, here, the term "faith" does not have a 'religious' or 'theological' implication. It rather means, "a complete understanding is a perfect grasp of the universe in its totality", and since "we are finite beings, such a grasp is denied to us."<sup>11</sup> Be that as it may, we are compelled to accept that there is an order of nature, at the basis of which we shall not find mere arbitrary mystery.<sup>12</sup> Whitehead, on the other hand, accepts the systematic unity of the mind from the epistemological point of view, and argues for his stand from the ontological perspective, thus emphasising the objective viewpoint, as is the case with Sadra. We may also argue with Whitehead that "the whole is a flux, changing with the lapse of time. This systematic totality is disclosed to us as one complex of things."<sup>13</sup> Since philosophy is the attempt to grasp that systematic totality, then, we may conclude, philosophy is the system-science, par excellence. It is this idea of philosophy which we name the Whiteheadian context. But we need further clarification of the idea of system itself in order to be able to apply this context to our study of Sadra.

Since our purpose is to clarify our notion of systematic philosophy, our concept of system, in this context, shall refer to the conceptual totality as an attempt to grasp the pattern of the universe. 'System' is thus used in the philosophical sense. When we consider it in this signification, a system, in the most general sense, can be taken to be a worldview. But philosophically speaking these two concepts are not synonymous. For a system, is a systematic organisation of ideas into an architectonic whole; while a worldview is an architectonic whole, in which ideas are not so systematically interconnected, and hence some ideas remain vague, unclear, and unorganised within a worldview. This distinction that is actually brought into attention by Whitehead, in his statement that "philosophy is an attitude of mind towards doctrines ignorantly entertained."<sup>14</sup> The contrast of worldview and system is also clear in Whitehead, as the phrase, "doctrines ignorantly entertained", I believe refers to worldview. This is attested in his statement which thus continues: "By the phrase 'ignorantly entertained' I mean that the full meaning of the doctrine in respect to the infinitude of circumstances to which it is relevant, is not understood. The philosophic attitude is a resolute attempt to enlarge the understanding of the scope of application of every notion which enters into our current thought."<sup>15</sup> These statements clarify his notion of philosophy as the system-science, which we shall utilise in this paper. In the following quotation we also see Whitehead's idea of philosophy, which I have identified as 'the system-science':

The true method of philosophical construction [i.e. systematic philosophy] is to frame a scheme of ideas... All constructive thought [i.e. worldview] is dominated by some such scheme, unacknowledged but no less influential in guiding the imagination. The importance of philosophy lies in its sustained effort to make such schemes explicit, and thereby capable of criticism and improvement.<sup>16</sup>

A 'system' on the basis of this idea of philosophy is a well-knit organisation of ideas and doctrines. It is a coherent unity that has no gaps, nor any inconsistency; and as such it is "a coherent, logical, necessary [unity] of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted."<sup>17</sup> Although a system is a well-knit unity, as we shall see, it is possible to divide it into certain subsystems that make up its 'parts'. Subsystems, or parts, are not merely attached to the main system, but rather they are all deduced discursively on the basis of knowledge reached within the system itself. Therefore, in most systems architectonic unity is a deductive unity, which gives it its speculative character. It is the method employed by the philosopher, which determines this deductive or speculative character of his system. Therefore, we also observe that every system decides for a specific manner of constructing the system, which is defined as its 'method'; for example, we can say that Kant's approach in his system

utilises what might be called the 'transcendental method'. But Spinoza's method is geometrical, and Hegel's dialectical (Sadra's method will be discussed below).

Our discussion of systems will clarify the Whiteheadian context further, but we should undertake this task in relation to Sadra's system to demonstrate our application also to solve the apparent disparity between the philosophic and mystic approaches. But first let us ask: how is the Whiteheadian Context as developed here pertinent to our study of Sadra? First of all, we can find a similar, but somewhat not clear, juxtaposition of philosophy and mystical approach in Whitehead:

The use of philosophy is to maintain an active novelty of fundamental ideas illuminating the social system. It reverses the slow descent of accepted thought towards the inactive commonplace. If you like to phrase it so, philosophy is mystical. For mysticism is direct insight into depths as yet unspoken. But the purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism; not by explaining it away, but by the introduction of novel verbal characterizations, rationally coordinated. Philosophy is akin to poetry, and both of them seek to express that ultimate good sense which we term civilization. In each case there is reference to form beyond the direct meanings of words. Poetry allies itself to metre, philosophy to mathematic pattern.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, it is only with this approach that the problem in Sadra's system can be adequately solved. I am not trying to defend the idea that Whitehead developed this idea of philosophy in order to bring mysticism at home in philosophy. But that his idea of philosophy is to be emphasised for reasons not to be defended in this context.<sup>19</sup> But another quotation may suffice to show this point:

In all systematic thought, there is a tinge of pedantry. There is a putting aside of notions, of experiences, and of suggestions, with the prim excuse that of course we are not thinking of such things. System is important. It is necessary for the handling, for the utilization, and for the criticism of the thoughts which throng into our experience..<sup>20</sup>... Such a habit of mind is the very essence of civilization. It is civilization.<sup>21</sup>

We may thus outline our position as the approach which utilises the concept of philosophy as the system science to show that once an attempt is made to construct the system rationally the philosopher must follow the logical principles to develop its main body. Sadra is also constrained to the same in his system, but as the general guide he uses the mystical approach. This is not the only point, of course, since the mystical approach is required by his theory of knowledge as well. This is clear in his statement that the reality of wujud cannot be captured conceptually, but that it is known only intuitively. But since that which is captured intuitively cannot be conceptualised, the system as Sadra defends will have to be a rationalised intuition which represents only a shadow reality, to express in Platonic terms. We shall try to show this in relation to the idea of system depicted here as the Whiteheadian context.

### The mystical and the philosophical counterpoised

On the basis of our 'system approach' I shall argue that the mystical and the philosophical methods are counterpoised in Sadra's system. This is indeed the result of Sadra's conception of the philosophical perception of a given problem vis-à-vis the mystical vision. This approach requires an explication of 'philosophical perception' from the standpoint of Sadra's psychology, though it does not necessarily involve the philosophical problems arising therefrom. We are thus not directly involved in 'perception' as an epistemological or metaphysical problem. We are rather concerned with perception as a rationalistic methodological tool in constructing a philosophical system based on a mystical vision. This

will be seen in the method utilised in his system. For we can clearly see that in the Asfar the system expressed according to the mystical order of the experiential journeys. Since 'method' is the manner or the approach the system-builder uses in constructing his system, we can safely assign Sadra to the mystical tradition which already delineates his approach. This tradition, some may argue, excludes rationalistic procedures and therefore, cannot be qualified for a study of systems in the philosophical sense. For a system is a rational interpretation of reality as understood by sciences involved in this interpretation. We must realise, however, that Sadra's mystical approach is not confined to its experiential aspect, as his dictum expresses: "knowledge is a mode of wujud."<sup>22</sup> In that case, this mystical experience can be expressed in a logical and rational construction that make up what we call 'system'. But "every instance of reality is a unique individual".<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the philosophical construction must be conceived in "a general and universal way": Fa'l-'ilm bi-kull wujud wa tashakhkhu{ la yumkin illa bi-wajhin kulliyin 'amin. This, at least, shows that Sadra does defend the impossibility of communicating our knowledge, which does not annihilate the possibility of philosophical discourse. If this is so then even the mystical vision can be so described on general terms, though it is the intuitive experience which represents reality par excellent and the philosophical conceptualisation is only a reflection of that both reality and experience, as it was also expressed by Whitehead:

... the purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism; not by explaining it away, but by the introduction of novel verbal characterizations, rationally coordinated. ... Speculative philosophy is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted.<sup>24</sup>

A philosophical system is, as we have seen, an orderly unity. The order in this unity is arranged according to certain principles and rules that are developed by the system-builder. Since these principles and rules may change from philosopher to philosopher, the structure of a system may also change according to these principles and rules, which we outlined above as 'methodology'.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, every system is constructed on a theoretical foundation, which is usually a "general, or fundamental metaphysics" and can be called "basic system". The basic system as a "general metaphysics", consists of doctrines, rules and principles that determine all the other parts of the whole system. It may include and outline the methodology of the philosopher as well. This fundamental metaphysics is determined by the orientation of the philosopher. For example, a Muslim Philosopher's orientation is determined by the Qur'anic insight which is God-centered, and thus, God, as the ground of all Being will occupy the central place in the fundamental metaphysics. In that case, if we name any system built by a Muslim philosopher 'Islamic system of philosophy', we can say that such a system will be either theology or ontology oriented; in other words, the fundamental metaphysics or the basic system of any Islamic philosophical system will be either a theology and/or ontology. On the other hand, an Islamic system of philosophy may begin by an epistemology only as a methodology outlined above. This is because it is the type of epistemology, which will determine the orientation of the philosopher to adopt a rationalist theology or revealed theology and so on.<sup>26</sup> In that case, epistemology cannot be the foundation of an Islamic system. This fact is clearly observed in Sadra's system, which is clearly ontology-based. It is from this ontological basis that his theology springs.

Usually system builders try to deduce another fundamental doctrine based on their metaphysics. In fact, this process of deduction continues until the whole system is complete; each doctrine deduced from a former one(s) becomes a part of the whole system. In this sense, if we try to outline the structure of philosophical systems in general, we cannot pass on any general conclusion about the part of the system that is deduced immediately from the general metaphysics. But it is possible to call each part deduced therefrom by a general name; "subsystem". Each part of the system which is based on the fundamental

metaphysics can be conveniently classified into super-systems, and sub-systems, according to the positions they occupy within the system. The part of the system that is prior is a super-system in relation to the ones that follow subsequently, which are sub-systems in relation to the immediately former one (or the former ones). It must also be clear that a part of the system can be both a sub-system and a super-system, depending on the position it occupies within the whole system.

Whatever the fundamental metaphysics may be, therefore, it is the beginning point of the whole, and thus it is the foundation of that system. Then, the other parts of the system follow usually with a different order as a branch of science such as, logic, philosophy of nature, ethics, politics, aesthetics, legal philosophy, philosophy of religion, philosophy of man and society, or as sociology. Since each part of a system is a science, the system taken as a whole is a unity of sciences. Philosophy can be conceived as a special branch which deals primarily with this unity. On the other hand, since it is the purpose of philosophy as a science to establish systems, the whole system itself is philosophy. In this sense, philosophy is the science par excellence; in other words, it is another general name given to sciences, in a sense it is a 'mother science' (umm al-'ulum). Moreover, all the parts of a system taken as a unity, may yield a cosmology, namely a general conception of the universe; if not, then cosmology itself is treated as a sub-system, i. e., an independent science within the system. We observe this in Sadra's system as well, in fact the expression of this system on a conceptual basis leads to the problem we have tried to solve in this study.

Can we, then, say that Sadra's theory of perception has a bearing on this issue? First of all for Sadra perception is not a requirement for knowledge in general. It is however required for conceptual knowledge because concepts are derived on the basis of perception. Since philosophy, as we shall see below, aims at conceptual knowledge it is in need of perception, but clearly experiential knowledge does not need perception because it grasps its object as it is without conceptualising it. Moreover, since the object itself is not given in perception, but it is given in the experiential grasp, i.e., the mystical intuition, we face a problem of combining the experiential grasp with the conceptual understanding of the object of knowledge. This is what Sadra is attempting at his system and if we do not realize this we will not be able to resolve the apparent disparity between his gnostic approach and philosophical endeavour. Although Sadra does not directly address this problem, it is clear from his exposition that it is the soul that both perceives and intuits;<sup>27</sup> hence combining the experiential grasp with the conceptual understanding of the object of knowledge is internally possible.

That being the case, Sadra sets wujud as the starting point of his system, and the epistemological tool corresponding to this tool is intuition. But this tool is applied by a 'rational procedure' as clear in the title of Asfar, al-asfar al-'aqliyyah. But there are ways to understand 'aqliyyah, i.e. 'rational'; hence, secondly, as Nasr shows,<sup>28</sup> his is the theosophic tradition as opposed to the purely rational approach which may exclude experiential knowledge, or even purely mystical tradition that excludes any discursive approach. In this sense Sadra is a rationalistic mystical philosopher. His methodology thus begins with intuition and proceeds with philosophical cognition and ends with the mystical experiential union. It is this methodological approach that Sadra's students rightly term 'transcendent theosophy' (al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah).<sup>29</sup> This philosophical method is an attempt to capture reality with intellectual vision, which thus came to be used as the designation of Sadra's school of thought. It must be for this reason that Sadra included this designation in the title of his magnum opus, to be translated as "The Transcendent Theosophy in Four Rational Journeys".

Conclusion

We may now examine the structure of systems in relation to its parts with reference to Sadra's system in order to reach a conclusion concerning the problem at hand. First of all, Sadra divides all philosophical sciences into four main branches. For this classification Sadra's clue is the mystical movement of human reality which must pass through four stages. I deduce this from his definition of philosophy:

Philosophy is [the endeavour to attain] the perfection of the human soul through the knowledge of the reality of things as they are, and to judge their existence by investigation with demonstrative proof not by accepting with conjecture and blind imitation.<sup>30</sup>

If, therefore, the aim of philosophy is to attain the perfection of the soul by acquiring true knowledge, then the path to knowledge must be the path of the soul, which is identical with the path of knowledge. Hence, the stations of the soul in its journey to perfection are sciences, namely stations of knowledge which correspond to subsystems in our theory of systems. In this sense, the rational aspect of the soul cannot be separated from its experiential aspect. As Sadra's definition shows clearly his acceptance of the philosophical method as well, i. e. the rational and discursive method, both the rational and the experiential are united in one methodological procedure. We have already given the journeys of the soul described by Sadra; now the corresponding sciences in his system are the following:

The First Journey: The First Journey: General metaphysics beginning with ontology and ending with epistemology (described as 'from the creature to the Truth');

The Second Journey: Natural Philosophy (from the Truth to the creation with the Truth);

The Third Journey: Theology (with the Truth in the Truth);

The Fourth Journey: Philosophy of Man (psychology) and Eschatology (with the Truth in the creation).

Secondly, following our system approach, we argue that in the Asfar this organization is not developed according to the mystical order of the experiential journeys. We thus offer the explanation that this is because these journeys are rational and that this rationality takes precedence since they are presented in the system-science, i.e., philosophy. Therefore, they are presented here in a rational order, which requires next the discussion of the creation rather than the Truth, as will be explained further below. For Sadra's system logically requires the passage from the wujud to the realm of its manifestation; whereas the mystical movement has reached to the source of wujud, the haqq, and it must thus continue with the Truth in the Truth.

Moreover, we can infer philosophically the Truth from its realm in a cosmological movement; whereas, again, there is no need for such an inference in the mystical movement because the Gnostic already lives experientially within the Truth. Our argument then is that this shift between the second and third journeys is a requirement of the system as developed by Mulla Sadra. We have shown above the way Whitehead argued to this characteristic of philosophy: "... philosophy is mystical. For mysticism is direct insight into depths as yet unspoken. But the purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism; not by explaining it away, but by the introduction of novel verbal characterizations, rationally coordinated."

We may give another proof for the system requirement of the shift between the second and the third journey. Both the philosophical discursive approach and the mystical experiential approach are continuous in themselves, but when they are combined that continuity is disturbed because they are not parallel movements. In this sense every part of the two movements do not correspond to each

other. The continuity of the mystical vision is maintained by the experiential journey, as if it takes place in a space-time continuum. But the continuity of the philosophical discursive movement is purely logical without any reference to the space-time continuum and thus the logical connection between the point where the first journey ends, i.e., God is the universe, and hence, natural philosophy as the subsystem of the general metaphysics. Logically there is also no problem in passing from the universe back to God, i.e., theology as the next subsystem, which is the third journey in the Asfar. But so far as the mystical movement is concerned, when the experiential journey begins from wujud and reaches to the Truth, it cannot come back to the universe and return back to it. For this experience, though it transcends space time limitations, yet passes through a sequence of space-time continuum. Therefore, it must continue with God, as described by the Sadra commentators beautifully<sup>31</sup> until the Gnostic is able to see His manifestation and unfolding in the realm of the physical universe whereupon he returns with Him and then finally back to His abode in the realization of self-annihilation (fana). Following the same path but philosophically, we must deduce each level from the previous one logically, hence the continuity is logical. In this way, we may argue that from wujud, the first journey, is deduced natural philosophy and its problems attending therefrom, i.e., the second journey; and from natural philosophy is deduced the creator, which is logical, thus follows theology and the third journey, from which, in turn, is deduced the highest form of existence, man for whom the possibilities to reach the self-annihilation is open as the fourth and final journey. But, of course, if he follows the path of philosophy he can achieve this only conceptually since he has not passed through the space-time continuum with an intuitive experiential journey. Based on this exposition we can say that for Sadra the Truth as it is in itself cannot be experienced philosophically. For philosophy can take us to God only conceptually, known in the Sufi tradition as 'ilm al-yaqin. But the mystical path takes us directly to the Truth, the experience of which is known as 'ayn al-yaqin, as is clear in Qumsha'i's commentary given below.

Therefore, the fact that the printed edition of Sadra's Asfar replaces the second and third journeys should not confuse us; as we suggest, the shift in priority of discussion is only a logical requirement since the treatment here is philosophical. Otherwise, it is also clear in the commentary of Qumsha'i that the third Safar of the Asfar corresponds to the second mystical journey, whereas the second Safar of it corresponds to the third mystical journey:

The Book [Asfar], as it has [a discussion of] general problems, substances, and accidents, ensures the first journey, and as it has [a discussion of] proofs for God's existence through His Essence [which is the Third Safar] ensures the second [mystical] journey; moreover, as it also contains [a discussion of] proofs for the spiritual substances and separate souls [which is the Second Safar] ensures the third [mystical] journey; finally, as it has [discussions concerning] the states of the soul and what it encounters in the Hereafter, it ensures the fourth [mystical] journey. The author's words "Know that travelers (al-sullak), and so on..." refer first to the above mentioned four journeys; and his words: "I have thus arranged my book, and so on... until in Rational Journeys" refer at last to the same four mentioned journeys. The book fairly safeguards these four journeys in conformity with the journeys of the Travelers (sullak) and the Saints. For, the theoretical and practical faculties are sufficient in [attaining] the Lights and Marks (athar) [of Existence in general], because by the former 'ilm al-yaqin, and by the latter 'ayn al-yaqin and haqq al-yaqin are attained.<sup>32</sup>

On the basis of this exposition if we would express the two movements on a parallel order we would have to revise our table as we gave at the beginning. The revised table would be the following.

## JOURNEYS

MYSTICAL VISION

PHILOSOPHICAL PERCEPTION

The First Journey

From the creature to the Truth

General Metaphysics/Ontology

The Second Journey

From the Truth to the creation with the Truth

Natural Philosophy or Cosmology

The Third Journey

With the Truth in the Truth

Theology

The Fourth Journey

With the Truth in the creation

Philosophy of Man (psychology) and Eschatology

Notes:

1-Alfred North Whitehead. *Process and Reality (PR)*, ed., by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 3 (4). (The page number in parenthesis refers to the Macmillan edition of 1929).

2-Quoted in *Science and Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 147. Henceforth this work will be abbreviated as SMW.

3-Asfar, ed. by Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar, 9 vols. (Tehran: Matba'at Haydari, 1383 A.H.; second ed. Qom: Maktabat al-Mustafwa, 1968; also Beyrut: Dar Ihya' Turath al-'Arabi, 1990, in all these editions pagination seems to have remained unchanged), 1: 13.

4-"Al-Asfar al-Arba'a", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 744.

5-Alfred North Whitehead. *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1938), 2.

6-Alfred North Whitehead. *Process and Reality (PR)*, ed. by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1979), xiv.



7-Ibid, 3.

8-Quoted in *Science and Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 147.

9-Ibid, 26.

10-Dorothy Emmet, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Organism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 46.

11-Modes of Thought, op. cit., 42.

12-W. T. Jones. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975), 5: 66; see also Victor Lowe, "Whitehead's Philosophy as I see It", printed in *Process in Context: Essays in Post-Whiteheadian Perspectives*, ed. by Ernest Wolf-Gazo (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988), 45-55.

13-*Science and Modern World*, op. cit., 145.

14-Modes of Thought, 171.

15-Ibid.

16-PR, xiv. Interpretory phrases in brackets are mine.

17-Ibid, 3.

18-Modes of Thought, 174.

19-For a detailed discussion of this see Alparslan Açıkgenç. "A Concept of Philosophy in the Qur'anic Context", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 11:2 (1994).

20-Modes of Thought, 2.

21-Ibid, 3.

22-Asfar, 3: 296. [kull 'ilm huwa nahwun min al-wujud... Fa'l-'ilm bi-kull wujud wa tashakhkhu{ la yumkin illa bi-wajhin kulliyin 'amin.].

23-See Alparslan Açıkgenç. *Being and Existence in Sadra and Heidegger: A Comparative Ontology* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993), 58f.

24-See footnotes 18 and 5 respectively as quoted above.

25-I think what Whitehead calls 'assemblage' largely corresponds to what we mean by 'methodology' as we use it in a general sense. See his *Modes of Thought*, op. cit., 2.

26-For this kind of a fundamental metaphysics, namely basic system, we can give as an example Ibn Sina's logic as a basic theory of knowledge for his whole system that fulfills the function of a methodology in his system, and thus is always given at the outset of his system presented in the *Shifa* with greater details, and in *al-Najat*, and 'Uyun al-Hikmah in general outline.

27-See, for example, Asfar, 66; also his statement that al-nafs kull al-quwa, *ibid*, 221.

28-See Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978).

29-See *Ibid.*, especially ch. 5; also see note 11 below.

30-Asfar, 1: 20.

31-For a detailed description see Nasr's translation of Qumsha'i's commentary, *op. cit.*, 58-61.

32-Asfar, 1: 16 continuation of footnote 1 from 1: 13.