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The Reality of Gnosis (‘erf¡n)

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Abstract

This paper presents an experiential introduction to the reality of mysticism illustrated extensively with quotations from the great Persian Sufi poets. It addresses the nature of mysticism, its subject of study that is the divine essence, its faculty of perception that is the heart and its results in godly action. Ultimately it demonstrates how mystical discourse and knowledge is rooted in the Islamic revelation and the sayings and teachings of the Prophet and his progeny.

Gnosis or mystical knowledge possesses many traits and characteristics that serve to distinguish it from other forms of knowledge. In this paper, we shall attempt to point out some of the most significant of these characteristics, thus distinguishing this particular form of knowledge from others, to the degree possible in such a short work.

I: Direct knowledge

Knowledge that is not directly of God,
Is no more permanent than make-up
But if you carry this weight well,
The burden shall be taken off your shoulders
And joy shall be granted you. 1

As defined by logicians, knowledge consists of the presence of the 'form' of the known before the knower. This definition applies to all conventional branches of science and scholarship. Normal knowledge never constitutes the immediate presence of the essence of the known before the knower. Thus, no scholar or scientist may perceive the object of his study directly, without the mediation of forms. In general, all scientific knowledge is indirect knowledge, in that the scientist always perceives the form of what he is studying, and then, through knowledge of this form, perceives the essence of the object of his investigation. Moreover, this rule applies to Islamic studies as well. Even those fields of learning that are very close to mystical knowledge in their aim and subject matter, such as Islamic jurisprudence or philosophy, are not exempt from this general principle.

Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy are both indirect cognitions of the manifestations of the divine, the difference being that jurisprudence has as its subject ethical and normative signs and manifestations, while philosophy is concerned with natural ones. Knowledge attained in both of these fields is, like all other fields of scholarship, of the mediated type, where the known is perceived by the knower through its form. In this form of knowledge, al-ma'l£m bi l-dh¡t (the known-in-itself, that is, the idea or form of the object known), is not the same as al-ma'l£m bi l-'ara¤ (the object itself), and what is united with the essence of the knower and is added to it is not the objective essence of the known but only an ideal form of it, which, naturally, is something different from it, though, because of the fact that it is a revelation of the object itself, enjoys essential unity with it. In other words, this unity is a unity in the sense of 'primary predication' (al-¦aml al-awwal¢), the basis of which is essence (m¡hiyya) and the concept (mafh£m), and not a unity in the sense of 'common predication' (al-¦aml al-sh¡'i'), the basis of which is unity in being.

The significant characteristic of mystical knowledge is that it does not fall within the category of acquired knowledge (ma'¡rif-i ¦u¥£l¢). It is, on the contrary, a form of knowledge by presence (ma'rifat-i

¦u¤£r¢), in which it is the essence of the object itself that is perceived and not an idea of it. In other words, in this form of perception, the essence, meaning the objective reality of the known, is identical with the knowledge attained by the knower. It follows, then, that mystical knowledge is immediate and direct perception, without any reliance on intermediation of idea or image. In this aspect, then, it is different from all other forms of knowledge.

Whoever has a mind at rest and a fine lover at his side
Fortune and felicity, joy and happiness are also his.
The gate opening into the shrine of love
Lies far beyond the reach of reason,
Only he who is willing to sacrifice his life may reach it. 2

In the mystical quest for the truth, the aim of the seeker is, first and foremost, to reach a particular destination. Knowledge, then, follows in the wake of this attainment. In the case of ordinary forms of knowledge it is precisely the opposite, in that the aim is to know. Such knowledge may then lead to the attainment of the thing itself, although it is by no means certain that it will do so. To sum up then, knowledge does not necessitate arrival, while knowledge constitutes an inseparable aspect of attainment. In the Qur'an, the word 'ilm (knowledge) generally refers to mystical knowledge, which signifies arrival at, and the attainment of, the object of knowledge. Thus, from the Qur'anic viewpoint, perfect and fruitful knowledge is that which leads to man's spiritual development and enables him to reach his destination.

It is for the reasons set forth above that mystical insight gives birth to wisdom, which is profound and comprehensive understanding of the truth. An understanding able to reveal all aspects of the truth, its roots, results and manifold relations with other realities can only be gained by attaining the truth itself. In abstract knowledge, which is perception of the form of an object, also known as acquired or formal knowledge (since it relies on form and idea), the final result is a picture of reality that is, in some cases, partial and incomplete. In many instances, then, this image-making process produces a picture of reality with color and properties very different from those of the original object. As a result, it not only does not reveal reality, but also becomes a veil that hides the truth from the perceiver.

What do you seek in formal studies?
How long will you pursue it?
Seek such knowledge that will free you
From all material attachments.
Seek that knowledge which illuminates the heart,
Turning the breast into Mount Sinai.
A knowledge that mastered,
Turns your heart into the Protected Tablet.
Seek that knowledge that cannot be found in books,
Is intuitive, not conveyed by words;
A knowledge that does not bring you low,
making you a slave of natural laws.
A knowledge that shall show you the way,
Reveal to you the eternal secret,
A knowledge which is not argumentative,
Entirely excellent, not discursive.
The knowledge that shall give you new life,

Believe me, is the science of love. 3

Thus, the truth and spirit of wisdom is mysticism, and the fruit of real mysticism is perfect wisdom:

Who can tell what goes on in
The hearts of those tormented by spiritual desire?
Who can take revenge from heaven
For the spilt blood of the wine-jar?
Except for the wise wine living in the vat,
Who can reveal to us the secret of wisdom.
Let the drunken Narcissus be put to shame
By the languishing gaze of wine-lovers,
If it dares to bud again.

This is the same wisdom that has been referred to by the Qur'an as 'the great benefit' (khayr-i kath¢r) 4 and is the best present that the prophets have made to mankind, and the best teachers of which have been the same divinely inspired prophets, the best of whom is Muhammad, may God bless him and his progeny.

He it is Who raised among the illiterates an Apostle from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom (al-hikma). 5

II: The subject of mysticism is the essence of God

The subject of mystical knowledge is the holy essence of the supreme Truth (dh¡t-i aqdas-i °aqq muta'¡l), while in all other forms of learning, even in jurisprudence and philosophy, it is God's signs and manifestations that are being investigated. For in all such sciences and disciplines, one or another of God's effects or manifestations is subjected to scientific or scholarly investigation and analysis, while the object of mystical knowledge is the holy essence of God Himself. Here, all His effects and manifestations are seen to be dissolved therein and serve merely to reflect His holy essence.

When the mystic saw Your face
Reflected in the cup,
The laughter of the wine
Inspired in him
A false expectation.
One brief reflection of your beauty
In the mirror
Gave birth to so many patterns
In that mirror of illusions.

The 'false expectation' mentioned above is that of attaining the 'true knowledge' referred to by the Prophet when he said, "We cannot truly know You (m¡ 'arafn¡ka ¦aqqa ma'rifatika)". It is also the subject of the request Moses makes of God: "O Lord, may I see you?," to which God answers, "I cannot be seen (lan tar¡n¢)". 6 It is also the phoenix that, according to °¡fe¨, cannot be trapped.

The phoenix is not to be caught,
Dismantle your trap!

In his abode, traps yield nothing.
When at the feast,
Drink a few cups and leave.
Do not set your heart
On everlasting union.

If, however, the attainment of perfect knowledge of God, which entails removal of all veils and boundaries that separate the seeker from the Beloved, is not possible, the removal of the 'self', which is the greatest of veils, is possible. It is this station of knowledge, consisting of the annihilation and dissolution of the individual self in God and its rebirth in the Divine, that is the goal of the mystic.

If we can kiss the threshold of the Beloved,
We can raise our head to the sky.
My bowed frame may seem worthless to you,
But it is from the bow that the arrow
May be shot, piercing the eye of the enemy.
The clothes worn by the dervish are not
The finery found at the royal court,
All I have is a patched and ragged robe
Which one can set on fire without remorse.
If the door leading to the great joy
Of union with You is opened,
Seekers shall prostrate themselves before that threshold,
Dazzled by that vision.

That 'bowed frame' from which one can aim an arrow at the eye of the enemy is no other than the soul that has undergone mortification and has submitted to God's will. As the result of this submission and mortification, it has gained the power to turn its back on everything except God, and this is identical with the aforementioned station of annihilation (fan¡').

The beauty of the Beloved is not hidden behind veils,
But you must settle the dust of the road, if you wish to see it.
If you desire the joy of being in His presence
And to have a soul which is in harmony,
This may be granted to you as a blessing by the enlightened ones.
But as long as you desire the lips of the beloved and the cup of wine,
Do not imagine that you can reach higher.
O heart, if you only become aware of the light of guidance,
Like a candle, laughing, you can lose your head.
If you heed this royal advice, O °¡fe¨,
You may tread upon the royal highway of Truth.

III: The faculty of mystical knowledge is the heart

In mystical knowledge the faculty of cognition is the very center of human awareness (the 'I'), also referred to as the 'heart,' while in other forms of knowledge, the faculty of perception is one of man's external faculties. All ordinary knowledge, whether sensual or rational, is gained through the faculties of the mind, reason or the senses, all of which constitute the lower reaches of the self, or, to put it another

way, are faculties created and developed by the self. On the other hand, man's self possesses a core, referred to as the heart, which constitutes the basis of his true life, and the death of which signals the termination of his real life and his fall into the jaws of death. For example, God addresses His Prophet in the following manner:

You can never make the dead listen to you. When the deaf run away from you, you cannot get them to listen to you. 7

The 'dead' referred to in the above verse are those who, in the words of the Qur'an, are 'dead at heart'. In other words, they are human beings whose hearts have stopped functioning and have been sealed:

Those infidels are the ones whose hearts, ears and eyes have been sealed by God. They are the ignorant, and inevitably, they shall be the losers in the hereafter. 8

When this 'heart', which is the center of man's true life, stops functioning, his powers of sight and hearing and the other powers and faculties of his real life also cease working, just as it has been pointed out in the above verse and in other Qur'¡nic verses. On the other hand, when the 'heart' is alive and vibrant, man's real life flourishes and his other faculties become lively, sharp and vibrant. It is in this condition that man becomes ready to accept the Truth that his inner being is illuminated by remembrance of God, and the way leading to union with the holy essence of the Almighty God is opened to him:

Verily in this Book there is a reminder for the one who has a heart, who has hearkened, and is a witness to the truth. 9

In the holy Qur'¡n, the loss of the 'heart' is equated with final and ultimate loss and is regarded as the greatest of all defeats and deprivations:

Those infidels are the ones whose hearts, ears and eyes have been sealed by God. They are the ignorant, and inevitably, they shall be the losers in the hereafter. 10

In the following verse the loss of the vital power of the 'heart', which is its ability to hear and see, is considered to be the ultimate loss of the self:

They could not hear or see. They are those who have lost themselves. And what they had falsely imagined, they could not get or benefit from. 11

Thus, it is in the heart that God is remembered and contacted and it is also the center of man's spiritual life and of his power of intuition and spiritual insight. This Qur'¡nic concept is one of the central themes of Islamic mystical literature, expressed in various forms. For example, in the following verses, R£m¢ states it in this manner:

If the mirror of the heart is cleansed
You shall behold otherworldly images in it;
You shall see the painting and the Painter;
You shall see the rug of creation and the Weaver 12

°¡fe¨ says:

For years the heart asked me for the magic cup;
What it already possessed, it begged from a stranger.
The gem that is free from the veil of time and space,
Pleaded with lost souls, wandering by the seashore.

The physical senses have no role whatsoever in this mode of perception:

There are five senses other than the material ones.
They are like gold, while the ordinary senses are like copper.
In the market of the experts,
How will they buy the copper senses at the same price
As the golden ones? 13

And:

Your imagination, thought, sense and understanding
Are like that wooden stick that the child fancies as his horse. 14

Nor can ordinary reason be of any assistance on this path:

Your amorous look proved such heady wine to lovers
That knowledge became foolish and reason lost its senses.
I wandered far and wide to ask the wise
The cause of the pain of separation.
But faced with this question, the judge of reason
Was turned into a mindless fool. (°¡fe¨)

IV: Mystical knowledge leads to action

One of the characteristics of mystical knowledge is that it leads to action (‘amal). Whenever it penetrates a heart, it transforms it. The transformation of the heart signifies change in the very essence of a human being. This transformation is accompanied by the purification of the heart and the sharpening and purifying of one’s inner, spiritual and intuitive perceptions. These would be impossible unless the individual humbles himself before the Beloved, the Supreme Reality.

What an amazing science is the astronomy of love,
Whose highest heavenly sphere is the lowest earthly plain!

In other words, in the science of love, in order to ascend to the highest point, one must descend to the lowest; that is, it is only by humbling itself that the soul may attain dissolution and annihilation in the divine Essence. It is impossible to reach high mystical states unless the individual self humbles itself before God and carries out His commands unconditionally, and this is not possible unless one thoroughly submits to the authority of His representatives and carries out their commands without hesitation.

Spill wine on the prayer rug,
If the sage so commands.

For the seeker should not be ignorant
Of the customs and ways of the stages
Upon the spiritual path.
Do not go near the neighborhood of love
Without a guide,
For I tried to do it by myself a hundred times
Without success.

It is for this reason that mystical knowledge is always accompanied by action. He who attains the heights of this form of insight shall find that his whole being has become spiritualized and his thoughts and actions have taken on the imprint of the Beloved. In contrast, intellectual knowledge is impotent and fruitless, in that it does not by itself lead to action nor require any particular transformation on the part of the human soul; it affects the mind and not the heart. If one so wills, it is translated into action, and if not, it will remain in the storehouse of the mind and may even be accompanied with behavior that directly contradicts it. This is the nature of all ordinary forms of knowledge, for they all deal with the mind and do not have the intrinsic power to shape one's behavior. On the other hand, mystical knowledge naturally orients and forms the individual's behavior and transforms it for the better. It can, therefore, be said that conventional forms of knowledge are like lights that illuminate the way for travelers, while mystical knowledge propels the seeker toward his objective, creating fervor, enthusiasm and movement.

Intellectual knowledge is all loss,
Hang on to love, the real knowledge.
This knowledge frees you
From multiplicity,
While that knowledge steals your soul.
This knowledge puts you upon the path
That frees you from all idolatry,
Whether open or hidden.
This knowledge is free of how and why
For its source is the Most High. (Shaykh Baha'e)

In the holy Qur'an, where the word 'ilm (knowledge) is used to signify the kind of insight that leads to seeking and action, reference is to mystical knowledge. For example, consider the following verses:

It is only the wise who fear God. 15
When the Qur'an is recited before those who have already accumulated knowledge, they shall prostrate themselves and say: "holy is our Creator, verily His promise has been fulfilled." Then, they shall put their foreheads to the ground and their humility shall be increased. 16
God shall raise those who have faith and have gained knowledge to exalted stations. 17

In many Qur'anic verses the terms 'reason' ('aql) and 'understanding' (fiqh) are used in such a manner as to indicate mystical insight and are therefore accompanied by such concepts as guidance toward man's aim in life, self-purification and right action. For example, we have the following verses:

Have they not traveled upon the earth, so that they may possess wise hearts and attentive ears? Verily, it is not eyes that are blinded, but hearts that are in breasts. 18

We have sent to Hell many men and jinn who did not use their hearts to know and their eyes to see and their ears to hear. They are like animals, maybe even more misled. They are the unheeding. 19

No one can believe in God unless He wills it. And none can contemplate Him until He has purified them. 20

The reason for the fact that impurity is the result of a lack of contemplation (ta'aqqul) is that this form of contemplation is the path of purity, and those who try to travel this path without sincerity and purity will reap nothing but impurity from it. Mystical insight is a fruit of the purity referred to in the above verse, a purity that is accompanied by right action and practice. In any case, in the verses mentioned above, and in similar ones, contemplation, jurisprudence and knowledge refer to mystical insight, and are therefore accompanied by practical effects. It is for this reason that this form of contemplation and understanding is considered by the Quran as a function of man's free will, and its loss is judged as the greatest sin committed by evil-doers. The denizens of Hell are quoted in the Quran in the following manner:

The evil-doers in Hell said: "If we had listened and thought we would not now be among the residents of hell." Thus they confessed their sin. Shame and damnation be upon those who live in Hell. 21

In Persian mystical literature this characteristic of mystical knowledge has received special attention and has been the subject of beautiful verses. For example, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi discusses this issue on a number of occasions, the following being one instance:

The knowledge of the men of spirit carries them,
While the knowledge of those who are in bondage to the body
Is a burden to them.
When the heart attains knowledge it gains a friend;
When the body acquires knowledge it only accumulates a burden.
God said, "They bear books like a burden,"
So, knowledge that is not of Him, is no more than a burden.
Knowledge that does not come directly from God
Will be no more permanent than makeup,
But if you carry this burden well,
It will be taken off your shoulders
And you shall be granted joy and happiness.
Do not carry about the burden of knowledge for selfish ends
So that you shall ride the chariot of knowledge.
When you ride the mount of knowledge
The burden shall drop off your back.
How are you going to free yourself from your
Selfish desires, without the aid of divine knowledge,
O you who are content to know only His name and not Himself?

The poem continues until we reach the following lines:

Like iron, abandon yourself.
By self-control, turn yourself into a spotless mirror.
Rid yourself of all your particularities,

So that you may behold your pure essence.
You shall behold the knowledge of the prophets in your heart,
Without the help of books, schools or teachers. 22

It should be pointed out here that the fact that mystical knowledge has a practical nature does not mean that those who gain it inevitably and invariably continue their journey upon the spiritual path. In other words, it does not cancel the seeker's free will and force him to ascend the higher rungs of the spiritual ladder, achieve proximity to God, and finally attain union with the Divine. On the contrary, in spite of having attained even the highest levels of spiritual illumination the seeker faces the ever-present danger of a sudden fall. In fact, the plunge from the heights of such spiritual knowledge is extremely terrible and painful, and is generally fatal and irreversible. If those who have succeeded in attaining the heights of spiritual knowledge, and before whose eyes the veils that hide profound and occult truths have been drawn aside, turn their backs on all that they have seen and tasted and descend from those exalted heights, their chances of salvation shall be slim indeed. Moreover, the higher the station they may have attained the more painful and devastating the fall shall be. The glorious Qur'an gives a number of instances in this regard, two of which are discussed below.

1. The first account concerns Bal'am bin Ba'awr¡', a Jewish man of great learning who had reached very high levels of mystical insight, so much so that he is referred to as "he on whom We bestowed our signs." However, he ultimately turned his back on the Goal and, in spite of all the divine signs that had been granted him, retreated from the path he had traveled and therefore suffered a fall so terrible that it is referred to in the Qur'¡n as 'mixing forever with the earth.'

Tell them the story of the man on whom We bestowed Our signs but he then withdrew from them and turned his back upon them. He was then misled by Satan and joined those who are lost. If We had wished, We could have raised him by those signs, but he turned toward the earth, mixed with it, and pursued his base desires. He is like a dog that barks whether you attack it or leave it alone. This is an example of those who turn their backs upon Our signs and reject them. Recount these stories to the people, perhaps it will make them reflect. 23

2. The second story involves the followers of Jesus Christ. Although things work out well for them in the end, it points out the fact that infidelity to the truth on the part of those who have attained genuine and high levels of spiritual knowledge is extremely hard and painful.

His disciples asked him, "O Jesus, son of Mary, can your God send us a table full of food from the sky?" He answered, "Be pious if you have faith." They answered, "We wish to eat from that table so that our hearts are pacified by the truth, that we may have faith in the existence of God and bear witness to it." Jesus, son of Mary, then prayed thus: "O Lord, send us a table of food from the sky, so that it may be a feast for all, whether those who came before us or those who may come after us, and to be a sign of You. Provide for us, since You are the best of providers." God answered: "Verily, I shall send down to you this table laid with food, and after that if any of you should disbelieve, I shall punish him more severely than any other human being on this earth." 24

The severity of the punishment for disbelief, that God promises shall follow the divine feast proves what was indicated above; namely, that the more profound the spiritual truths revealed, and the higher the level of certitude attained, the greater shall the damage and pain also be in case of a fall.

V: Mystical knowledge and love

Mystical knowledge is attachment, not description (it falls within the category of love, not representational knowledge).

That science which can give you new life,
Believe me, is the science of love. (Shaykh Bah¡’¢)

In ordinary forms of (representational) knowledge, the relationship between the knower and the known is that of perception and description (¦ik¡yat), and therefore does not require any form of unification or identification between the two. It can be likened to the relationship between a mirror and the objects it reflects. Mystical knowledge, however, requires such identification, since it is attachment and does not consist of perception and description. That is, the mystic disappears in his Beloved and this dissolution and annihilation, which is identical with attachment to the Beloved, is the real nature of mystical knowledge. This attachment and annihilation is that which is understood as love. The reality of love, then, is none other than annihilation and dissolution of the individual self in the holy essence of the Supreme Truth through losing oneself entirely in one’s love for Him. Attachment to any other thing is nothing but illusion and fantasy, and love for anything else is not true love but a passing infatuation:

This cry of the flute is not wind, but fire.
May he perish who is not ablaze with it. (R£m¢)

And:

There is no room for contraries in the hermitage of the heart.
Only when the demon has left will the angel come in. (°¡fe¨)

It is for the above-mentioned reason that mysticism can be defined as the science of becoming like the known to such a degree that one attains complete identification with it. At this stage the seeker is annihilated and dissolved in it. The ladder by which the seeker ascends towards this annihilation and dissolution in God is love. This ability to become like the Beloved, to love, and to liberate the soul from the material body, is a very special characteristic of man, something that no other creature, not even angels, possess. The source of this love and spirituality is none other than the ‘breathing’ mentioned in the Qur’¡n: "I breathed my spirit into him".25 It is indeed this divine breath that is the cause of this tumult and uproar, and which drives man towards the Beloved.

I do not know who is inside this weary-hearted breast,
For though I am silent, He is in uproar and tumult. (°¡fe¨)

This is the same divine inspiration that has raised man from lifeless earth to the unique station of God’s viceroy on earth, dressed him in the robe of honor, and made him worthy of veneration by angels.

Last night I saw angels knocking on the door of the tavern,
kneading the clay of man and soaking it in a wine cup.
Residents of the most holy and chaste heaven
Became drinking partners with me, a humble beggar.
Heaven could not bear the burden of trust,
So I, a madman, was chosen. (°¡fe¨)

Angels are manifestations of reason, and thus do not partake of love. With man's creation, love entered the world and gave it vitality, warmth and movement. In the realm of reason things are undifferentiated and uniform. What exists and must exist exists and what does not exist and must not exist does not exist. That is all. But that being which is intermingled with nothingness arises out of non-existence and soars towards infinite being, is love. It transcends reason. It is in the realm of love where the visible and the invisible, the outward and the inward, matter and spirit, mix and God manifests Himself in the form of His Names. It is here that the universe comes to life, is filled with vitality, need and desire, giving rise to a movement that begins from the boundaries of non-existence and extends into infinity. In the words of °¡fe¨, it is love that has set the world aflame, filling it with passion, fervour and ecstasy.

In pre-existence the rays of Your beauty dawned,
So, love appeared and set the whole world ablaze.
Your visage revealed itself for an instant,
And seeing that there was no love in angels
Was so offended that it turned into a flame and set man afire.
Reason wanted to light a lamp from that fire,
But the lightening of zeal threw the world into disarray.
The pretender wanted to enter the abode of the mystery,
But a hand emerged from the invisible realm
And pushed the uninitiated away. (°¡fe¨)

Thus, angels, who are manifestations of reason, failed to understand the secret of Adam's creation, and God revealed this secret through the science of Names. The divine Names, as explained in numerous narrations, 26 are the holy spirits of the prophet Muhammad and his progeny. These are the manifestations of the divine Essence and perfect representations of divine love in the world of creation. It is indeed for this very reason that the way to pay back the Prophet Muhammad for his mission and teachings is love for him and his descendants. For the soul of external religious observances (shar¢'a) is none other than the inner spiritual path (§ar¢qa). It is in this inner spiritual realization that the external observances bear fruit. Without this inner insight, man is nothing but a lifeless corpse. Finally, the inner path is true love alone and can be summed up in total obedience to the authority and guidance of Muhammad and his progeny.

Without exertion you will get nowhere on this path;
If you want to be rewarded, obey the master. (°¡fe¨)

And:

Angels know nothing of love, do not waste your breath,
Get a cup of wine and pour it upon the dust of man. (°¡fe¨)

Notes:

1-Mawl¡n¡ Jal¡l al-d¢n R£m¢ (d. 1274), perhaps the greatest Persian Sufi poet. Born in Balkh in present-day Afghanistan, he moved to Konya in Anatolia where he founded a Sufi brotherhood. He was buried in Konya and his tomb has become a major Sufi centre of learning and practice. He is best known of two works of poetry, the didactic anecdotal collection of stories, the Mathnav¢, and his collection of mystical odes dedicated to his inspiration Shams-i Tabr¢z¢, known as the D¢v¡n-i kab¢r-i Shams-i Tabr¢z¢. See

the recent work of Franklin Lewis, Rumi: past and present, East and West, Oxford: Oneworld Publications 1999.

2-Shams al-D¢n Mu¦ammad °¡fe¨ Sh¢r¡z¢ (d. 1389), great Persian lyric poet and master of the ghazal form. See A.J. Arberry, Classical Persian Literature, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1958, pp. 329-63.

3-Shaykh Bah¡' al-D¢n Mu¦ammad ibn °usayn al-'ªmil¢ (d. 1621), Safavid polymath and Shaykh al-Isl¡m in Isfahan under Sh¡h 'Abb¡s I. For a study of his literary achievements, see C.E. Bosworth, Bah¡' al-D¢n al-'ªmil¢ and his literary anthologies, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1989.

4-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-Baqara 2: 269.

5-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-Jum'a 62: 2
6-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-A'r¡f 7: 143.

7-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-Namal 27: 80

8-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-Na¦l 16: 108-109

9-Qur'¡n, S£rat Q¡f 50: 37

10-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-Na¦l 16: 108-109

11-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-H£d 11: 20-21

12-R£m¢, Mathnav¢, daftar II: 73-74

13-R£m¢, Mathnav¢, daftar II: 49-50

14-R£m¢, Mathnav¢, daftar I: 3445

15-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-F¡§ir 35: 28

16-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-Isr¡' 17: 107-109

17-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-Muj¡dila 58: 11

18-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-°ajj 22: 46

19-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-A'r¡f 7: 179

20-Qur'¡n, S£rat Y£nus 10: 100

21-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-Mulk 67: 10

22-R£m¢, Mathnav¢, daftar I: 3446-3461

23-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-A'r¡f 7: 175-176

24-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-M¡'ida 5: 112-115

25-Qur'¡n, S£rat al-°ijr 29: 15 and S£rat ¯¡d 72: 38.

26-That is, a¦¡d¢th or reports from the Prophet and the Sh¢'ite Im¡ms.

Intentionality in Mull¡ ¯adr¡

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Abstract

This paper considers the nature of intentionality in the thought of Mulla Sadra. By examining his proofs and arguments for the existence of a mental realm of being, one elucidates his doctrine of intentionality and how those cognitive mental states relate to cognisable objects. One alludes to some features of the Sadrian account that are similar to Husserlian phenomenology's postulation of two levels of cognitive objects. Existence and knowledge are intimately connected. It is only through an account of existence, especially of mental existence, that one can give an account of how the mind cognises extra-mental existence. It is this relationship and the very nature of consciousness that lie at the heart of Sadrian epistemology. One accesses this account through considering his doctrine of intentionality.

Mulla Sadra (d. 1641), one of the great Islamic philosophers, has dealt extensively with the problem of mental existence (al-wuj£d al-dhihn¢). Apart from dedicating an important section in his magnum opus, al-Asf¡r, 1 in which he deals extensively with the justificatory proofs and the philosophical significance of this issue, he has an elaborate discussion on the same issue in the sixth volume of al-Asf¡r. 2 One of the proofs for the separate and independent existence of the mind is that we conceive universal concepts in our minds, whereas everything whatever, in the external world is particular and the universal as such does not exist in the outer world. 3 Another proof is that we sometimes make affirmative judgements about non-existent entities such as a gryphon ('anq¡) or about logical contradictions which by definition cannot have a concrete existence other than in our minds.4 Another name for mental existence in Mulla Sadra is cognitive existence (al-wuj£d al-'ilm¢). The latter term is applied either to the existence in the mind or to the relationship between the knower (the cognitive subject, al-'¡qil) and the known (the cognitive object, al-ma'q£l). This paper will consider the relationship between this mental mode of being and extra-mental reality and examine the resultant theory of intentionality in Mulla Sadra.

Knowledge, in the true sense of the word, according to Mulla Sadra is the presence of something to something else and in order that such a presence to another can be realized, it is necessary that it should be present to itself.

Because the presence of something to something else is a concomitant of that thing being present to itself. 5

So the more a thing is in possession of self-presence, the more it partakes of being and knowledge.

Knowledge in Sadra's view is analogous to being (inna l-'ilm k-al-wuj£d); indeed, knowledge and being are one and the same thing. 6 So knowledge, like being is sometimes applied to the real and concrete thing, and sometimes knowledge is said of an abstract, relative (rational) and derivative object, and it is from the latter that the relational terms such as knowledge, the knower and the known are derived. Moreover, since knowledge and being are co-extensive and coterminous, one could say that when being is weak (in the intensity of existence) such that it borders on non-existence and is tinged with all sorts of deficiency and imperfection, then it is deprived of all faculties of perception. In such a state it is absent to itself. This is due to the fact that it lacks unitive existence (al-wuj£d al-j¡mi') and presential reality (¦aq¢qa ¦u¤£riyya). These beings, therefore, are deprived of any cognitive being. So even if existence is attributed to them, such correlative terms as knowledge, knower and known are not predicated of them.

The axis of knowledge and ignorance – and also of light and darkness, manifestation and self-concealment and of presence and absence – revolves around the intensity and the weakness of being. So whenever being has stronger reality and more intense actuality and more complete and total ipseity, it has stronger self-revelation (inkish¡f), more intense self-manifestation and is more all-encompassing with respect to things. But when being is weak and deficient, it is more deficient in manifestation. 7

Moreover, Mull¡ ¯adr¡ makes a very significant distinction with respect to the object of knowledge, which makes him a predecessor of Husserl concerning the distinction the latter makes between the content of the thing known, on the one hand, its object on the other. 8 According to Mull¡ ¯adr¡, there are two kinds of object of knowledge or the thing known (ma'l£m). 9 The first kind is that whose very existence in itself is identical to its existence for the percipient (or the subject of perception). In other words, its objective form is exactly the same as its cognitive form. Mull¡ ¯adr¡ calls this kind of ma'l£m or object, the object known essentially (al-ma'l£m bi l-dh¡t) or the essential object of knowledge.

The second kind of object of knowledge (ma'l£m) is that whose very existence in itself is other than its existence for the percipient. Or in other words, its objective form is not identical to its cognitive form. Such an object is known as al-ma'l£m bi l-'ara¤ or the object known accidentally, or the accidental object of knowledge. So knowledge too, has two different senses with reference to these two objects of knowledge. In the first instance (the object known essentially) knowledge consists of the presence of the form perceived in (the mind) of the percipient. By this presence, one means that knowledge is identical to the object known. In the second instance, knowledge consists of the acquired form of the thing known in the percipient which refers to an object outside the perceptive faculty such as the heaven, the earth, a tree, a horse and so on. We can, therefore, say that when we look at a tree, the tree that is in the external world and outside our mental reality, is known accidentally by the mind. But its idea in the mind, which is present in the mind and is identical to the perceiver's mental content is known essentially or in other words, is an essential object of knowledge.

Here Mull¡ ¯adr¡ draws a very daring metaphysical conclusion. If, as we said, the mind's knowledge of itself and of the content of consciousness, constitute essential knowledge (whereas the mind's knowledge of the objects in the external world is accidental), then we can divide being into perceptual and non-perceptual being and divide the world into the visible and the invisible. In accordance with our division of knowledge into the essential and the accidental, it follows that our knowledge of the external world, being accidental, lacks the apriority that we normally ascribe to it. On the contrary, obscurity and being absent to itself are the attributes of this world.

From what we said it is evident that being is divided into two kinds, namely the perceptual and the non-perceptual and again there are two worlds accordingly namely, the visible and the invisible. They are what we call this world and the next. Naming the next world, the invisible and this world, the visible is only with respect to the weakness of our vision and not with respect to things as they are in themselves, because absence and obscurity are among the essential concomitants of this worldly existence, whereas presence and true vision are among the essential concomitants of other-worldly existence, with the multifarious degrees and ranks of the paradise. Every rank, which is more remote from this world, and more freed and elevated from matter is more intense in manifestation and possesses more presence, unity and integrity. 10

According to Mulla Sadra, knowledge by presence (al-‘ilm al-¦u¤£r¢), in which the existence of the object in itself is the same as its existence for the percipient, is the sine qua non of knowledge by acquisition (al-‘ilm al-¦u¥£l¢) in which our knowledge of a thing is mediated by a mental concept which refers to that thing outside ourselves. 11 So in the ultimate sense, without knowledge by presence, in which knowledge is identical in the mind to the thing known, no knowledge would be possible. In the words of Mulla Sadra,

In both kinds of knowledge, that which is really known and essentially revealed is the form whose being is a perceptual and luminous being, pure from all material paraphernalia and uncontaminated by any kind of non-existence and darkness. 12

Mulla Sadra then goes on to elaborate on the point that our self-knowledge is something objective and real and that we know our selves by a form, which is our very being, and not by a form, which is extraneous or super added to our being. Everybody perceives himself by himself in a manner that does not allow participation by other persons. Were our perception of ourselves to be mediated by an acquired and extraneous concept in ourselves, that concept would be universal and a conglomeration of universals would not be able to constitute our concrete ipseity to which we refer by expressions such as ‘I’ (an¡’).

So our knowledge of ourselves is the same as the being of our proper selves and our personal ipseity. 13

Mulla Sadra puts forth some arguments to prove not only that the soul knows itself by itself without the intervention of an intermediary concept, it also knows its own faculties, such as those of perception and locomotion immediately and without recourse to intermediary concepts.

The first proof

The soul administers its proper body and utilizes its personal faculties. The soul, for instance, uses the cogitative faculty (mutafakkira) to differentiate and combine the particulars and to arrange the middle terms of a syllogism. They are necessarily particular forms, which exist in the spectacle of the soul, being present and exemplified in it. The soul is able to change these particular forms as it wishes. Its can change their order; it can add to or subtract from them. All these alterations and changes made by the soul are concrete and personal, and not universal or ambiguous. The same is also true about the organs deployed to bring about such arrangements and alterations. So the soul perceives all its faculties, whether they be physical, imaginal, retentive, re-collective or otherwise, and witnesses them as they are in themselves and not through conceptualization. Otherwise, it would need an infinite sequence of concepts.14

The second proof

If the perception of such things were through the intermediary of mental concepts, which are derived and abstracted from things, then we would have to perceive them in a general and universal fashion. But the consequent is false and so is the antecedent.15

The third proof

It sometimes happens that some disease afflicts us, or we experience the dispersal of unity in an organ, through which we feel extreme pain. But this feeling of pain is not through an accidental form, which supervenes over the organ, but the very dispersal of unity is the cause of pain and its mere presence is sufficient cause for the perception of pain. 16

The fourth proof

When we perceive something that is outside our mind and our mental faculties, we perceive it through a corresponding (conceptual) form, which obtains in our minds. But we perceive that obtained form by itself and not through another supervening form. Otherwise it would follow that an indefinite number of conceptual forms would occur in the same locus (mind) for one and the same thing.17

According to Mulla Sadra, the primary knowledge of our soul (mind) is its self-knowledge, the knowledge it has of itself and then its knowledge of its faculties and again the organs of those faculties, which are the internal and the external senses. These too are kinds of knowledge by presence. When the soul uses an organ, it is not through any cogitation or deliberation, but it is an intentional and volitional act, not disengaged or separated from knowledge. On the contrary, according to Mulla Sadra, in the intentional act, knowledge and volition are one and the same thing. Moreover, knowledge and volition are not supervenient elements in the soul, but constitute its very essence. So the mere intentional attention of the soul (iltif¡t al-nafs) towards something is sufficient cause for the presence of its form in the mind.

So perception is nothing but the intentionality of the soul towards the thing perceived and its immediate vision (mush¡had¡tuh¡) and the latter is not through a universal, but through a particular form. So the soul necessarily possesses an illuminative knowledge by presence. It is in need of a supervenient mental form, only when the existence of the perceived object is not luminous perceptual existence, such for example, as physical bodies and their accidents. 18

Mulla Sadra makes a clear-cut distinction between the first or primary intention (al-qa¥d al-awwal) and the second or secondary intention. These two terms which go back to such medieval philosophers as St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), can be traced back to Avicenna and as a matter of fact are used in his magnum opus, Kit¡b al shif¡'. 19 There a distinction is made between the first intention (primum intentio, al-qa¥d al-awwal) and the second intention (secundum intentio, al-qa¥d al-th¡n¢). The referents of the primum intentio exist outside the mind, such as one's idea of a horse. The objects of the secundum intentio such as a universal horse, exist primarily in the mind and secondarily (or by second intention) in the external world.

Mulla Sadra, making use of such a distinction, ties it up with another distinction he has already made concerning the object of knowledge. But here the two terms get a different significance from the medieval usage. The primary object of knowledge which he calls al-ma'l£m bi l-dh¡t, is known essentially

and by the first intention of the soul (bi l-qa¥d al-awwal). The things existing outside the mind are known accidentally and by a second intention of the mind.

That which is known in reality is the same as the form that is present in the mind and not what exists outside the mind. When we say concerning a thing which exists outside the mind, that it is known to us, it is known by a second intention (bi-qa¥din th¡nin) just as "existent" is sometimes said of the reality of an existent quiddity. What is really existent, is the former which is determined and distinct in reality, contrary to the quiddity which is in itself something ambiguous and undetermined. So when we predicate existence of a quiddity it is only by the second intention (bi-qa¥din th¡nin). 20

One of the features of the essential object of knowledge, which, according to Mull¡ ¯adr¡ is the object known by the first intention (ma'l£m bi l-qa¥d al-awwal), is that the percipient and the perceived, the objective and the subjective poles of existence are one and the same thing. Or in other words, the existence of the known object is identical to its existence for its subject. This principle does not only apply to the faculty of intellection in which the act, the subject and the object of intellection are one and the same, a Porphyrian principle to which Avicenna had objected (Mulla Sadra tried to reinstate and demonstrate the Porphyrian principle as a necessary condition for the sheer possibility of knowledge). 21 It also applies to all levels of consciousness, to imagination, sensation and even to the estimative faculty.

It should be known that the object of intellection (al-ma'q£l) qua an object of intellection (which is an object of intellection in essence and reality) is such that its existence in itself, and its existence for the agent of intellection ('¡qil) and its intelligibility (ma'q£liyya) are one and the same thing, without any difference in their modality. In the same way the sensible qua sensible, which is the essential object of sensation, the sensible form exemplified in the sensible substance, is such that its existence in itself and its existence for the sensible agent are one and the same thing without any difference in modality.22

We might ask what are the metaphysical grounds whereby the human soul (mind) acquires attributes such as knowing, willing, intending, creating and so on. We should not, as philosophers, take such phenomena for granted, and must have some ontological justification for such phenomena, otherwise we have not explained them at all. This question is one with which a phenomenologist is not concerned, because he reminds us always of his philosophical slogan 'back to phenomena themselves' (sozein ta phainomena). So he has to explain everything with reference to phenomena alone. Such is not the case with philosophers such as Plato and Mulla Sadra for whom philosophy is concerned with answering the ultimate questions. Why is there consciousness (knowledge) rather than nothing?

Answering this question is one of the main concerns of Mulla Sadra. For him, such attributes as consciousness, knowledge, power, creation and so on are possible, if possible at all, because the human mind or soul, has a theomorphic nature. All its qualities and attributes are divine by nature. God does not have a peer or an equal like unto himself (mithl) but God can have an image (mith¡l) like unto Himself. The human soul is that very image.

He created the human soul as an image for His Essence, Attributes and Acts. Because He, the Almighty is far transcendent to have an equal, but not from having an image. So He created the soul as His image with respect to essence, attributes and actions. So the knowledge of the soul is a ladder to his knowledge. So He made the essence of the soul free from the contamination of the worldly existence and from place and the four directions. He made her possessed of power, knowledge, volition, life, hearing and sight and made for her a kingdom and sight and made for her a kingdom similar to that of

the creator, so that she is able to create and choose whatever she wills. Except that, even if she is from the kingdom of spirit, the realm of power, and the mine of grandeur and majority, she is weak in existence and inborn nature, due to the fact that having been captivated in this cycle of descent there are now many intermediary veils between her and the creator. The multiplicity of intermediaries between a thing and the fountainhead of being causes its feebleness and weakness of being. 23

As a corollary of the deformed nature of the human mind, Sadra reiterates that one should explain the efficient causality of the soul, in line with its theomorphic nature. The human mind is not an affective receptacle for the material forms of things. He totally rejects the impression theory of philosophers like Hume or other Muslim adherents of such a theory. Human mind is more like the creative origination of forms than their passive receptacle. In other words, the subsistence of forms in the human mind is not the so-called immanentist subsistence (qiy¡m ¦ul£l¢). It is another kind of subsistence, which he calls originating subsistence (qiy¡m ¥ud£r¢). To understand this theory, an explanation is in order.24

There are two rival theories of vision among Muslim philosophers. According to the first theory, vision consists in the rays of light emanating from the envisioned object that affect or impress the retina and as a consequence, vision occurs. This is called the impressionist theory of vision, held by Muslim physicists (hence called the physical theory). According to the second theory, when we see an object, rays of light emanate from our eye, or better our soul, and reaching the object make it visible. This theory was held by some Muslim mathematicians and hence is called the mathematical theory of vision.

Suhraward¢, made the latter a metaphysical theory and put forth the theory of the illuminative relation (i¤¡fa ishr¡qiyya) by which he tried to expound the reality of divine knowledge and which Mull¡ ¯adr¡ used to explain the intentional nature of consciousness and developed it into its more refined form of the theory of originating subsistence (qiy¡m ¥ud£r¢). 25 According to Suhraward¢, in such relations as paternity and fraternity, it is necessary that the two terms should exist beforehand, so that the relation can be realized. A father is a father for an existing son. A brother is a brother for an existing sister, without being its cause. But there is another kind of relationship, such as luminosity, in which, one term of the relation is enough for the relation to be realized. Such is for example when a source of light illuminates its whereabouts and originates the other term of relation, that is light. This kind of relation is called the illuminative or luminous relation (i¤¡fah ishr¡qiyya) and he utilizes it to explain the creative and the causal relationship of God.26

It is evident that things exist outside us and so we cannot be their originating cause when we perceive them. But according to Mulla Sadra, when we encounter an object the mind immediately creates the image identical with the object without being impressed by it. The subsistence of the image in our mind is not by impression or by immanence (¦ul£l) but by origination (¥ud£r).

Notes:

1-Al-°ikma al-muta‘¡liya f¢ l-asf¡r al-‘aqliyya al-arba‘a, ed. R. Lu§f¢ et al, 3rd edition, 9 vols., Tehran: Mu’assasat d¡r i¦y¡’ al-tur¡th al-‘arab¢ 1981, vol. I, pp. 363-95.

2-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 149-306.

3-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. I, p. 272.

4-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. I, pp. 269-70.

5-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. III, p. 383.; cf. vol. I, pp. 53, 61, 412-13.

6-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. III, p. 336; cf. vol. I: 290, vol. III, pp. 402, vol. VI, pp. 125, 150.

7-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. III, p. 383.

8-Cf. Levinas, "Intentionality and metaphysics," in Discovering existence with Husserl, trs. R.A. Cohen & M.B. Smith, Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1998, pp. 122-29.

9-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 151 ff.

10-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. Vi, pp. 151-52.

11-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, p. 163. Cf. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, The principles of epistemology in Islamic philosophy: knowledge by presence, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992, pp. 43-56.

12-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, p. 155.

13-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, p. 157.

14-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 157-58.

15-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 158-59.

16-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 159-60.

17-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 160-61.

18-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, p. 162.

19-Avicenna, al-Shif¡': al-il¡hiyy¡t, eds. I. Madk£r et al, Cairo: al-hay'a al-'¡mma 1960, p. 126.

20-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, p. 163.

21-Cf. Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. III, p. 323, vol. VI, pp. 165-6.

22-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 165-66.

23-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, p. 252.

24-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 170-74.

25-Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 249-52. Cf. Suhraward¢, °ikmat al-ishr¡q [The philosophy of Illumination], eds.trs. H. Ziai & J. Walbridge, Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press 1999, p. 106.

26-Suhraward¢, °ikmat al-ishr¡q, pp. 46-7, 52, 114.

Proofs for the Existence and Unity of God in Greek and Islamic Thought, with an Emphasis on Ibn ‘Arab¢’s Barzakh and its Role in Proving God’s Existence and Unity

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Abstract

This paper considers the proofs for the existence and unity of God in the thought of the Andalusian Sufi master Ibn ‘Arab¢ (d. 1240) by analyzing his concept of the ontological mediatory entity that is the barzakh. After considering rational proofs for the existence of God in the Hellenic tradition and in the classical Islamic traditions exemplified by Ibn S¢n¡ (d. 1037) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), the author considers Ibn ‘Arab¢’s proof for God derived from the revelation and argues for a rational proof based upon the concept of the barzakh as the Limit.

In introducing the barzakh, as the concept on the basis of which Ibn ‘Arab¢ established his proofs for the existence and the unity of God, I follow the same procedure that I carried out in my doctoral dissertation. 1 I start with a discussion of the proofs for God’s existence and unity in Greek philosophy, especially in the thought of the two great philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. I proceed with the discussion of the proofs for God’s existence and unity in medieval Islamic theological and philosophical traditions. On the basis of these discussions, I introduce Ibn ‘Arab¢’s thought about the subject. To some readers an elaborate reference to the philosophers in this context might require some sort of justification, since Ibn ‘Arab¢ rarely mentioned the philosophers in his writings. It should be noted, however, that the goal of this paper is not merely to provide a detailed historical account of the philosophers’ proofs for the existence and the unity of God. Rather, it is to present their thought on this subject as a suitable background for presenting Ibn ‘Arab¢’s view.2

Proofs for the existence and the unity of God in Plato and Aristotle

The Pre-Socratic philosophers searched for first principles to account for the element of unity in the changing plurality of appearances. Consequently, they established a fundamental distinction between appearances and their reality, which is represented by ‘first principles’. Despite this fundamental distinction, a logical connection was called for to relate appearances to their principles as effects are related to their causes. As Lloyd Gerson points out, Parmenides showed that establishing this kind of connection would be impossible if appearances and the source of their reality were considered as completely separated from each other. According to Gerson, Parmenides’ arguments were so convincing that the history of Greek philosophical theology could be seen as a series of responses to his challenge.3

Plato articulated one of the most serious responses to Parmenides’ challenge. Gerson points out that Plato did not provide a systematic exposition of his thoughts on theology. Nevertheless, he thinks that theological themes affected every important entity in Plato’s philosophy, and that his theological thought can be approached effectively through his theory of the Forms. An argument for a Platonic Form is like an argument for God. 4 In both cases, the argument is to the effect that in dealing with plurality and change, we are compelled by epistemological considerations to postulate the existence of a unifying principle that makes the practice of acquiring knowledge possible. This should become clear from the following Platonic argument for the existence of the Forms:

(1) Scientific practice exists.

(2) Central to scientific practice is the making of hypotheses.

(3) Scientific hypotheses are inductive generalizations where we make predictions about the future behaviour of an unobserved sample by extending our observations from an observed sample.

(4) Such inductive generalizations are only rationally justified if we assume that the observed sample and the unobserved sample have some one thing in common.

(5) This one thing that the observed and the unobserved samples have in common must not exist in space and time, since the samples occupy different areas of space/time and a single physical thing cannot exist in two places at the same time. Therefore,

(6) We are committed to the existence of some one thing that the two physical things have in common and this thing must not itself be physical.5

The argument states that the scientific practice of acquiring knowledge exists in reality, and that, in order to justify rationally the scientific generalizations that we perform in this practice, we are committed to the existence of the Forms. Furthermore, the argument shows that Forms must be 'ones' and incorporeal. The argument shows, therefore, that Forms must exist and that they must exist as 'ones' or unities. The main problem with the conclusion of this argument is that there seems to be a serious difficulty about presenting the Forms as genuinely 'ones' and, at the same time, as predicated of many things. This difficulty was raised by Plato himself against his theory of the Forms in Parmenides:

Parmenides: Then each thing that partakes receives as its share either the form as a whole or a part of it? Or can there be any other way of partaking besides this?
Socrates: No, how could there be?
Parmenides: Do you hold, then, that the form as a whole, a single thing, is in each of the many, or how?
Socrates: Why should it not be in each, Parmenides?
Parmenides: If so, a form which is one and the same will be at the same time, as a whole, in a number of things which are separate, and consequently, will be separate from itself. 6

The kind of criticism that Plato introduced against his own theory of the Forms restated Parmenides' principal objection to positing an entity that is separated from, yet is the cause of its effects. In Parmenides, Plato confirms the claim that attributing absolute unity to the Forms, that is, investing them with an independent status results in serious difficulties. Moreover, if the logical relation between the Forms and the things that participate in them turns out to be problematic, then positing the Forms fails to account for the logical connections between the things that participate in them and, consequently, it fails to account for the practice of acquiring knowledge. From a skeptical point of view, one that characterizes Plato's reasoning in Parmenides, this criticism must be destructive to the theory of the Forms. From a dialectical point of view, however, this need not be the case.7 For, from this point of view, endowing the Forms with independent traits 8 is meant to be one step in a dialectical argument that leads eventually to positing a higher principle of unity, a principle that provides for the unity of the Forms that is questioned in Parmenides. In the Republic, this higher principle of unity found its formulation in Plato's concept of the Good, a supreme Form that is responsible for the existence and the unity of all other Forms:

In like manner, then, you are to say that the objects of knowledge not only receive from the presence of the good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived to them from it, though the good itself is not essence but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power.9

The Good transcends existence and knowledge. But the transcendence stated in this passage is dialectical, in the paradoxical double sense that the Good preserves the specific unity of existence and knowledge through transcending them. The ambiguity surrounding this notion of transcendence creates a serious difficulty concerning the possibility of the rational comprehension of the Good, the highest Form of unity. The same ambiguity characterizes Plato's introduction of the notion of the Receptacle in Timaeus. In this dialogue, 10 Plato stresses the limitations of reason in comprehending the notion of the Receptacle, as he stressed its limitations in comprehending the notion of the Good in Republic. In both cases, Plato makes it clear that positing higher forms of unity is necessary for coping with the epistemological difficulties that arise from reflecting on the relation between the Forms and the objects that participate in them. In order to safeguard the unity of the Forms, Plato was compelled to posit a yet higher form of unity. However, in order to do so, he had to conceive of this higher form of unity as free from the finitude or determinateness that was revealed in the nature of the Forms. But how can that which is infinite be comprehended? For we know that infinity means unlimitation and unlimitation means lack of definition. It was the positing of the actual existence of that which is infinite that led Aristotle to his principal objection to the theory of the Forms, a theory that made such positing necessary.

Aristotle reasserted the points of criticism introduced by Plato against his own theory of the Forms. His criticism can be based on the claim that whether we separate the Forms from the things that participate in them, or, whether we establish a relation between them, we face serious difficulties. If we reflect in terms of absolute separation on the 'relation' between the sensible things and the Forms, we can no longer speak about the Forms as causes of sensible things:

Above all one might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things, either to those that are eternal or to those that come into being and cease to be. For they cause neither movement nor any change in them. But again they help in no way towards the knowledge of the other things (for they are not even the substance of these, else they would have been in them), nor towards their being, if they are not in the particulars which share in them; though if they were, they might be thought to be causes, as white causes whiteness in that with which it is mixed.11

On the other hand, if we try to relate the Forms to the things that participate in them we end up with an infinite regress:

If that which is predicated truly of several things also exists in separation from these (this is what the believers in Ideas think they prove; the reason why, according to them, man-himself exists is that 'man' is predicated truly of the many particular men, and is other than they) – if this be so, there will be a third man. For, if the 'man' which is predicated is different from those of whom it is predicated, and exists independently, and 'man' is predicated both of particular men and of the Idea of man, there will be a third man apart both from particular men and from the Idea. On this basis, too, there will be a fourth man, predicated both of the third man, of the Idea, and of the particulars; and similarly a fifth, and so ad infinitum.12

For one thing, if the Forms are separated from sensible objects they cannot be their causes, because to be a cause of a thing is to cause movement in it, whereas the Forms cannot cause movement in sensible

things due to their separation from them. For another, if the Forms are related to sensible things, an infinite regress results. Aristotle's belief in the necessity of the existence of a causal relation between sensible things and the principle that moves them, 13 and his conviction that the relation between sensible things and the principle that moves them should not lead to an infinite regress play a major role in his proof for the existence of God. There are two premises on the basis of which Aristotle's proof of the existence of God from motion is established: the premise that "everything that is in motion must be moved by something", 14 and the premise that "one thing cannot proceed from another, as from matter, ad infinitum. Nor…can efficient causes form an endless series." 15 Combining these two premises, we arrive at the conclusion that there must exist a First Cause, the Prime Mover of Aristotle. This was Aristotle's proof for the existence of God from motion, which he established in the Physics and the Metaphysics.16

As Gerson points out, Aristotle's physical proof for the existence of God from motion does not exclude the possibility of the existence of more than one prime mover, which must be disastrous as a metaphysical conclusion. 17 This metaphysical consideration is what led Aristotle for providing complementary proofs for the incorporeality and the unity of the First Cause. His proof for the incorporeality of the First Cause is the following:

It has been shown also that this substance cannot have any magnitude, but is without parts and indivisible. For it produces movement through infinite time, but nothing finite has infinite power. And, while every magnitude is either infinite or finite, it cannot, for the above reason, have finite magnitude, and it cannot have infinite magnitude because there is no infinite magnitude at all.18

Aristotle provides two arguments for the unity of the First Cause. The first argument is based on the incorporeality of the First Cause. Gerson provides the following summary of the argument:

If there are many distinct motions to be accounted for, then the unmoved movers will be many in number but one in form. But all things that are many in number but one in form have matter. The primary substance, however, cannot have matter because it is pure actuality. The unmoved mover must, therefore, be one in form and in number.19

Aristotle's second proof for the unity of the First Cause is based on the continuous nature of motion:

It is evident also from the following that there must be some one mover which is eternal. Now we have shown that there must always be a motion, and if always, it must also be continuous; for also that which exists always may also be continuous, but what is in succession is not [necessarily] continuous. Further, if [a motion is] continuous, it is one. And it is one if both the mover is one and the thing in motion is one; for if now one thing causes it to move and now another, the whole motion will be not continuous but in succession.20

As we can see, Aristotle's arguments for the existence and unity of God are established on the basis of his belief in the impossibility of the actual existence of the infinite. The series of causes must have a first cause, since otherwise it will consist of an infinite number of intermediate causes, with no first cause to initiate motion. Aristotle admitted, however, that the assumption that the infinite does not exist in any way leads to impossible consequences. The most important of these consequences is that there will be a beginning and end of time. 21 But the existence of time cannot have limits, since the definition of time is the 'now' between 'before' and 'after'. 22 There is a sense, however, in which the infinite exists. The infinite has a potential existence. Time exists as a potential infinite in the sense that its parts exist

successively not simultaneously. Since time is potentially infinite, the world cannot have a beginning or end in time. This conclusion was not in harmony with the theological principles of Islamic theologians, who believed in the creation of the world in time, that is, in the finitude of the world's time. Moreover, Islamic theologians established their proof for the existence of God on the basis of the assumption that the time of the existence of the world is finite.

Proofs for the existence and the unity of God in Islamic theology and philosophy

As Herbert Davidson points out, in their proofs for the existence of God Islamic theologians followed the 'Platonic procedure' as it was introduced in Timaeus. Following this procedure, the theologians first indicated that the world is generated and then they argued that the generation of the world necessitates the existence of a generator or creator. 23 Two main concepts were employed by the theologians in carrying out this procedure, the concept of particularization (takh¥¢¥) and the concept of tipping the scales (tarj¢¦). The concept of particularization implies that "when an object has a given characteristic but could conceivably have a different one, something must serve to particularize it, that is, to select the particular characteristic it does have from among all those that it might have."24 Davidson cites Juwayn¢ (d. 1085), an Ash'arite theologian, who employed the concept of particularization in his proof for God's existence:

A particular agent must have selected out a moment for the world to emerge in preference to other times when the world might have emerged; and that a particularizing agent must have selected out existence for the world in preference to nonexistence.25

As Davidson points out, Juwayn¢'s reasoning was influenced by Ibn S¢n¡'s analysis of the concepts possibly existent and necessarily existent. 26 According to Ibn S¢n¡, the possible of existence for itself is that which may or may not exist, whereas the necessary of existence for itself is that which cannot not exist. When the possible of existence enters into actual existence, this must be because of something that provides it with necessary existence, since the possible of existence for itself is not capable of existing necessarily. The possible of existence in this case becomes necessary of existence only by the other. If this other is also a possible of existence for itself, the question might be raised as to what provides it with necessary existence or keeps it in actual existence. Thus, either we end up with an infinite regress or we conclude that there must exist something that gives actual existence to the possible of existence in preference to nonexistence, and that this something must be necessary of existence for itself. 27 The difference between Juwayn¢ and Ibn S¢n¡ regarding this conclusion is that Ibn S¢n¡ did not think, as Juwayn¢ and the theologians in general did, that the necessary of existence for itself performs the act of particularization in time. For it turns out that, according to Ibn S¢n¡, the possible of existence exists always as necessary of existence by the other. Thus, although the concept possibly existent implies that the thing that is possible of existence may or may not exist, the thing that is possible of existence exists always. 28 According to Ibn S¢n¡, the world is possible of existence in the sense that actual existence is given to it by God, but is necessary of existence in the sense that this giving of existence is eternal, that is, is not the outcome of a temporal process.

Ghaz¡l¢ (d. 1111), who was of the opinion that Ibn S¢n¡ made improper use of the concepts possibly existent and necessarily existent, employed the notion of tipping the scales (tarj¢¦) in arguing against Ibn S¢n¡'s argument that the world could not have been created in time since creation in time presupposes an infinite regress of causes of creation. He introduces Ibn S¢n¡'s argument in The Incoherence of the Philosophers as follows:

When the world begins in time, a new determinant either does or does not arise. If it does not, the world will stay in the same state of pure possibility as before; if a new determinant does arise, the same question can be asked about this new determinant, why it determines now, and not before, and either we shall have an infinite regress or we shall arrive at a principle determining eternally.29

Ghaz¡l¢ argued that the proper conclusion to be drawn from the argument is not that the world could not have been created in time. The proper conclusion, according to him, is that since (rationally speaking) all moments of time before the existence of the world are equal candidates for its creation, there must exist an overriding agent to tip the scales in favor of the existence of the world in a specific time.

Ibn S¢n¡ was critical of Aristotle's proof for God's existence from motion in Physics. He was concerned with the cause that maintains the thing that is possible of existence in existence and not merely with the mover that maintains it in motion. Moreover, Ibn S¢n¡ thought that since the First Cause is incorporeal, the proof for its existence must be metaphysical. Davidson points out that Ibn S¢n¡ was aware of the difficulty that, according to Aristotle, a science cannot provide a demonstration for its first principles and that, in order to overcome the difficulty, Ibn S¢n¡ insisted that he was not seeking to establish the existence of God through a syllogistic demonstration (burh¡n) but rather through a proof (dal¢l). For, a proof is a chain of reasoning that proceeds from the presence of the effect to the existence of the cause, whereas demonstrative syllogism advances propositions that are prior to the conclusion. Since there can be nothing that is prior to the actual existence in the necessarily existent, only a proof that proceeds from the presence of the effect to the existence of the cause can establish the necessary existence of the First Cause. 30 Ibn S¢n¡ established his proof for the existence of God (the Cause) on the basis of considering the existence of objects that possess actual existence but that are necessary of existence only by the other (the effects).

Like Ibn S¢n¡, Ibn Rushd thought that science could not provide a demonstration for its first principles, only a proof that proceeds from the posterior, which is the effect of causation, to the prior, which is the cause of existence. For Ibn Rushd, the posterior phenomenon from which the existence of incorporeal beings can be established turns out to be motion, a physical phenomenon. 31 Ibn Rushd was critical of Ibn S¢n¡'s metaphysical proof for the existence of God,32 insisting that the proof for God's existence can be only the proof from motion. He argued in the Epitome of the Metaphysics that there must exist a first principle or cause of motion, 33 since it would be a self-contradiction to assume an infinite series of causes consisting of intermediate terms with no first cause to initiate it. 34 The argument goes back to Aristotle, who says in the Metaphysics:

For in the case of an intermediate, which has a last term and a prior term outside it, the prior must be the cause of the later terms. For if we had to see which of the three is the cause, we should say the first; surely not the last, for the final term is the cause of none; nor even the intermediate for it is the cause only of one…but of series which are infinite in this way, and of the infinite in general, all the parts down to that now present are alike intermediates; so that if there is no first there is no cause at all.35

The argument makes it clear in what sense the argument for the existence of the First Cause and the argument for its unity are interconnected. For, if we consider the category of the intermediate term in the causal series, we can see that its nature is that of the nature of the compound, since it is both a cause and an effect. In a series that does not have a first cause every member of the series has this compound nature. In the absence of a first cause, whose nature is simple, 36 the series of causes cannot

even be initiated. This was the reasoning on the basis of which Ibn Rushd established his proofs for God's existence and unity in the Epitome of the Metaphysics.37

The Barzakh: Ibn 'Arab¢'s proof for the existence and the unity of God

The barzakh is Ibn 'Arab¢'s conception of the Limit. However, by 'limit' Ibn 'Arab¢ does not mean the part of a thing inside of which all parts exist or outside of which no part exists, but rather the self-activating essence of a thing:

And it is a being running (¥ar¢) in all beings but it is not felt due to its subtlety, like the line that divides the shade from the sun, and is rationally recognized but not perceived with the senses. These are the limits (¦ud£d) between things with a specific face to each of the two things between which they lie, and that is despite the fact that they are not divided in themselves. And so they are in themselves in every limited thing (ma¦d£d). This is why it is hard to find the self-acting (dh¡tiyya) limits, unlike the formal and verbal limits that are with the rational thinkers.38

Ibn 'Arab¢'s conception of the Limit can be elucidated by comparing it with Aristotle's:

'Limit' means (1) the ultimate part of each thing, or the first part outside of which no part can be found, or the first part inside of which all parts exist; (2) the form of a magnitude or of that which has magnitude; (3) the end of each thing, such being that toward which, but not that from which, a motion or an action is directed, although sometimes it is both that from which and that toward which; (4) the final cause; (5) the substance of each thing, for this is said to be the limit of knowledge; and if of knowledge then of the thing also.39

Like Aristotle, Ibn 'Arab¢ thinks that the Limit is the essence and the definition of the known thing. However, Ibn 'Arab¢'s Limit is the definition of the thing not in the sense that it is the first or the last part of the thing, but as a self-activating essence, being both the definition of the thing and the very activity of defining it. Hence, Ibn 'Arab¢'s Limit is the essence of the thing not in the Aristotelian sense but in the sense in which a Platonic Form is the essence of the object that participates in it. This becomes clear from Ibn 'Arab¢'s following definition of the Limit (barzakh):

You should know that this waystation is the waystation of the true barzakh. People have thought wide about the barzakh so as to miss the point. Rather it is as God has made us to know it in His Book in His saying about the Two Seas: "Between them there is a barzakh the bounds of which they do not exceed." [25: 53] The truth about the barzakh is that there can be no barzakh within it. The barzakh is what meets the two [sides between which it separates] with its [undivided] essence. If it were to meet the one side with a face that is other than the face with which it meets the other side, there would be between the two faces a barzakh to separate between them so that they do not meet. In that case it is not a barzakh. The true barzakh is that which meets one of the things between which it separates with the very face with which it meets the other. It is in its essence identical to everything that it meets.
Hence the separating between the things and the separating factor become manifest as one in entity…Its likeness is the whiteness of every white thing through its very essence. It is not in one white thing through one of its faces, and in another through another face. On the contrary, through its own entity it is in every white thing. The two white things may be distinct from each other, but whiteness is their counterpart only through its essence…So also, humanity, through its essence, is in each human being. Hence the 'one' is the true barzakh. Anything that can be divided is not one. The one divides but it is not divided, which is to say that it is not divisible in itself…

No one knows the reality of this affair…save him who knows the configuration of the last world, the reality of the barzakh, and the self-disclosure of the Real in numerous forms. He transmutes Himself within them from form to form, but the Entity is one. (emphasis added)40

Elsewhere, 41 I opened the discussion of the Qur'¡nic roots of the barzakh concept by citing Qur'¡n 25: 53 as one of the three verses in which the barzakh is mentioned:

It is He Who has
Let free the two bodies
Of flowing water:
One palpable and sweet,
And the other salt and bitter;
Yet has He
Made a barrier (barzakh) between them,
A partition that is forbidden
To be passed.42

Upon observing the two bodies of water and noticing that their identity is preserved despite their intermingling, we conclude that a Limit (barzakh) must exist between them to account for the objects' differentiation through their unification. This argument for the existence of the barzakh brings to mind the argument for the existence of God from composition in nature, an argument that was employed in the medieval Islamic theological tradition and that goes back to Athanasius (fourth century). Davidson, who provides a discussion of this argument, brings Athanasius' saying that the existence of God cannot be denied by one who "discovers fire mixed with the cold, and the dry mixed with the wet, yet not opposing one another." Davidson says that similar formulations of the argument appear in the writings of John of Damascus (d. ca 748), Theodore Ab£ Qurra (d. 820), and Jacob of Edessa (d. 708), and that each of these thinkers could have served as a bridge for transmitting this argument to the Islamic world. 43 To show that the argument was manifest in the Islamic world, Davidson cites, among others, Na¨¨¡m (d. 845), the Mu'tazilite theologian:

I find heat and cold joined in a single body despite their contrariety and mutual divergence; and I understand that they cannot be joined by virtue of themselves…that the agent who joined them is the agent who created them joined, and who constrained them.44

The barzakh in the Qur'¡nic verse cited above, and the agent who joins contrary qualities in a single body in Na¨¨¡m's argument fulfill an important function and that is providing for the unity of existence. According to Heinz Heimsoeth, the problem of the unity of existence is the "most primitive problem of all metaphysics." It is a problem that acquires its full weight "through the perception of oppositions in reality and through the exceptional force with which these oppositions obtrude themselves on us as the ultimate determinations of intellectual existence." 45 The perception of oppositions in reality compels us to posit a unifying principle to join the opposites. Furthermore, we are compelled to ascribe a unified or abstract nature to this principle. Ibn 'Arab¢ says in his definition of the barzakh that a limit that has a complex nature requires another limit to unify its parts; and if this latter has also a complex nature another limit will be required, and so an infinite regress will be inevitable. Hence, the Limit that is required must be undivided unity.

The example of Ibn 'Arab¢'s undivided Limit is what he calls 'fixed entity' ('ayn th¡bita), such as whiteness and humanity. Fixed entities or the essential limits are, like the Platonic Forms, responsible

epistemologically and ontologically for the existence of the objects, which are their limited existentializations. Fixed entities are undivided unities that exist through their very essence in their limited existentializations. 46 Whiteness, for example, is the whiteness of every white thing through its very essence. Whiteness is not in one white thing through one of its faces, and in another through another face. Rather, it is in every white thing through its own entity.

The positing of fixed entities as essential limits between objects that are considered their limited existentializations creates a serious difficulty. The difficulty is about the logical consequences of reflecting upon the relation between fixed entities and their limited existentializations. As it is the case with the Platonic Forms, here too reflecting on the sort of relatedness in question yields an infinite regress. Ibn 'Arab¢ was aware of the problem and discussed it in chapter 451 of the al-Fut£¦¡t al-Makkiyya. He explains that attempting to establish a logical relatedness between fixed entities and their limited existentializations results in (what William Chittick calls) a paradox of infinity. 47 Elsewhere, 48 I elaborated on the special way in which Ibn 'Arab¢ attempted to utilize his analysis of this paradox in order to arrive at the conclusion that a higher principle of unity must be posited. I compare his attempt with Plato's attempt in Timaeus to show that a Third Thing (the Receptacle) must exist in addition to the Form and the sensible object to accord for the possibility of relating between them, and to avoid the sort of infinite regress that is the outcome of this relatedness. In what follows, I would like to focus on the manner in which Ibn 'Arab¢ employed his reasoning in relation to positing a higher principle of unity in establishing his proofs for the existence and the unity of God, as he introduces those proofs in chapter 272 of the al-Fut£¦¡t.

In this chapter, Ibn 'Arab¢ says that proving the existence of God is established rationally by considering the act of preferring one of the rulings over the other (tarj¢¦ a¦ad al-¦ukmayn) regarding the existence or the nonexistence of the thing that is possible of existence. 49 In the same chapter, he uses the word takh¥¢¥ (particularizing), instead of the word tarj¢¦ (tipping the scales) to refer to the act of giving existence to the possible thing. Ibn 'Arab¢, therefore, employs the two main concepts (particularization, tipping the scales) that served the theologians in their proofs for God's existence. He differs, however, from the theologians in thinking that, according to rational proof, the act of particularization or tipping the scales does not occur in time. Nevertheless, he insists that the report or the divine address contradicts the rational proof. 50 His solution to this problem is to reflect on the possible thing as a barzakh that brings together in its own reality the reality of existence and the reality of nonexistence.51 Thus, on the one hand, "there is no priority and there is no posteriority, since in the state of nonexistence the possible thing is not posterior to the eternity without beginning that is ascribed to the Being of the Real" 52 On the other hand, in the state of existence the being of certain existent things is posterior to that of others. 53 The combination of existence and nonexistence signifies for Ibn 'Arab¢ the totality. He thinks that the property of this totality can be found only in the possible thing not in the two sides, that is, the side of existence and the side of nonexistence. 54 The possible thing becomes, therefore, an indicator for the totality, and the act of inclining the totality towards existence or nonexistence becomes an indicator for the existence of something that exists above this totality, and this is God.

Concerning the proof for God's unity, Ibn 'Arab¢ says that it is a subdivision of the proof for God's existence. In this respect, he does not differ from the theologians or the philosophers, since they all complemented their proofs for God's existence with proofs for His unity. Ibn 'Arab¢ says also that the proof that he introduces for God's unity is a proof of His unity in respect of being a divinity (il¡h), not in respect of being an Essence (dh¡t). As we are going to see, the distinction that Ibn 'Arab¢ makes between God as divinity and God as Essence is crucial for understanding his proof for God's unity, and

for understanding the sense in which Ibn ‘Arab¢’s view differs from the views of the theologians and the philosophers.

Ibn ‘Arab¢ says that there are two methods for proving God’s unity. One method is to ask the associator, who agrees that there is at least one particularizer (mukha¥¥i¥), to establish his claim that God has associates. "Let him then be the one who judges and let him be burdened with the proof." 55 His second method consists of providing an analysis of the Qur’¡nic verse: "If there were in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides All¡h, there would have been confusion in both."56 He says that the verse constitutes one premise. The other premise is the fact that heavens and earth are not corrupted. The connector between the two premises is the corruption, and the combination of the two premises yields the unity of the particularizer.

Ibn ‘Arab¢ elaborates on the rational manner in which the proof for the unity of God can be based on the mentioned verse. Let us assume, he says, that there are two gods. Even if the two gods agree in their willing to determine existence or nonexistence for the world, it is still possible to assume that they may not agree. If they disagree, then it is impossible for their contradictory determinations to be carried out, since the possible of existence does not accept that. Or, it may be the case that only the determination of one god is carried out. But then one of the gods will be incapable. Since, as an actual fact, one determination is carried out, it follows that one of the divinities is incapable. This is absurd, however, since the divinity can never be incapable. Therefore, there can be one God only.57 Ibn ‘Arab¢ says that this chain of reasoning is what guided Abraham to the proof for the existence of God in the going down of the stars:58

Rational consideration delivered to him (a‘§¡hu) that the going down [of the stars] opposes preservation. The divinity cannot be characterized by going down, since the going down is an accident that occurs to that which goes down after not going down. But [we know that] the divinity cannot be a place for accidents on the basis of similar proofs. These lights, however, accepted the going down, and consequently none of them can be a divinity. And this is exactly the method [of reasoning found] in God’s words: "If there were in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both." And any proof that is not based on this method is not correct.59

In the Qur’¡nic story of Abraham the star, the moon, and the sun behave as determinations posited each time as limits for the totality of existence. By positing these limits, Abraham was seeking to provide an ultimate definition and unity for the totality of existence. He started by positing the star as the Limit. He soon discovered that the limit that he posited was limited, which led him to negating his affirmation. He then posited a new limit and, by doing so, he negated his negation of the limitation of existence. He repeated his affirmation of the limitation of existence for the third and last time. This time he declared that the sun was the ‘greatest of all’ meaning the furthest limit of the totality of existence. However, even this furthest limit turned out to be limited. Abraham learned from this experience that the Limit that he was seeking is not to be found within the limits of being, since within the limits of being each existent thing suffers from an internal duality of existence/nonexistence, which exercises its power over the existent thing and the determinations of the intellectual experience that reflects on its existence. Abraham came to realize that the determination or the limitation that he was seeking could not be found in things that are determined or limited, that is, things that may be associated with other things.

This was the rational proof that Abraham found for the unity of God in the going down of the stars. His rational proof led him to an unlimited entity, that is, to an entity that must not be compared to, or, associated with, anything else. But is this rational chain of reasoning sufficient to provide us with

comprehensive knowledge about the unity of God's Essence? Is it sufficient in order to define His Essence to say that He is unlimited? Indeed this is what the rational proof for His existence demonstrates. For, as Ibn 'Arab¢ says, "the rational proof is based on the negation of comparability (tashb¢h)."60 But Ibn 'Arab¢ says also that the furthest limit of distance from Him is the furthest limit of nearness, 61 and that "the furthest limit that he who negates comparability can achieve is limitation." 62 Thus, we come to realize the limitedness of the rational consideration in relation to knowing the Essence of God. Rational consideration can demonstrate that God exists and that, in order to exist, God must be absolutely unlimited. However, reason comes to realize that demonstrating the unity of the Essence of God in terms of unlimitation, which is the furthest limit of the rational proof, is also a limitation of His Essence:

The Folk of the Path of God have seen that when Oneness is demonstrated it becomes the same as association, since the One in Himself does not become One through your demonstration of His Oneness. Therefore, it is not the case that you have established the Oneness of the One. Rather, the One is established from within Himself. After all, you have realized that He is One not because you have demonstrated that this is the case. That is why some of our companions expressed themselves in the way they had. Therefore, he who demonstrates His Unity is a denier (ji¦id). The One cannot be unified for He does not accept that. If He accepted that, He would become a duality, a duality that embraces His Oneness as It is in Itself and His Oneness as demonstrated by the unifier. The One becomes, therefore, One in Himself and One by means of the demonstration of the other. The One becomes a duality; His Oneness is negated. Whatever is demonstrated only through its own negation, its demonstration must be self-defeating. Unification abides in silence especially, whether in a manifested or, otherwise, in a nonmanifested form. Once Unity has spoken, thereupon it has given birth to existence, and once it has given birth to existence, it has invoked association…Therefore, the harm has not been inflicted Upon the Unity except through existence giving. Unification (taw¦¢d) inflicted the harm upon itself no existent thing has inflicted any harm upon it.63

Ibn 'Arab¢ says that whatever is demonstrated only through its own negation, its demonstration must be self-defeating. When we seek through rational consideration to demonstrate the unity of God by saying that God is absolutely unlimited, our demonstration turns out to be self-defeating, since the truly unlimited must not be limited even by unlimitation. In order to think properly about the unity of God, we need to affirm not only the negation of limitation but also the negation of the negation of limitation. Rational proof is based on negating the comparability between God and the limited beings. But God declared in His reports about Himself that He is also similar to the limited beings:

So also will be their consideration of the Real, for He is the One/Many, just as Nothing is as His likeness, and He is the Seeing, the Hearing [42: 11]. What does tanz¢h have to do with tashb¢h? Yet the verse is one, and it is His speech about Himself for the sake of instructing us about what He is in His Essence, so He separated through Nothing is and He affirmed through He is.64

The light of reason is insufficient for revealing the truth about such reports that declare God's limitation. For this reason, there is need for the light of faith that is added to the light of reason and that is "related to the truthfulness of God's reports about Himself and is not related to anything else other than this."65 But God's reports about Himself contradict each other, for some of them report unlimitation while others report limitation. The light of faith is not sufficient in itself to reveal the truthfulness of the unity of the contrary reports. For this reason a Third Light is needed. This light reveals to the thinker that the unity of each object of knowledge consists of a self-active combination of limitation, which is an attribute of existence, and unlimitation, which is an attribute of nonexistence. Ibn 'Arab¢ says that this

light reveals the unity of every object of knowledge and enables him to realize that God has a unity that is specific to Him. 66 The unity of the objects of knowledge becomes a sign that God has in each thing and that signifies that He is One.67

The question might be raised as to the manner in which the realization that occurs through unveiling is different from the realization that occurs on the basis of the rational proof, since, in both realizations, the unity of God is realized on the basis of the examination of the existent things or the world. Ibn 'Arab¢, however, insists on a considerable difference between the two realizations. For, according to him, the conclusion of the rational proof, which proceeds from the world to God, pertains only to the unity of God as divinity and not to His unity as Essence. It falls short, therefore, from discerning the independent side of God's Unity. This Ibn 'Arab¢ makes clear in the following:

The Existence of the Necessary of Being for Himself possesses a face that implies the existence of the possible of existence, which is the face in respect of His being a divinity that possesses will and power over the possible thing…God possesses another face that is directed to Himself and that does not imply the existence of the possible thing, and this is His absolute independence…God said: "God is independent from the worlds." [3: 97] The worlds are the rational proofs (dal¡l¡t) in relation to Him. He says in this verse that He is independent from the rational proofs, thus removing any possibility of any relatedness between Him and the world, or the possibility of the existence of a face that ties Him to the world in respect of His face that is independent from the world. Thus the proof of the Real for the Real is the Existence of the Real in the entity of the possible thing in the respect in which the possible thing's existence is identical to the Existence of the Real, not in the respect in which the possible thing's existence comes from the Real, or, is dependent on the Real…
He who considers this affair imagines that the world is a proof for God, since the possessor of rational consideration looks into himself and draws his proof, not knowing that his rational consideration is due to his being invested with Existence. Therefore, Existence is the Seer and is the Real…while nothing sees through the Real but the Real.68

Rational proof is based on the assumption that the possible existence of the world is dependent on the existence of God, and that that requires the independence of the existence of God. However, this way of establishing the independence of God renders Him dependent on the very independence that the rational proof seeks to establish for Him. Rather, the real 'proof' for God is the Existence of God in the possible thing, not in the sense that the existence of the possible thing comes from the Existence of God, or, is dependent on the Existence of God, but rather in the sense that it is identical with the Existence of God. The 'proof' for God is the realization of the Unity of the two faces of Existence. It is the realization that the Existence of God is an Essential Limit that combines the two sides of limitation and unlimitation, although It is an undivided Unity. The 'proof' for God is the realization of the conception of the barzakh.

Notes:

1-Salman Bashier, Philosophy of the Limit: Ibn Arabi's Barzakh Concept and the Meaning of Infinity, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Utah, Salt Lake City 2000.

2-For an examination of Ibn 'Arab¢'s standpoint from philosophical thought, see Franz Rosenthal's "Ibn 'Arab¢ Between 'Philosophy' and 'mysticism'," Oriens 31 (1988) pp. 1-35.3-

3-Lloyd P. Gerson, God and Greek Philosophy: Studies in the Early History of Natural Theology, New York: Routledge 1990, p. 21.

4-Gerson, God and Greek philosophy, p. 83.

5-This is a contemporary summation of, what Aristotle called ‘The argument from the existence of the sciences’, cited in Naomi Reshotko’s "A Bastard Kind of Reasoning: The Argument From The Sciences and the Introduction of the Receptacle in Plato’s Timaeus," History of Philosophy Quarterly 14 (1997) p. 123.

6-Plato, The Collected Dialogues, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994, Parmenides 131c.

7-Dialectic, in the Platonic sense, is the art of conversation. The Platonic dialogues aimed to turn the conversation into continuous dialogue with the self, inducing in the process a creative tension that dissolves finalized conclusions and engenders a proper comprehension of the subject matter of the conversation.

8-In Phaedo Plato says:

I am assuming the existence of absolute beauty and goodness and magnitude and all the rest of them…It seems to me that whatever else is beautiful apart from absolute beauty is beautiful because it partakes of that absolute beauty, and for no other reason. Plato, The Collected Dialogues, Phaedo 100 b-c.

9-Plato, The Collected Dialogues, Republic VI 509b 5-10.

10-Plato, The Collected Dialogues, Timaeus 52 b.

11-Aristotle’s Metaphysics, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1973, I 991a 9-16.

12-The Works of Aristotle, ed. Sir David Ross, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1952, Vol. XII, Select Fragments, On Ideas, p. 84, l. 21.

13-Aristotle says in the Metaphysics:

Nothing, then, is gained even if we suppose eternal substances, as the believers in the Forms do, unless there is to be in them some principle which can cause movement; and even this is not enough, nor is another substance besides the Forms enough; for if it does not act, there will be no movement. The Complete Works of Aristotle, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1984, Vol. II, Metaphysics, 1071b 14-18.

14-Aristotle’s Physics, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1969, Book VII, 241b 34.

15-The Complete Works of Aristotle, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Vol. II, Metaphysics, 994a 2-5. For a critical discussion of Aristotle’s conception of infinity, see Heinz Heimsoeth, The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics and the End of the Middle Ages, trans. Ramon J. Betanzos, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1994, pp. 85-86. Heimsoeth writes:

With Aristotle the longing for finiteness completely gained the upper hand once again. Just as Zeno did, Aristotle regarded anything that led thinking to lapse into infinite regress as refuted from the outset. It is impossible for the apeiron or the boundless to exist. In Aristotle's view, actual, existing, completed infinity, as it were, was nonsense and essentially self-contradictory. As he saw it, even Plato conceded two much being to the infinite. Heimsoeth, The Six Great Themes, p. 85.

16-Physics VII, VIII; Metaphysics XII.

17-Gerson, God and Greek Philosophy, p. 130.

18-The Complete Works of Aristotle, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Vol. II, Metaphysics, 1073a 5-11

19-Gerson, God and Greek Philosophy, p. 128.

20-Aristotle's Physics, trans. H. Apostle, Book VIII, 259 a 15-20.

21-Aristotle's Physics, trans. H. Apostle, Book III, 206a 10.

22-Aristotle says in the Metaphysics:

But we apprehend time only when we have marked motion, marking it by 'before' and 'after'; and it is only when we have perceived 'before' and 'after' in motion that we say that time has elapsed…When we think of the extremes as different from the middle and the mind pronounces that the 'nows' are two, one before and one after, it is then that we say that there is time. Aristotle, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon, New York: Random House 1941, Metaphysics, Book IV, 219a 22-30.

23-Herbert A. Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987, p. 2.

24-Herbert A. Davidson, "Arguments from the Concept of Particularization in Arabic Philosophy," Philosophy East and West 18 (1968) p. 299.

25-Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 161.

26-Davidson, Proofs for eternity, p. 162.

27-Ibn S¢n¡, Al-Naj¡t, ed. 'Abd Al-Ra¦m¡n 'Umayra, Beirut: D¡r Al-J¢l, 1992, p. 89. For Ibn S¢n¡'s proof for God's unity, see al-Naj¡t, p. 83.

28-See a discussion of this problem in Bashier, The Philosophy of the Limit, pp. 43-5 and in °us¡m Alw£s¢, °iw¡r bayn al-fal¡sifa wa l-mutakallim¢n, Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li l-dir¡sa wa l-nashr 1980, p. 43.

29-Ibn Rushd, The Incoherence of the Incoherence, trans. Simon Van Den Berg, London: Oxford University Press 1954, vol. I, p. 1.
30-Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 298.

31-Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 316. Ibn Rushd says in his commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics:

This is why it is not for the specialist in the lower discipline to investigate the first principles of its genus, according to the method of apodictical proof, but according to the method leading from the things that are posterior to the things that are prior, called indications (dal¡'il), it is possible for him to do so. Charles Genequand, Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Book Lam, Leiden: Brill 1984, p. 96.

32-One of the reasons that led Ibn Rushd to reject Ibn S¢n¡'s metaphysical proof for the existence of God is his rejection of the concept of the possibly existent for itself necessary existent by the other, on the basis of which Ibn S¢n¡ established his metaphysical proof. See The Incoherence of the Incoherence, trans. Simon Van Den Berg, vol. I, p. 239; and Ibn Rushd, Al-Kashf 'an man¡hij al-adilla, ed. Mu¦ammad al-J¡bir¢, Beirut: Markaz dir¡s¡t al-wa¦da al- 'arabiyya 1998, p. 114.

33-Ibn Rushd says in his commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics:

As the first principles of the subject of natural philosophy have no first principles, it is possible to prove the existence of the first principles of the object of natural philosophy only by means of things that come later in natural philosophy. Therefore, it is impossible to demonstrate the existence of the first substance except by means of motions; methods which are thought to lead to the first mover other than the method based on motion are all suasive; even if they were true, they would be a limited number of indications belonging to the science of the philosopher; for the first principles cannot be proved apodictically. Genequand, Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics, p. 74.

34-Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 241.

35-The Complete Works of Aristotle, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Vol. II, Metaphysics, 994a 11-19.

36-The series of causes must be moved by a cause that is simple and pure actuality. Otherwise the series of causes will exist only potentially and, due to its material compoundness, it must eventually cease to exist.

37-An extensive discussion of Ibn Rushd's proofs for God's incorporeality and unity can be found in Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, pp. 348-349.

38-Ibn 'Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t al-Makkiyya, 4 vols., Cairo: B£l¡q 1911, vol. II, pp. 47, ll. 29-30.

39-Aristotle's Metaphysics, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle, Book V 1022a.

40-Ibn 'Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. III, p. 518. William Chittick, The Self-Disclosures of God, Albany: State University of New York Press 1998, p. 335. The first passage in this citation is my translation.

41-Bashier, Philosophy of the Limit, p. 140.

42-Abdullah Yusuf Ali, The Meaning of The Holy Qur'¡n, Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Corporation 1989, p. 901.

43-Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 150.

44-Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 151.

45-Heinz Heimsoeth, The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics, p. 38.

46-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t , vol. III, p. 397, l. 19.

47-See William Chittick’s commentary on chapter 451 of the Fut£¦¡t in The Self-Disclosures of God, pp. 42-44.

48-Salman Bashier, Philosophy of the Limit, pp. 257-273.

49-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 289, l. 10.

50-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. IV p. 210, l. 33.

51-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. III, p. 275, l. 13.

52-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. IV, p. 9, l. 19.

53-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. IV, p. 210, l. 31.

54-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. III, p. 275, l. 14.

55-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 289, l. 11.

56-Yusuf Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur’¡n, 21:22.

57-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 298, ll. 14-18. It is worth noting that Ibn Rushd also mentions Qur’¡n 21: 22 as one of three verses in the Qur’¡n that provide, according to him, a proof for God’s unity. He says that the proof of this verse is rooted in our natural disposition. For if there were two kings and the two were trying to perform the same actions to govern one city, the city would become corrupted. This is so, unless one of the kings acts while the other would refrain from acting. This is absurd, however, since God cannot be incapacitated. Ibn Rushd, Al-Kashf, p. 123.

58-Qur’¡n 6: 75-78 reads:

So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude. [6: 75] When the night covered him over, he saw a star, he said: "This is my Lord." But when it set, he said: "I love not those that set. [6: 76] When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord." But when the moon set, he said: "Unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray."[6: 77] When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)." But when the sun set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah."[6: 78] Yusuf Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur’¡n, pp. 314-315.

59-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 289, ll. 20-25.

60-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 289,l. 27.

61-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. III, p. 393, l. 3.

62-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. IV, p. 213,l. 2.

63-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 290, ll. 5-13.

64-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. III, p. 324, ll. 10-13. Chittick, The Self-Disclosures of God, p. 75. Tanz¢h is declaring incomparability and tashb¢h is declaring comparability.

65-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 289, l. 30.

66-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 289, l. 33.

67-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. II, p. 290,ll. 1-2.

68-Ibn ‘Arab¢, Al-Fut£¦¡t, vol. I, p. 439, ll. 11-26.

Some Notes on the Problem of Mental Existence in Islamic Philosophy

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Abstract

According to Muslim philosophers, knowledge of objects is a relation between our minds and the world extrinsic to our minds. These objects of knowledge, that are independent of our minds and of our control, have a mental presence for us. This mental presence, which is under our control, is called cognitive existence (al-wuj£d al-‘ilm¢) of the things. Thus there are two modes of existence for things: external existence, which is independent of the mind and mental existence, which depends on the mind. It should be noted, however, that despite some Muslim philosophers, a group of theologians (namely, Ash‘arites) rejected such a mode of existence. They believed that knowledge is a correlation between the mind (subject) and the external world (object) and like knowledge, existence is not realized in the mind. In Islamic philosophy, however, it is believed that when we have knowledge of a thing, the essence, or quiddity of that thing, has another mode of existence in our mind. After the origination of the form of a certain thing in our mind that corresponds to an object in the external world, our mind seems to become a mirror, which unveils the external world for us. A mode of existence has been realized in our mind whose essence and quiddity are identical to the essence and quiddity of the external thing and discrepancy between these two lies in their modes of existence.
In this article, aspects of the historical development of this doctrine in Islamic philosophy will be considered. The distinction between this doctrine and that of ‘Phenomenologists’ in contemporary philosophy will also be discussed briefly.

The problem of mental existence, or of a mode of mental reality, was not discussed in ancient Greek philosophy or even in early Islamic philosophy as an independent issue. 1 Later, this issue developed in the light of Islamic philosophy and its concern with intentionality. 2 Later European philosophers have discussed the question from another point of view. Their discussions have focused mainly on the representative authenticity of mental concepts with respect to the world, or in other words the value of knowables; and as we know, some of them in their skepticism have tended toward idealism.

According to Muslim philosophers, knowledge of objects is a relation between the world extrinsic to our minds and us. These epistemic objects, though being extrinsic to our minds and control, have a mental presence for us. This mental presence, which is under our control, is called the cognitive existence (al-wuj£d al-'ilm¢) of the things. Thus there are two modes of existences for things: one, extra-mental existence (al-wuj£d al-kh¡rij¢), which is independent of the mind and the other, that existence which depends on the mind, which is termed 'mental existence' (al-wuj£d al-dhihn¢). It should be noted, however, that a group of theologians (Ash'arites) rejected such a mode of existence. 3 They believed that knowledge is a correlation (i¤¡fa) between the mind (subject) and the external world (object). Knowledge, for them, does not realize an existence in the mind. In post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy, however, it is believed that when we have knowledge of a thing, the essence and quiddity of that thing possess another mode of existence in our mind. After the origination of the form of a certain thing in our mind that corresponds with an object in the external world, our mind seems to become a mirror, which unveils the external world for us. An existence is realized in our mind whose essence and quiddity are identical to the essence and the quiddity of the external thing and the discrepancy between these two lies in their modes of existence. For example, when we imagine a stone, a stone comes into existence in our mind, which is, in terms of the essence and quiddity, same as that stone, which exists in the external world. The discrepancy between these two stones lies in their modes of existence, on mental and the other extra-mental. By quiddity in Islamic philosophy, we mean the essence and the nature of thing.4 It is the response to the question about the reality of the thing. For example, when we inquire about the reality of Parwiz, one replies that he is a man; therefore his quiddity is man.

According to Mulla Sadra (d. 1641), what is realized in the external world and has originality is existence. Even if one holds that every possible entity is a combination of quiddity and existence, 5 this does not mean that there are two realities realized in the external world. 6 Originality (or ontological primacy) is specific to existence and the quiddity is a mentally posited (i'tib¡r¢) thing. The distinction between the quiddity and the existence of a possible entity is thus mental. 7 That is, one's mind is able to imagine what exists in the external world and to make a distinction between its existence and quiddity. On the issue of mental existence, it is argued that, even if the quiddities of things are realized through their existence, in the same way that things become manifest in the external world through external existence, they can become manifest in the mind through the mental existence.8

In the other words, according to Muslim philosophers, God is the creator of existents; and these realities are created, through His creation, in the external world. Man's rational soul is an example of the Essence, attributes and acts of God. 9 Like a heavenly existent, it is free of material corruption, it has a degree of God's power. This power is, of course, granted to it by God, that it may be, like God, creative in its own realm. That is, in the same way that God, who is the Creator, is the sole creator in this world, it will also be a creator in the domain of its power and creates things in the mind. 10 Despite all its power and magnificence, the soul's existential level is relation to the sacred divine realm is weak. The acts and forms that originate from it are also weakly existent. Mental existents are the quiddities of things. The quiddity is a receptacle of existence, which is fixed and unchangeable in the two modes of the extra-mental and mental existence. Clearly, existence in the station of the mind, as compared with extra-mental existence, is at a lower level and hence the effects and characteristics, which are expected from an extra-mental existent, are not contained in it.11

Two further issues arise at this point. First, upon the origination of knowledge, a phenomenon comes into existence in man's mind, and it is not the case that knowledge is a mere correlation between the knower and the known. Second, what comes into existence in man's mind and what exist extra-mentally are, in terms of the essence and quiddity, the same. That is, the quiddity of the extra-mental existent is

identical to the quiddity of the mental existent, and their discrepancy lies only in their degree of existence. One of them exists through a strong degree of existence (extra-mental existence) and the other through a weak degree of the existence (mental), and each degree has its own effects.12

According to Mull¡ ¯adr¡, the issue of knowledge's being representative of the known and the correspondence between the two is based on the second fact, that is 'essential identification'.13 Undoubtedly, extra-mental existence is not mental, and no one can argue that upon the origination of knowledge, the extra-mental existent is transmitted to the mind and becomes present in it. But rather, it is another independent existent. Now, if the essence and the quiddity of the extra-mental thing were also other than the quiddity and essence of the mental existent, then knowledge would not have a representative aspect. Man would never have an intentional relationship to the extra-mental world, and cognitive and perceptive forms would be like other psychic states such as pleasures and pains. It goes without saying that we have in our minds certain forms of the realities of extra-mental things and these forms represent those things for us. Through essential identification, Muslim philosophers have removed the gap between mental existence and extra-mental existence, and solved the problem of the representativeness and correspondence of the mental concept and extra-mental object. Thus they have not been confronted with the problem with which European phenomenologists have been faced.

Phenomenologists believe that there is a gap between the mind and the extra-mental world, which can never be removed. According to them, man's insight emanating from his mind is entirely obscured. What exists in man's mind are mental phenomena, that is what reveals its own self for us. We have no access to their essential existence (noumenon). According to Mull¡ ¯adr¡, the unacceptable result of this way of thinking is the denial of knowledge of the extra-mental world. That is, if we deny this relation and say that what our mind has grasped in no way corresponds to what is in the extra-mental world and what is in the extra-mental world may be something that is not imagined by us, then what is the distinction between the knowledge and ignorance?

Having claimed that every thing has two modes of existence: one, in the extra-mental world, which is material existence, and the other, the existence of the thing in the mind which is same as the cognitive existence. Between these two, there is similarity, not unity. The unity is only in the essence and quiddity of these two existents. Muslim philosophers have opened man's mind to the extra-mental world, and bestowed him with the ability of awareness of extra-mental things as they are. Muslim philosophers have proved that the existence, whether extra-mental or mental, is not grasped in the essences and quiddities of things, in the same way that non-existence is not grasped in them. For quiddities of things are in themselves indifferent to existence or non-existence.

The essence in extra-mental existence is identical to the essence in the mental existence. According to this doctrine, man's soul turns to a world, which is called the intelligible world (al-'¡lam al-'aql¢). The distinction between this world and the extra-mental world is that in the extra-mental world things appear in the garb of their natural and material existence. In the intelligible world, however, they appear in the garb of mental existence.

The main discrepancy between this doctrine and that of phenomenologists is that the latter regard the reality of everything to be identical to its extra-mental existence. According to them, the phenomenon is a symbol of the reality and the reality cannot enter in our mind. According to Muslim philosophers, however, the reality of thing is same as its essence and quiddity, which is saved both in the external world and in the mind and existence is not involved in the essence, quiddity and reality of the thing. It is, in fact, a locus for the reality of things. According to Muslim philosophers, there is only one reality for

the thing, and this reality sometimes appears in the garb of extra-mental existence with its external effects, and sometimes in the garb of the mental existence, again with its effects. Both modes of existence, however, are loci for the same reality.

Mental existence is an authentic Islamic doctrine, introduced after the time of Khw¡ja Na¥¢r al-D¢n al-±£s¢ (d. 1274) and proven in detail by Mull¡ ¯adr¡ (d. 1641). But not all Islamic philosophers accepted it. Some, while accepting the doctrine of mental existence, rejected the essential union with the extra-mental world and claimed that in mental existence it is not the quiddity of the known thing that is present in the mind. What is present in the mind is nothing but a mirage. Such a view is associated with the Illuminationist (ishr¡q¢) philosopher Qu§b al-D¢n al-Sh¢r¡z¢ (d. 1311), the author of Durrat al-T¡j, 14 in his commentary on al-±£s¢'s Tajr¢d al-I'tiq¡d (Sublimation of belief). He argues that philosophers have defined knowledge as an acquired form in the mind, and by the form they mean nothing but a picture drawn by a painter. This is not the doctrine of mental existence as portrayed above because the reflection of the picture on the soul is not the same as the essence and quiddity of the thing present in the mind. Mull¡ ¯adr¡ proves that the mind creates an existent in its own realm, which in terms of the essence and reality is the same as what exists objectively and extra-mentally.

Arguments for the mental existence

Muslim philosophers have adduced some arguments to prove their claim. They have two major claims: first, that a mode of existence that is mental exists, and second, that the mental and extra-mental modes of existence of things are united by their quiddities. Taking the historical development of the issue into account, it should be noted that some of these arguments prove the first part of their claim, that is, that upon man's acquiring knowledge of things, an existence is realized in the mind. It is not the case that the knowledge is a mere correlation between the knowing and the known. Some arguments, however, prove both parts. They prove mental existence as well as the essential union between the mental existent and the external existent.

One significant argument was first introduced by al-±£s¢ in his Tajr¢d al-I'tiq¡d. He regards the acceptance of factual (¦aq¢qiyya) propositions as the most important argument for mental existence. He says:

Existence is divided into two kinds: mental and extra-mental. Otherwise (that is, if there were no mental existence) the factual proposition would be absurd entirely.15

Muslim philosophers classify propositions as mental, extra-mental and factual. Avicenna (d. 1037)16 first introduced it and it was developed by the time of Mull¡ ¯adr¡. This classification deals with the subject of the proposition. If the subject of proposition is in the mind, then it is a mental proposition. If the subject is extrinsic mind, it is an extra-mental one. If the subject of the proposition is the essence and quiddity of the thing and existence is not involved, then it is a factual proposition.

The mental proposition: 'man is a species of animal'. The locus of the judgement is the mind, since it is in the mind where man is a species of animal. His being a species has nothing to do with his existence in the extra-mental world, for the extra-mental man cannot be described as 'species' and the subject is restricted to existence in the mind.
The extra-mental proposition: 'all Iranians speak Persian'. In this kind of proposition, the judgement applies to the extra-mental world. The proposition means that all Iranians, free of tensed qualifications,

speak the Persian language. In other words, the predicate is predicated of the extra-mental subject in the extra-mental locus. The subject is restricted to the extra-mental world.
The factual (theoretical) proposition: 'an iron rod expands when it is heated'. The judgment deals with the general nature of the subject, and it is not restricted to its mode of existence at all nor is it restricted by temporal modality. It is in the nature of iron rods to behave in this way whether past, present or future. All propositions employed in science are factual propositions, for this kind of proposition is universal and not restricted to a certain space and time.
Having introduced these premises, one can say that there are propositions of this kind which are necessarily true, but do not exist in the extra-mental world, and even some of them, despite their soundness, are logically and rationally impossible. For example, the famous Law of Non-Contradiction stipulates that two contradictories cannot be in agreement ('adam ijtimi' al-naq¢¤ayn). In such a case, where does the judgment arise? Undoubtedly, the one who judges, has a concept of the agreement of two contradictories in his mind which he predicates. But does it mean that the agreement of two contradictories in the mind is impossible? Clearly, this is not the case. If the attribute is not predicated of the subject it does not even exist in the mind. Does it mean that the agreement of contradictories, if it exists, is attributed in this way? In other words, should this predicative (¦amliyya) proposition be converted to the conditional (shar§iyya) one? Again, this is not the case, since it is meaningless to say that the agreement of contradictories, if it exists, is impossible. Muslim philosophers say that in this kind of proposition, the predicate deals with the reality and essence of the subject and has nothing to do with existence. Upon judging the proposition, mental existence is a locus for the subject. It is, however, in no way a restraint for the subject. Now we come to the conclusion. The mind judges such a proposition positively and the subject does not exist in the external world. Every positive judgement must exist in some mode. Since it does not exist in the extra-mental world, then it should be in the mind, that is, where it is.17

To take another example, let us say that an iron rod expands when it is heated. In this proposition, which iron rod is meant? The iron rod that exists in extra-mental reality? Clearly, this is not the case. In general, in this kind of proposition, extra-mental existence is not considered. Then what is meant? Upon predication, the speaker has the subject in his mind certainly. But what exists in his mind is the essence and the reality of the iron rod and he predicates the predicate of the subject in the same mode of the existence. But he does not regard mental existence as a restraint for the subject, since if it were the case, then only the iron rod should be attributed to being heated in the mind. It is not, however, the case. The iron rod is essentially such that it expands upon being heated. Now we conclude. The fact that in this kind of true propositions, the predicate is predicated of the essence of the subject, and the subject includes all its individuals whether existent or non-existent, proves Muslim philosophers' doctrine of mental existence, since in this kind of propositions, the mind predicates the predicate of the essence and reality of the subject, which exists in the mind. The essence and reality, in every mode it is realized whether the mode of the extra-mental existence or that of the mental existence, has such an attribute.

If we do not accept this doctrine of Muslim philosophers, then this kind of proposition will be meaningless. All propositions, employed in sciences, however, are of this kind. For example, when we say that every object is finite, or the sum of angles of a triangle is 1800. In this kind of proposition, the existent subjects are not meant, but rather the one who judges the proposition assigns the predicates to the essence and reality, and the mode of the existence of the essence and reality is not the extra-mental world. For what are found in the extra-mental world are the individuals and referents of the essence and reality. If the existent individuals are meant, then non-existent individuals will not be qualified by this attribute. The essence and reality are universal concepts and include all the individuals, whether

existent or non-existent; and such a concept never exists in the extra-mental world. The positing of a mental mode of existence and the permissibility of factual propositions ensures that science is possible.

Notes:

1-Cf. Julia Annas, Hellenistic philosophy of the mind, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996.

2-Cf. Parviz Morewedge, Essays in Islamic philosophy, theology and mysticism, Oneonta: Department of Philosophy, State University of New York at Oneonta 1995.

3-This really refers to the view of Fakhr al-D¢n al-R¡z¢ (d. 1210) in his al-Mab¡¦ith al-mashriqiyya, Hyderabad: Osmania University Oriental Publications 1343 Q, vol. I, p. 331.

4-Cf. T. Izutsu, "The problem of quiddity and the natural universal in Islamic metaphysics," in Etudes Philosophiques, ed. O. Amine, Cairo: GEBO 1974, pp. 131-77.

5-On the doctrine of the originality or primacy of existence (a¥¡lat al-wuj£d) in the thought of Mull¡ ¯adr¡, see Fazlur Rahman, The Philosophy of Mull¡ ¯adr¡, Albany: State University of New York Press 1975, pp. 27-34; cf. Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-°ikma al-muta‘¡liya f¢ l-asf¡r al-‘aqliyya al-arba‘a, eds. R. Lu§f¢ et al, Beirut: D¡r i¦y¡’ al-tur¡th al-‘arab¢ 1981, pp. 37-43.

6-Cf. Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Roots of an aporia in later Islamic philosophy: the existence-essence distinction in Suhrawardi and Avicenna," Studia Iranica 29 (2000) pp. 61-108.

7-See the position that became dominant in later Islamic philosophy of Na¥¢r al-D¢n al-±£s¢ (d. 1274) in his commentary on Avicenna's al-Ish¡r¡t wa l-tanb¢h¡t, ed. S. Duny¡, Cairo: al-hay'a al-‘¡mma 1960, vol. I, p. 201.

8-Cf. Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. II, pp. 36, 70-71.

9-Cf. Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. VI, pp. 252 ff.

10-Cf. Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. I, pp. 264 ff.

11-Cf. Mull¡ ¯adr¡; al-Mas¡'il al-Qudsiyyah, in Ras¡'il falsaf¢, ed. S.J. ªshtiy¡n¢, Tehran: Tehran University Press 1362 Sh, p. 32; idem, al-Asf¡r, vol. I, p. 262.

12-Cf. Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. I, p. 263.

13-Cf. Fazlur Rahman, Philosophy, p. 46; Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. II, p. 10.

14-See John Walbridge, The science of mystic lights: Qu§b al-D¢n Sh¢r¡z¢ and the Illuminationist tradition in Islamic Philosophy, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 1992.

15-See in ‘All¡ma al-°ill¢, Kashf al-mur¡d f¢ shar¦ Tajr¢d al-I‘tiq¡d, ed. °asanz¡da ªmul¢, Qum: Mu'assasat al-nashr al-isl¡m¢ 1988, p. 28.

16-Avicenna, al-Naj¡t, ed. ‘A. ‘Umayra, Beirut: D¡r al-j¢l 1992, pp. 23-6.

17-Cf. Mull¡ ¯adr¡, al-Asf¡r, vol. I, pp. 269-72.

Toward The Phenomenology of Dreaming Consciousness

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Abstract

The ‘mystery’ of consciousness is one of the central concerns of contemporary philosophy. The present article makes a pioneering contribution to the literature on consciousness by extending its scope and considering the nature of ‘dream consciousness’. Drawing upon techniques and methods from phenomenology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry, the author begins by considering generally the nature of consciousness and categorizing conscious states into off-subject and towards-subject by virtue of the intentionality of the act. The analysis then progresses to a examination of what dream consciousness is and how it differs from our wakeful states. A proper understanding of consciousness requires us to grapple with the question of dream consciousness and recognize that what differentiates dream consciousness from wakeful consciousness is the manner of the actualization of its contents. The significant conclusion is that dream consciousness is a transcendental consciousness that is free of the ‘real space’ that characterizes our waking consciousness.

Man’s interest in dreams seems to be as old as the human race itself. When we try to trace the beginnings of scientific research dealing with this phenomenon, we usually think of Siegmund Freud and his theory of psychoanalysis. Freud never gave up the age-old belief in the symbolic significance of dreams, though he endowed this conviction with an entirely new interpretation. To him, dreams were a symbolic expression of our subconsciousness. Freudian theories (except for the concept of pansexualism) are still valid and accepted to a large extent by some psychologists and psychoanalysts who apply them in their therapeutic work. Without diminishing Freud’s achievements, it could be stated that the strong influence of his theory has steered rather one-sidedly the methods of analyzing the content of dreams. It often happens that dreams are being analyzed only from the point of view of their symbolic character, and only those fragments are taken into account that can be subjected to a symbolic interpretation. Other dimensions are neglected as an insignificant framework for the former. Moreover, one can observe a large degree of interpretational arbitrariness resulting from a lack of clear methodological criteria sufficient to guide interpretation. Descriptive examination of dreams, which would take into consideration the whole of the substance of a dream and would not be burdened with theoretical presuppositions, should become an initial stage of any attempt to answer the question, "What is a dream?" Here we come across an obstacle. The substance of a dream is difficult to verbalize, and it is not communicable intersubjectively as a whole. We can only resume that different people’s dreams are essentially similar, and focus our attention on analyzing our own dreams (Freud himself was convinced of the reasonableness of such a procedure).

Research in the domain of dream physiology has greatly expanded in recent years. However utopian it may be to assume that one day we can register ‘objectively’ the content of dreams, there is no doubt at present that the results stemming from dream physiology comprise an important body of material complementary to the analysis of contents. Since dreams are reported in the conscious state, it is important to be aware of the phases, the length and conditions necessary to remember dreams. It is known that multifarious interactions take place between the stimuli experienced while dreaming and the content of dreams. Examinations of such interactions in a laboratory produce very interesting

results. For example, the actual duration of dreaming can be compared with the internal period of time of a dream. Let us emphasize once again, however, that although the knowledge concerning the physiology of dreaming is vital in the overall formulation of the phenomenon, it cannot replace research into the content of dream.

There is a wide range of possible perspectives, namely psychological, sociological, cultural, literary and philosophical ones, in which the problems of dreams appear. The one that is the most interesting to us is the philosophical perspective. A dream is a paradigmatic type of experience which can make us doubt, in a Cartesian manner, whether our apprehension of the world is sound: is not everything we experience just a dream? Numerous philosophers have taken up this theme (for example, Husserl's 'transcendental illusion'1). In particular, it becomes an impulse for trying to find out how the dreaming consciousness differs from the waking consciousness (or in what ways the dream world differs from the life world). Most studies referring to this problem tend to point at the differences between these two types of consciousness and, indirectly, to justify the validity of acquiring knowledge 'while aware'. The distinguishing characteristics that are usually presented let us only grade the differences between the dream and the reality, but they are not clearly distinctive features (for example, it is said that the world of dreams is less clear, less coherent or logical, more elusive and transitory). Speaking against any sharp delineation is the vast opulence and variety of dreams, which seems not to exclude any topic or any form of waking consciousness.

This paper attempts to distinguish dreaming consciousness from waking consciousness, even while admitting that the results arrived at may be controversial. It does not pretend to offer a final solution. We are going to employ a certain general idea of consciousness which may itself be regarded as tendential. As a result, the effects of employing it may be equally regarded as speculation. However, the subject of the studies is difficult and intriguing enough to justify the risk. As the title of the paper suggests, certain methods and notional apparatus of phenomenology will be used here, though not always in a manner faithful to the orthodox form of this philosophy. The content formulation of dreams itself makes us think of using the methods of descriptive phenomenology. Our analyses will be eidetic analyses directed at pointing out the essential features of the content of dreams and the ways in which it appears in consciousness. The basic thesis that we are trying to justify asserts that the fundamental difference between dreaming and waking consciousness lies in a dissimilar manner of actualization (thematization) of content. Other differences may be treated as derivatives of the former.

Content idea of consciousness

Phenomenology seems to be especially conducive to studies on dreaming consciousness, both because of the method and the essential subject matter. Phenomenology is the philosophy of consciousness par excellence or, to put it in another way, phenomenology of consciousness is phenomenology itself. First, everything that makes an object of phenomenology studies is formulated in the way in which it manifests itself to a conscious subject; as a certain substance of consciousness within the limits of this consciousness. Both 'the principle of all principles' and 'phenomenological reduction' results in such a formulation. Phenomenological reduction is a methodological procedure which allows us to reorientate consciousness from an object being experienced to the experiencing of this object or, more precisely, to the content of this experience. Second, the subject of phenomenology is consciousness itself as the place where all conscious substance arises. What plays a special role here is examining the ways in which the substance arises. What arises is also taken into account.

Dreaming consciousness as a type of consciousness should find its place among the interests of phenomenology. Thus, it may seem surprising that traditional phenomenologists did not take up this issue, or they treated it as a matter of secondary importance.2 As a matter of fact, it is only recently that the first phenomenological formulations have taken place. 3 The meaning of the analyses of dreaming consciousness, and especially the eidetic research devoted to it, is not limited to the issue of dreams. The results obtained here, particularly when compared to the analyses referring to waking consciousness, give us a deeper understanding of the essence of consciousness.

The existing analyses of waking consciousness are very extensive, starting with Husserl himself, through his successors, and ending with the contemporary philosophers who combine the methods of phenomenology with those of analytical philosophy. 4 Out of these analyses, have emerged conceptions of consciousness - to a greater or lesser degree theoretically coherent. A dominant motive of these ideas, similar to Husserl's conception, is recognizing intentionality as the decisive feature of consciousness and, at the same time, concentrating mainly on the issues of sensory experience. The importance of this type of experience should not be diminished but still, reducing oneself during research to this type of experience only and neglecting entirely other types or transmitting uncritically the results obtained onto other types of experience makes the generality of such concepts rather doubtful.

As it has already been emphasized, in our studies we will adopt a certain general outline of the theory of consciousness which we will not justify or develop in detail. In accordance with the indicated profile of our interest, we will understand consciousness as a set of contents, the content of experiences. This formulation is nothing new in the tradition of philosophy, and it is particularly closely related to the phenomenological method. It is difficult to define accurately what the content is. This is a fundamental notion, closely connected to the idea of consciousness itself. At the same time, the notion is fairly clear and intelligible in many contexts, so let us confine ourselves to accentuating particular semantic moments, while remembering that the notion is understood very broadly. Generally, content is everything that we become aware of (we experience) in the acts and within the limits in which we become aware of them (experience them). By 'content', we will refer not only to what can be communicated intersubjectively (verbalized) but also to any sensory data, also to (bodily) feelings, moods, or even abilities (such as the Heideggerian ability of 'hammering'5). The latter experiences are contents insofar as they can be realized reflectively. It should be emphasized that a class of contents is closed with respect to internal apprehension through the act of reflection. An act of consciousness consists in the actualisation of contents, in other words, the existence of an act is tantamount to actualization of some contents. In the time dimension of consciousness, new contents are being actualised in correspondence with successive acts of consciousness. The contents of consciousness create an organized whole both in synchronous and diachronous aspects. The basic form is the part-whole form; particular contents make components of others, and we can speak generally about a certain system of contents which is a system in the technical meaning of this word (the same as used in the theory of systems).

At this point we are going to introduce the key conceptual distinction that will be utilized in further parts of the paper. We assume that there are two, mutually opposite ways of actualizing the consciousness contents: off-subject and towards-subject. In relation to concrete contents, we will speak respectively about off-subject moments, or sometimes, unless it is ambiguous, directly about off-subject and towards-subject contents (in short, off and towards). This distinction is equivalent in a sense to the traditional cognizance scheme of 'formulation-content' that was even accepted, to a certain degree, by Husserl. Essential to our approach is the application of the off/toward opposition to the moments of

actualization of conscious content, rather than to the distinction in content itself. However, the difference between these approaches will not be clear all the time.

We shell try to explain the nature of the off-towards opposition, referring to a great extent to the conceptual apparatus of the classical theory of intentionality. This does not mean, however, that the idea of intentionality is more fundamental than the idea of off-towards moments; rather both notions should be treated correlatively.

The off-subject moment is, generally speaking, a moment when the consciousness is active: such a moment points at 'I' as a source of contents. Off-subject moments are all these moments that give a direction to intentional acts, they constitute an empty intentionality, and they are filled in these acts. In Husserl's theory, they can be equivalent to semantic-noematic contents, categorial contents, 'ways of presentation' (Gegebenheitweisen) and noetic elements. The towards-subject moment is a moment of experiencing the content, entailing a certain passivity and at the same time an opening of consciousness. Relative to this moment, the object of an act is given distinctly, it is 'self-present'. Towards-subject contents are those which come forth in the field of consciousness as 'foreign' to the 'I'. They pervade us, fill empty intentions and they cannot be created by the subject 'out of itself'. It is extremely difficult to render precisely the above distinction. This would require extensive analyses which in effect would lead to a certain general theory of consciousness. Still, before we proceed to further studies, let us note that such a theory is not indispensable to achieve the objective that has been chosen here.

The off-towards opposition refers first of all to relatively simple contents of consciousness. When the contents are more complicated, and especially as is the case with complete contents of acts, they cannot be attributed univocally at any of these moments. We have to do here with a mixture of off-towards moments which are distributed to particular fragments of the contents. Unless we conduct a deeper analysis, we can only suppose that it is also possible to single out a superior component in the complete content of an act, which organizes this content and has the off-nature. This component expresses in a way the essence of consciousness' intentionality, indicating the 'I' as the performer of acts. (Perhaps in the complete content of an act it is also possible to grasp a superior element of towards-nature, expressing the act's 'fatedness' to be filled). It seems that every act of ordinary waking consciousness contains off- and towards-moments and that the coexistence of these two moments is a necessary condition for intentionality of an act. In the case of a sensory experience, and especially of perception, this is obvious, even without the off-towards opposition being spelled out in complete theoretical detail. We can understand this experience as a synthesis of categorial moments – off-moments, and hyletic data - towards moments. In a sense, towards-subject contents are dominant here, but even with a far-reaching cognitive and volitional passivity the off-subject contents do not disappear. 6 In intellectual acts, memories, considerations, reasoning, where sense perception is minimized, the off-subject contents become most important, but even here there are some towards-subject contents - filling ones. Definitely, certain regulatory principles must control coexistence of various contents and the off-towards nature of actualization. However, the issue is highly complicated and we will not deal with it at this point.

As it has been mentioned, an off moment refers us semantically to 'I'. What is meant here is rather not an ideal point deprived of any internal structure or internal semantic dimension. It seems that off-subject contents are already potentially present in consciousness, creating its internal space, a sort of background against which the towards-subject contents may arise. The space of consciousness may be understood as a complete representation of the 'external world', the 'world's model', (as it was meant

by Henri Ey7), which is focused on 'I' or as everything that has already been constituted. The space thus understood is the foundation for memory (which is worth keeping in mind while discussing the issues connected with dreaming consciousness). Beside the content-semantic component, what we can distinguish in the space is content-structural components which determine the manner in which various types of towards-subject contents arise. The latter components are not thetically given, but they are available in reflection (for example, certain contents appear as perceptive ones). In Husserl's terminology, the space of consciousness is a maximum horizon co-supposed in every act, and it will include both noematic and noetic moments correlated with the former in their modal dimension.

The space of consciousness, as we understand it, is thus primarily the source of off-subject contents. As a class of contents, it is not a set of loosely linked elements, but a complex, hierarchical structure whose organization is accessible to consciousness, at least upon reflection. The space of consciousness undergoes particular transformations over time, and it should be imagined that these transformations are of a continuous character. Certain contents enter this space, others disappear (they are forgotten). Yet the base of these changes remains in the space, which guarantees continuity of the stream of consciousness in time. The space also guarantees the identity of consciousness as exactly my consciousness, in spite of temporary states of unawareness. What we mean here is the obvious fact that we wake up as exactly the same person that fell asleep.

The outlined theory of off-towards moments, like basic ways of contents actualization, enables us to formulate from a new standpoint the concept of phenomenological reduction and the idea of pure (transcendental) consciousness to which such reduction leads. Suspension of the thesis about the existence of the world is related to deactivation of consciousness, extinction of its intentional character that results from consciousness' orientation to 'the world'. We 'neutralize' the relational opposition of consciousness to the world. Thus the procedure of reduction can be now understood as gradual withdrawal of consciousness from the off attitude to that of towards changing the status of the off-subject contents into towards-subject contents. As a result, if we have conducted a radical reduction, all contents of consciousness will become towards-subject contents. This will be followed by depriving the 'I' of the space of consciousness or, in other words, this space will contract just to one point, namely 'pure consciousness'. Such dimensionless pure consciousness does not process the contents individually any more, but it actualizes them as a whole (in particular, noetic moments change into correlative noematic moments). The stream of consciousness is reduced to one transcendental act. This act is timeless in itself because the whole of time is now merely its internal content. What I was thinking about a moment ago is not actually what I was thinking, but it is realized by the transcendental subject as the data, 'thought at a past moment'. An intentional act in which I picture (in off-subject manner) an object turns into an act of experiencing (in towards-subject manner) picturing the object.

We do not intend to settle here whether it is possible to carry out radical phenomenological reduction; whether it is possible to proceed from natural to transcendental consciousness. The basic problem lies in the fact that changing the status of the contents from off into towards requires a separate intentional act which would put itself at a reflective distance from the original act. Such an act, just like perhaps any intentional act, includes in itself off-subject moments, and because of this, does not bring us nearer to transcendental consciousness. In this light, the realization of transcendental consciousness seems an infinite task. What seems possible and phenomenologically justified is only local and limited application of reduction, although this does not lead to transcendental consciousness.

Let us also mention a slightly weaker version of the concept of transcendental consciousness, according to which such consciousness does not reduce itself to one transcendental act, and a multitude of acts

succeeding one another is admissible. All the contents of every act of this type, including the complete contents, would have the towards character. Consciousness consisting of such elements only would be deprived of space, or at least it would not make any sense to ascribe space to it. Such consciousness would be just a place where contents arise, and it would preserve, just like in the previous formulation, the transcendental character of a dimensionless point. Each following act would bring some content expressing in its horizon the whole of the world: each act would be 'a monad without windows', closed to other acts. The obvious weakness of such an idea is the fact that nothing can guarantee continuity of the stream of consciousness, and unity of ego, except the unity of the transcendental world itself (yet at this point we are going beyond the sphere of transcendental phenomenology). However, it is not without reason that we consider this concept since, as we will see, the idea will turn out very useful while describing the dreaming consciousness.8

Dream life and waking life

The basic feeling that dreams elicit is that of amazement. When we wake up and try to remember what we were dreaming about - whether it was a cheerful and pleasant dream, or rather neutral, or, finally, frightful and gloomy one - we are always enchanted by its mysterious and fantastic character. Dream life is far away from waking life, even if the former contains a number of elements that we can recognize as borrowed from reality. The oddity of dreams is perceived only when we are awake; we do not experience this feeling while dreaming. On the contrary, even if we have nightmares and would like to avoid them, we can feel in the dream world 'at home', that this is 'our world'. In this sense, from the point of view of dreaming consciousness, the real world is strange to us, if we realize its existence at all. The strangeness of dreams is closely connected to the richness and variety of dream contents. We feel touched by a fairyland plot, unusual composition of various objects, persons, places, and also by their surprising transformations. In a dream, the most fundamental laws of the real world are broken, including the rules of logic. Our presence in the world of dreams also takes various forms: we are both observers and main characters of the events. Not only do we experience passively what is happening, but we also act intentionally, think, imagine, recall things, etc. It seems that there are no such contents that we would not be able to dream about. This variety of dreaming worlds must be the reason why there exists such a large number of theories of interpretation, among which the most striking one is Jung's archetype interpretation. And if we agree that everything may become potentially a topic for a dream, then the only essential difference between dreaming consciousness and waking consciousness is the manner in which the contents appear (actualize).

One of the differences between the two types of consciousness considered here is the lack of reflexive moments in the case of dreaming. This is only partially true. We have to admit that reflection occurs here relatively seldom and in the shallow stage of dream that borders the waking state (this refers also to other forms of consciousness in which a moment of reflection takes place, like recollection). The frequency of reflection depends to a high degree on the psychological predispositions of the dreaming person. The phenomenon of 'lucid dreams' 9 has been evidenced and empirically examined. The person who is dreaming is perfectly aware of the fact that s/he is dreaming. S/he may look at the world of dreams from a distance, may influence the dream by bringing about content changes, or sometimes even get partly in touch with the external world. Although some people claim that lucid dreams make a bridge between dream life and wake life, most scientists treat this state of consciousness as a state of dreaming consciousness.

Let us note a significant feature of the contents of dreams - though it should be said immediately that this feature, as a rule, is apparent only when we are awake - when we try to recall and analyze these

contents. Namely, the dream world has a schematic form whose numerous fragments are not precisely defined, but just outlined. This refers to all types of contents, starting with the sensual ones or such that are regarded as sensual. What we can 'see' in a dream is not filled, it lacks the animation and self-presence that real objects possess, as well as lacking their 'being uncovered (unfolded)'. We can realize this when, while dreaming, we become interested in an object or a person, and especially if we desire them. At such a moment we experience the transitoriness and ephemerality of objects, we are unable to see them clearly or to grasp them. It also happens that when we try to approach them, new elements emerge, which is accompanied by some recalcitrance of 'the material' of the dream. Objects as such are not uncovered - we have to rely on the dream world if we want to have them uncovered or created completely. We can speak here about certain 'schematic appearances', as Ingarden understood them, though this is not exactly the same phenomenon as in the case of literary works. Definitely, this schematic character is related to the changeability of objects and to their constant transformations. It is obvious that an intentional act can be filled only in relation to a stable object.

Schematization encompasses us in our roles as 'citizens' of the dream world. In the dream we are to a greater or lesser degree bodiless, and the scarcity of our 'cognitive tools' is proportional to our state. As a result, our being present in the dream world is weakly marked. The extent of schematization may vary. Sometimes when we wake up, we have a strong feeling of the verity of our experiences (for example, we say that something was 'lifelike'). Still, it is doubtful that completely filled oniric experiences exist. The more so, schematization should not be treated as a consequence of the fact that we forget our dreams so easily. A more detailed explanation of this phenomenon can be found in the psychology of memory. Let us just note at this point that we can often remember dreams that we dreamt a long time ago much better than the details of our latest dreams. The schematic character of dreams remains in conformity to our 'feeling of being at home' in the dream world which we noticed earlier. It does not render unreal, effectively distancing us from the dream world. This happens mainly because this world is given to the dreaming consciousness as the complete, filled world, and therefore not schematic. Let us also note that a dream does not consist of loose and unconnected contents that arise simultaneously at random (though some theories of dreams do accept such a formulation, and thus escape the issue of the meaning of dreams). First of all, the actualizing of the contents of specific categories, for example, object senses, does not take place in isolation. It is accompanied by the actualizing of the contents of other respective categories. It seems that some categorial rules must govern this phenomenon, similar to or identical with those that figure in the waking consciousness. We never dream about an object or a person as a static form without any location, independent from time and space. Although this may be weakly marked, the subject is always situated somewhere and something is happening to it; there is always some presupposed background, horizon. The whole of the dream's plot also occurs in a certain horizon, the maximum horizon that contains such moments as location, time, continuity, namely everything that creates the sense of the world. It is difficult to characterize this maximum horizon, either generally or in respect to particular dreams. This is, as it were, a sketch of the dream world, but the sketch which captures its essence. We can speak here about a certain mood or a specific aura of a dream, which usually escapes our attempts to describe it verbally. This aura is not necessarily built upon what is happening within the dream and what can be put into words. It is rather a superior element of the contents of a dream, which organizes the whole. Let us refer to the following observation. When we take up an attempt to describe the contents of a dream, what we do is first of all trying to relate the plot of the dream in detail giving all elements that are 'comprehensible' in wake life. Those who have got some experience in reporting their dreams may have noticed that when they go back to one of the recordings after a long period of time, it is often difficult to remember the dream, even if the description was very accurate. This may mean that something essential for the dream, something going beyond narration, was lost. This omitted element is just the special aura of the dream, which is difficult or

impossible to render. Conversely, we can 'remember' certain dreams for a very long time, although we have already forgotten the details; most probably, what we can remember is the aura or atmosphere of the dream which 'organizes' other elements of its content.

Let us also note one more significant feature of dreams. There is no need to convince anyone that numerous elements of dreams' contents, if not all of them, are borrowed from our conscious life in reality. Referring to the notional apparatus we have introduced, it can be stated that the source of these contents is the space of consciousness. The following phenomenon is striking at this point. While analyzing the content of our dreams, we are constantly surprised by the fact that the objects, events, fragments of real experiences that appear in the dream - however identical they are, given as exactly these objects - do not resemble their real counterparts in any respect. Why does a given person or a place that we know so well become absolutely different when we dream about it? We shall try to answer this question and explain other problems mentioned above in the succeeding section.

Dreaming consciousness as transcendental consciousness

Basically, we can distinguish two essential views referring to the ways in which the contents of a dream form. The first concept, which may be called atomistic (or compositional, or even syntactic), treats the dream as constructed from certain basic content elements that come directly from real experiences or are the equivalents, copies of the latter. The whole of the dream, including its sense and meaning, is formed as a composition of these elements. This is more or less how Freud understood the process of dream formation. According to him, the basic material of dreams were mental traces arranged adequately by certain mechanisms of our subconsciousness. Atomistic theories are also put forward by many contemporary scholars. 10 Unlike the former, holistic theories regard the dream as a certain originally constituted whole that contains a moment organizing particular concrete component contents (the dream world is constituted de novo). Gordon Globus presents a theory of this kind.11 The idea of dreams discussed here is also a holistic concept (which is indicated by the analysis of the dream's aura presented above).

We pointed out some differences between the life world and dream world (or rather dream worlds), but they could be discerned only from the perspective of the former world. Let us repeat. We feel 'at home' in the dream world despite serious discrepancies between our real experiences and what we dream about. How is it possible that, while dreaming, we are not surprised or even shocked by the oddity of the dream's content? Why does the transition to the dream world take place in such a natural manner? It seems that we can give here a very simple answer. Namely, in the dream world we are not in the possession of the space of consciousness which is present in our wake life. And so, the contents do not appear on the background of this space; they may possess their own space which can be associated - keeping in mind our earlier analyses - with the dream's aura. The lack of real space, that is the one which the waking consciousness has, is the reason why there is no clash with the waking world ('strange' contents of a dream are not odd because they do not interfere with 'rational' contents of the space). It is important that that the space of consciousness, even if it occurs in a given dream, will not be preserved in the next dream or in the wake life. This is related to the uniqueness of dreams - you cannot dream the same but in a different manner (although most of us dream repeatedly the same subjects but, as it reported, every time in a different way). Formulating the phenomenon in Heidegger's language, which is a bit metaphorical, we can say that whereas we are 'cast' into the wake life once for ever, we are being 'cast' into the dream worlds again and again.

The fact that some fragmentary contents that we recognize as the elements of reality occur in a dream, and that these contents are at least partly categorized and hierarchical, does not entitle us to think that the space representing the reality appears in the dream. As it has been emphasized, the real space of consciousness is a coherent, organized whole responsible for the identity of the conscious 'I'. It is a principle by means of which the 'I' can retrieve itself in reality. It is also a basis for the horizontal constitution of objects.

Let us go back to the question asked at the end of the previous section. Imagine that that we are dreaming about our friend, Mr. Smith, who 'looks' and 'behaves' quite differently than in reality. It is significant that in the dream we are not surprised with the different nature of our friend. Yet when we are thinking about him in waking life, he is co-presumed with a definite horizon in which his personality characteristics, appearance and lots of other fact occur. Indeed, even in our waking lives we can picture John Smith as someone different from who he really is, but then there is a distance of formulation in respect to what is true (or what is regarded as true), co-given in the act. In short, in an act of imagination we are given, rather unthetically, the real horizon connected with John Smith, and this horizon is a fragment of the real space of consciousness. There is no parallel moment in the dream. If there were such a moment, there would be a confrontation of the contents of the real consciousness with the effective content of the dream, which would put as at a distance in respect to the dreamt object. Yet this object appears in the dream just as such, and not otherwise. This observation brings us to a conclusion that the real space of consciousness is absent in the dream.

As it has been stated, the space of waking consciousness plays a dual role: it is a kind of a model of the world and of our existence in this world, and at the same time it is a source of off-subject contents. Indeed, we could also notice in the contents of dreams something that could be regarded as a model of the dream world (the dream's aura), yet this element is not given as opposed to the contents we experience. It is rather actualised just like the remaining contents and simultaneously with them, and thus it is not the source of off-subject contents. And if so, are there any off-subject contents or, more precisely, off-subject moments present in the dream?

The moment of off-subject contents actualization was associated with certain fundamental activity of consciousness, which can be regarded as constitutive of intentionality (at least in a certain understanding). Let us repeat that the space of consciousness in our formulation is not just 'the world's model'; it is also, perhaps first of all, our reference to the world, and thus the various ways in which object comes to be experienced in an off-subject manner. The off-subject actualizing of the contents takes various forms, those of perception, recollection, imagining, reasoning, and so on. All these forms in turn overlap with the form of temporal actualization, since they are carried out over time. Do similar forms of consciousness, exactly as the forms of off-subject consciousness, occur in the dream?

Let us study the case of recollection. While recollecting, we actualize (in the off-subject manner) some contents of the space of consciousness which have a status of the past contents and which at one time had been actualised as present ones and were incorporated by this space (as long as we mean non-transcendental consciousness!). We also have to do with recollection in dreams, though not frequently and not all of us. For example, we are dreaming about recollecting something that happened in reality or in another dream. When we wake up, we are surprised to find out that we can not remember that a given event could really occur or was the content of an earlier dream (the latter case can be partly verified if we write down the contents of our dreams). The explanation seems very simple. Actually, we are not recollecting something that really happened but we experience 'something-as-recollected'. Whereas the act of actual recollecting is of the off character, complete recollection in a dream, that is,

together with the act moment itself, is of the towards nature. This formulation is absolutely consistent with the lack of real space of consciousness in a dream. Since there is no such space, consciousness is deprived of a time dimension and as a result it does not have any 'material' to recollect.

The issue of experiencing time in dreams requires additional explanations. Undoubtedly, the plot of a dream possesses its internal time and it differs from the real time much more than so-called internal psychological time in the case of wake life. In a dream, we are able to experience events that 'last' much longer than the period of physiological dream. Moreover, there is an oft-discussed phenomenon of weaving certain external stimuli into the plot of a dream, such as some noises. It happens that when we hear the sound of an alarm clock, it is introduced quite naturally into what we are dreaming about and at a certain moment we can experience it as bell tolling. When we wake up, we have a feeling that the ringing of bells was a summation of the plot, and the dream had been oriented at this point since its beginning. So we could put forward a hypothesis, and this has already been done that at least in such cases the dream is a very short one, not longer than the ringing itself, and its 'earlier' phase is being actualized at this moment. We do not fully accept this explanation because laboratory studies refute the opinion that dreams can be very short or that they are just timeless points. Still, note that this explanation is consistent with the concept of the dream worlds appearing as integral wholes which possess their internal time structure. As a result, it seems understandable that in a dream time can be freely extended or even cut into pieces and mixed up (it is a different problem how far the freedom goes here). If we dream about three events, Z1, Z2, Z3 as arranged chronologically exactly in this order, this does not mean that we dream about them in this order. We can dream about them simultaneously: Z1 as a past event, Z2 as a present one, Z3 as a future one. The timing of dreaming consciousness belongs to its internal content here; it is difficult to discern off moments. Thus it should be stated that the time in a dream is a towards-subject content.

Let us now consider the form of consciousness which occurs in every dream, namely perception (or more generally, sensory experience). It is doubtful whether we can talk at all about perception in a dream in the strict sense of the word, since our senses are blocked when we are asleep, the eyesight especially. If we talk about perception in a dream, the experience must be different from real perception because of the schematization that we have already discussed. Real perception itself requires fulfillment of definite conditions (noetic rules), and particularly, an adequately equipped subject of perception is needed. In the dream thesis conditions is not fulfilled because the dreaming subject's corporeality is reduced, or sometimes the subject may be bodiless. 12 Still, we can 'see' in the dream and sometimes we can see quite clearly. The only explanation here seems to be stating that indeed, in a dream we rather experience things as perceived than perceive certain contents. It is not easy to visualize the difference between a perception as such and the awareness of something as being perceived. From the theoretical standpoint, in the first case the noetic moment of perception is an off moment, and in the other case it is a towards moment. In the dream modi 'as perceived' joins in a way the remaining contents and constitutes a 'perception', though equally well they could be joined by modi 'as imagined' or 'as recollected' and then we would have to do with 'image' or 'memory'. Similarly, a detailed problem connected with 'perceiving' could be analyzed. Sometimes, especially with a pre-theoretical attitude, a question is posed as to whether dreams are colour or black and white. Unless we are aware of this problem and it penetrates into the dreaming consciousness, the dream is neither colourful nor black and white. But when we start being interested in 'the colours' of a dream, we have colourful' or 'black and white' dreams. This means that an additional towards-subject content appears which 'gives colors' to the dream.

Our studies are an attempt to justify a thesis that the contents of a dream are not actualised as syntheses of off- and towards-subject moments but they are all given uniformly and as a whole, in the towards-subject way. This thesis justifies the holistic idea of dream, and when we remember that there is no (real) space of consciousness in a dream, we can draw a conclusion that dreaming consciousness has the nature of transcendental consciousness. We are not trying to say that each dream is a single transcendental act isolated from the acts of other dreams. It should be rather believed, and it can be confirmed by more detailed analyses, that dreams consist of a number of acts that are linked by a uniform content plot or by the aura of the dream. These acts are characterized by relative independence, and the transitions between them are rather jumpy, and not continuous as in waking life (this explains, partly at least, the changes of objects and sudden turns of plot in the dream). However, basically all contents of particular acts actualise in the towards manner. As such, they are nonintentional acts, according to the understanding of intentionality adopted here (the intentional acts are those which contain off moments). 13 We say 'basically' because certain acts in the dream have intentional traits. These are those acts in which we show some activity without giving in completely to the plot of the dream, for example, we try to achieve something, especially something pleasant, or we escape from something, especially if it is repulsive. However, in such cases it is doubtful that the act character contains an off moment, or it should be stated that these cases lie on the borderline between the dream and wake world.

To conclude, let us share a general reflection. According to popular opinion, a psycho-physical individual is the creator and author of dreams. The effect of our phenomenological considerations is a conclusion about nearly complete passivity and helplessness of the dreaming subject as far as the contents of dreams are concerned. Of course, there is no formal contradiction here. The problem of the source and sense of dreams and the issue of the manner in which dream contents appear in consciousness are two different things. Still, our emphasis on a certain opposition of the dream and the dreaming person may hint at a different view of the meaning on dreams than the traditional one. In the psychoanalytical formulation, the meaning of dreams is referred mainly to the past of the dreaming individual, and it is expressed in displaying his/her past experiences. The displaying itself is also an (unconscious) act of the individual. When we focus our attention on the variety of dreams, the high degree of creativity and independence from our current psycho-physical form in the real world, we put forward a hypothesis that the essence of dreams lies in their being directed towards the future. Perhaps dreams supplement our current experience (generating changes in the real space of consciousness) and prepare us for what is going to happen.14

Notes:

1-Cf. W. R. McKenna, Husserl's Introductions to Phenomenology. Interpretation and Critique, Hague: Mouton Publishers 1982.

2-An early attempt to analyze dreams phenomenologically (very limited in its scope) can be found in Jean-Paul Sartre. More recent research is presented in a rather little known work by D. von Uslar, Untersuchungen zur Ontologie und Phanomenologie des Traums, Pfullingen 1964.

3-Cf. J. Gordon, "Dream-world or life-world? A Phenomenological Solution to an Ancient Puzzle," Husserl Studies 2 (1985), and G. Globus, Dream Life, Wake Life. The Human Condition Through Dreams, New York 1987. The methods of phenomenological psychology were applied in dream studies conducted by D. Reed-Burnet, "Phenomenological Psychology of Dreams," Association for the Study of Dreams Newsletter 5.5 (1988).It is also worth mentioning that the problem of dreams has been associated with

Heidegger's phenomenology, and especially the fact that the research has referred to the Dasein category. Cf. M. Boss, The Analysis of Dreams, New York 1958, and M. Boss, I dreamt last night...,New York 1977.

4-Cf. D. W. Smith & R. McIntyre, Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning and Language, Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing 1982, and H. R. Otto & J. A. Tuedio (eds), Perspectives on Mind, Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing 1988.

5-Heidegger, Being and time, tr. J. Stambaugh, Albany: SUNY Press 1996, pp. 69-70, 78-84, 154-7, 360-1. Cf. M. Inwood, Heidegger, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 34-46.

6-According to Ingarden a condition necessary for an intentional act to exist is certain activity of the subject (that is, an off moment), though he admits some entirely passive acts of waking consciousness. He says, "It seems doubtful to me that experiencing and passive perceiving should be admitted an intentional moment". Cf. his Der Striet um die Existenz der Welt, Vol. II, Tuebingen 1965.

7-Henri Ey et al, Psychiatry and philosophy, ed. M. Natanson, New York: Springer 1969; eadem, Consciousness: a phenomenological study of being conscious, tr. J.H. Flodstrom, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1979.

8-The conceptual apparatus that we have introduced here enables us to distinguish theoretically some other posited concepts of consciousness, to a greater or lesser degree distinct from the idea of transcendental consciousness. It can be stated that all the contents of consciousness are of off character. Of course, then the 'off-towards' distinction would become meaningless. But even when we skip this doubt, it can be noted that consciousness, according to such a theory, would be something closed in itself, because any contents that could be updated, would be already the contents of the space of consciousness. If we decided that consciousness does not possess any space, we would have to admit that the contents are actualised here ex nihilo - their source is contentless consciousness. In this conception, similar to the idea of transcendental consciousness, consciousness appears to be a dimensionless, internally indefinite point.At present, the computational conception of consciousness is fairly popular. It is according to this conception, the space of consciousness is very rich, although it does not use up all contents that might occur. The remaining contents are contentless in themselves - the only definition they deserve is that they are towards-subject, they are pure 'filling' of intentional acts. One can imagine the space of consciousness as a network of off-subject contents consisting of 'meshes' which can be filled or not, and the filling of each mesh is homogenous in respect to quality. The actualising of the contents lies, generally speaking, in filling definite meshes of the space of consciousness: the filling itself is a towards moment, and the type of a mesh is an off moment. Moreover, filling one mesh is followed by filling another one, according to strictly defined rules. (This theory can be also described using computer terminology: the space of consciousness is equivalent to software).

9-Cf. S. LaBerge, Lucid Dreaming, Los Angeles 1985.

10-More or less clearly outlined theories of this type can be found in the following works: J.A. Hobson & R.W. McCarley, "The Brain as a Dream State Generator: An Activation-Synthesis Hypothesis of the Dream Process," American Journal of Psychiatry 134 (1977); M. Edelson, "Language and Dreams," The Psychoanalytic Study of Child 27 (1973); D. Foulkes, A Grammar of Dreams, New York 1978.

11-Cf. G. Globus, Dream Life, Wake Life.

12-The reduction of the corporeality of the dreaming subject is sometimes regarded as the basic feature distinguishing a dream from reality. Cf. J. Gordon, "Dream-world or life-world?"

13-According to Globus, dreaming is also an intentional act, the one that fills itself. See G. Globus, Dream Life, Wake Life. However, this does not hold for the Ingardenian concept of intentionality. Since, according to our analyses, dreaming lacks the activity of off-moments, it can hardly be considered as intentional.

14-D. Foulkes seems to present a similar thesis in his Dreaming: A Cognitive-Psychological Analysis, London 1985, Chapter 5.

Some Advantages of Deliberative Democracy

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Abstract

This paper addresses itself to a central question in contemporary political thought, namely are there any advantages to a deliberative, as opposed to an aggregative, model of democracy? Assessing the raging discussion on the nature of democratic theory and practice, it considers a model of deliberative democracy that constitutes a ‘normative ideal’ that may be applied in national political and civil institutions. Deliberative democracy can be seen as more consonant with the demands for a ‘just society’ since it eschews sectional interests that define the liberal democratic process. Compared with liberal democratic models, however, it is found wanting and is a poor replacement when one considers broader issues of the constitution of a national level of civil society and the exigencies of social justice within the political process.

The notion of deliberative democracy has enjoyed a revival during the past twenty years, 1 though the term was used in ancient times as well. Broadly speaking, it is an alternative to interest-based democracy or liberal democracy. Whereas some theorists tend to give prominence to the distinction between ‘citizens’ interests’ and consequently the inevitability of disagreement amongst members of the community, there are also others who postulate the possibility of reconciliation of citizens’ profits.2 The former suggests the establishment of a plural society and the consideration of differences, whilst the latter attempts to develop a constructive discussion amongst the subjects in order to obtain agreement. To put it in another way, interest-based democracy is suspicious about the viability of achieving the common good; accordingly it looks to private gains, seeking a just procedure to aggregate them. On the other hand, deliberative democracy optimistically strives to establish a procedure through which the common good and justice can be obtained.

In this essay I shall first look at some definitions of deliberative democracy, developing those explanations by contrasting them with other relevant concepts. Then, I shall examine some advantages that deliberative democracy possesses in comparison with interest-based model. Finally, I will discuss some shortcomings which deliberative democracy might face in return.

Part One: Defining deliberative democracy

A-Some general definitions of deliberative democracy

Generally speaking, deliberative democracy expresses a community in which the members make decision on their public affairs through equal and free argument and discussion, as Cohen describes it concisely. 3 In other words, in a deliberative democracy each member of the community can propose and reason in favour of his or her opinion, while the aim is to choose the best alternative to serve the public good and justice. 4 This kind of democracy, unlike liberal democracy, can normally be implemented at the level of 'representative' assemblies and associations rather than 'citizens who are too numerous'.5

Adam Przeworski explains deliberative democracy in terms of its outcome and holds that it is a discussion that aims at changing preferences on public affairs culminating in voting that affects government. He sees it as a deliberation since it contains discussion that is aimed at changing the opinions of the participants. Also, it is political because it intends to affect the community and the government. And finally, it is considered democratic because participants in the discussion resort to collective decision-making at the end of the argument.6 Some others, such as Diego Gambetta, talk about deliberative democracy as a process through which 'individuals speak and listen sequentially before making a collective decision'. He names that process conversation that is located between 'bargaining' in which participants 'exchange threats and promises', and 'arguing' in which people seek the truth.7 According to this view, it does not matter what the result of the process might be. If the outcome is made after mutual observations and exchange of opinions, then that process is considered to be deliberation.

Likewise, Cohen by mentioning two notions of deliberation, 'formal conception of deliberative democracy' and 'ideal deliberative procedure' approaches the issue in a similar way. By the first, he means 'an ongoing and independent association', whose members consider 'free deliberation among equals' as 'the basis of legitimacy'. Also, despite the fact that participants of the association differ in beliefs and preferences relating to their own lives, they resort to collective decision-making through public discussion to determine their communal affairs. Furthermore, the members of the community attach importance to linking legitimacy of their decision to public deliberation in a clear and evident way. And finally, the members of the community consider each other as qualified persons for deliberation. By ideal deliberative procedure, he aims to postulate a procedure for decision-making that can serve that formal deliberation. He maintains that if choosing a topic for discussion as a public problem, posing different solutions to that problem, reasoning for or against each solution and coming to the conclusion are all implemented through the ideal deliberative procedure then the outcome of such a deliberation can counted legitimate and justifiable.8 In this way, he propounds deliberative democracy as a procedure that can best justify collective decision-making and legitimise the outcome of public choice, no matter what the outcome would be.

B- Defining deliberative democracy through opposing models

Now I want to compare the idea of deliberative democracy with relevant concepts to explain it more precisely.

Athenian deliberation

The first notion, which can be compared with deliberative democracy, is 'Athenian deliberation'. The idea of deliberation is as old as democracy itself. In ancient Athens where the idea of democracy emerged there existed the notion of deliberation as well.9 We can find the concept of deliberation as a

process of making collective decision in Aristotle's comments when he said, 'we deliberate not about ends but about the means to attain ends'.10 However, there are differences between deliberative democracy in its new sense and the ancient concept in the following features:

Firstly, since Athenian government was a direct democracy, which consisted of thousands of people, it was normally impossible that everybody contribute to the conversation, though there was no privilege for any specific person; that is, not 'all could talk and make proposals, though anyone could'. Therefore, deliberation in that context implied the argument between a small group in front of the whole people who wanted to make a collective decision. Moreover, the participants in the discussion did not intend to convince each other, instead they tried to convince the audience in order to obtain their votes for their ideas.11The discussion was held as a competition between groups who believed that the truth was only in their own hands so that they were not inclined to alter their opinions by reasoning. They had made their decision before the argument.

2- Interest-based Model of Democracy

The other rival to deliberative democracy that was dominant in the middle of the 20th century was liberal democracy, according to which people express their interests and desires and vote for policies that can procure the best results to their own benefits. Although in a liberal democracy, participants may argue about their ideas and preferences, they do not intend to reach the consensus on the common good. In addition, each party may individually thinks reasonably about the way of obtaining his or her own interest, but there is no guarantee that the outcome will be achieved at by the reasoning way.12

Whereas the theorists of deliberative democracy hold that it is possible for people to pursue the common good through discussion and argument, the theorists of liberal democracy maintain that people have different interests and concerns that contradict with each other. The latter argue that the only democratic way to make decisions on public affairs is to pave the way for a free and equal competition amongst different groups of people in the society. The first theorist in this camp was Schumpeter.13 By suggesting the conception of the 'elite theory of democracy', Schumpeter attacked the idea of common good. He denied both the possibility and the advantage of the existence of the common good. It is impossible, he argued, for people to arrive at one end not only because they have different values and desires, but also because they disagree on the way through which they can realise a certain goal. Furthermore, it is dangerous to believe in the common good because if a group thinks that there is a common good, which can be realised by reasoning and rationale, that group is likely to reject all other ideas as irrational, and consequently suppress all protests as sectarian. 14 As a result, he maintained that democracy is a mere means to change one government by another and prevent it from becoming a permanent dictatorship and thus from threatening citizens' rights.15 Some others, too, argue that the problem is not only that most people pursue their own benefits and are self-interested, but also the predicament is that there is no consensus on the definition of truth and justice.16

3- Epistemic Democracy
The other opponent to deliberative democracy, as Miller propounded it, is epistemic democracy. According to him, in the epistemic model of democracy people through the democratic process pursue a correct answer to a given problem related to the society. In other words, this opinion supposes that there is a right answer to any question in public affairs. Therefore, bearing in mind the fact that there is no consensus to determine correct answer we can find the most reliable means to realise the truth by majority voting. By contrast, deliberative democracy assumes that when all opinions of a community's

members are put forward and discussed openly and equally the outcome of this process is justifiable. Thus, the aim of deliberative democracy is to bring about a justifiable decision by public argument, not to reach the reality and truth.17 In other words, deliberative democracy is a process that can justify the decision in the best way, not a means to achieve the truth.

To sum up, deliberative democracy, unlike Athenian deliberation, is a community whose all members try to participate in collective decision-making on public affairs through open, free and equitable public discussion. It also diverges from liberal democracy in that the aim of parties in deliberative democracy is arriving at the agreed conclusion about the common good, not the sectarian interests as liberal democracy aims at. And finally, it is different from epistemic democracy in that the latter assumes that there is a right answer to any problem and the members of the democratic society pursue that answer through public discussion. By contrast, in deliberative democracy the members of the community try to reach the most justifiable outcome through equal and free argument.

To arrive at the main purpose of this essay, I will develop the discussion by concentrating on advantages of deliberative democracy posed by some theorists.

Part Two: The advantages of deliberative democracy

Whereas there are some advantages to deliberation with respect to its outcome and result, there are also some advantages to it per se. Thus, we may call the benefit of public deliberation, which can be counted per se and regardless of the outcome it may yield, 'intrinsic value'. According this view, discussion or deliberation is seen as a sort of exercise programme for developing human or civic virtues.18 In addition to these two values, we can find another benefit to deliberation that relates not to the process itself nor to the real outcome, but to a very significant feature of the outcome: legitimacy. In this sense, deliberation is considered neither because it is per se valuable nor because it affects the real result, but it is important for it makes the outcome justifiable and legitimate, no matter what it would be.19 Therefore, in the following discussion I will categorise the advantages of deliberation in three parts.

A:The intrinsic values of deliberative democracy

1. Human Virtues

Foremost among the instrinsic values of deliberation is justice. In this respect, I shall first look at Rawls' Theory of justice. He mentions some features about a 'just society' that correspond to deliberative democracy. According to him, in a just society participants pursue public good, and not sectional interests. In addition, he stipulates that parties must be concerned with demands that are the outcome of an open discussion intended to discover the common good. Consequently, he holds that even in an interest-based democracy with a 'fair bargaining', through which each group seeks for its own interest, and not the common good, justice is not materialized.20 Therefore, we can conclude that Rawls sees deliberative democracy as an intrinsically valuable procedure that can bring about justice, the element that is per se worthwhile regardless of the real outcome.

One might favour this approach and place justice at the peak of the hierarchy of huan values. Just interaction amongst parties of the society is one application of that general goal. Hence, in a deliberative procedure, regardless of the result, equal participation in a free discussion is considered a merit per se,

which is favourable to the members of the community themselves. This feature, however, relates to the society as a whole and is a manner of the society, and not each person individually.

Some other theorists argue that, regardless of the consequences, public discussion and reasoning may develop some characteristics and skills in the participants that can help to establish a good society. The result of a decision made by public reasoning may or may not be just or to the benefit of some members, but it is a way of 'national education that promotes the general mental advancement of the community'. Obviously, however, a community whose members enter the process of choosing a matter for discussion, putting forward different proposals for arguing, reasoning for or against every alternative, and making a decision 'tend to result in the development of certain skills and perhaps virtues in the participants'. We can mention some of those virtues as follows: 'eloquence, rhetorical skill, empathy, courtesy, imagination and reasoning ability', 21 as well as being intelligent and reasonable.

Also, according to Rawls, another value of deliberative democracy, which can be considered as an intrinsic one, is 'self-respect'. People, who contribute to a free and equal argument in order to discover the public good, feel that they are considered as useful members of the society. They are capable of deciding their destiny through the proposition of different opinions. 22 As Christiano explains this feature, 'a society in which individuals deliberate publicly before making decisions embodies a kind of mutual respect and concern among citizens'. 23 He mentions public deliberation as an intrinsic value because when every member of the society attaches importance to others' opinions and tries to know others' viewpoints and shows that he or she is apt to learn something from others that person shows a sort of respect for others. By contrast, if that person does not consult others on a public issue that has an effect for those others he or she ignores them and behaves them 'contemptuously'. According to political morality, respecting members of the community entails giving them the right to vote for policies relating to their affairs. Furthermore, not only should we consider others' ideas when observed, but also we must try to find out their opinions and encourage them to participate in discussion on those affairs. However, Christiano in a different observation expresses the irrelevance of this value. Through mentioning some scenarios, he tries to prove that justice necessitates providing equal opportunity for each member of the community when there is a discussion and deliberation so that if we do not listen equally to everybody, we treat them unjustly. However, it is not injustice or contempt to make decisions on public affairs without discussion and deliberation. Similar is the case when decisions made through equal bargaining and by means of threats and promises. In this way, he concludes that in neither of the latter cases does injustice occur.24

However, one might criticise this observation by taking into consideration what Rawls notes about justice. He points out that justice is only one feature of the good society;25 thus we can assert that although in those cases there is no injustice, we would lose another essential value relevant to the human society; that is to say, the dignity or perfection of men. Hence, we may believe that the establishment of a deliberative democracy, based on which every person in the community can express himself and present his ideas to be considered by others, will promote human qualities and strengthen the feeling of dignity in them. Likewise, paying attention to all members of the community by seeking out their opinion makes them feel useful and effective on social life. Therefore, both promoting human dignity and bringing about the feeling of usefulness can be counted as two intrinsic values of deliberative democracy.

B. The instrumental values of deliberative democracy

1. Producing a more correct decision

Whereas in a secret ballot, participants do not share each other's information and experiences, in an open discussion they can be informed of more knowledge and viewpoints on a certain matter. In other words, in addition to general information and knowledge, every member of the community may have some personal experience and background relating to the given problem. Therefore, if we provide the members of the community with an open arguing and reasoning 'private information relevant to a political choice' can 'revealed', through which the outcome will be more precise and consistent with the reality. It is worth considering, however, that this characteristic only may be obtained if the participants in the open discussion do not consider themselves as having broadly different interests and desires. Otherwise, they might prefer to hide their real desires and personal knowledge in order to prevent making a decision that may not benefit them. Thus, if the members of a community share approximately the same interests and preferences in regard to the result, the exchange of knowledge and personal information, rather than a secret ballot, makes the outcome more accurate and precise.26
Thus, deliberation, as discussed above, advances the probability of achieving the right decision that overcomes wrong decision-making with respect to incorrect information or imperfect knowledge.

Enhancing the probability of arriving at the common good
Some thinkers maintain that in open and public reasoning, participants tend more to consider public interest, rather than their own narrow benefit for two reasons. Firstly, although human beings are 'self-interested' and selfish in nature 'the desire not to appear selfish' prevents a participant in the public discussion from reasoning openly on the basis of selfish justification. This is true on the condition that the arguer 'has some concern for the opinion of those' in front of whom he or she observes. Moreover, since in deliberative democracy, voting is public, and not secret, normally it is rare that participants support a non-selfish opinion in discussion and vote for the opposite when it comes to making a decision. Secondly, bearing in mind the fact that in a public deliberation members intend to convince others through reasoning to arrive at consensus, insofar as possible, it would be 'contradictory' if a person supports his or her opinion by saying that 'this is to the benefit of my group'.27 For this comment, clearly, cannot be acceptable to other groups. Accordingly, each party should attempt to find some arguments and reasons that contain publicly acceptable elements, that, obviously, might not be, at least manifestly, selfish-based. As we can consider through this discussion deliberation mostly, if not always, can reduce the probability of pursuing group interest and, by contrast, promote the possibility of seeking the public good.

3. Removing the Problem of Cycling from majority rule

Majoritarians propound some predicaments to justify majority rule against its opponents, one of which is cycling. Shortly, we can describe that difficulty as follows:

If we assume that three or more voters, for instance, should choose between three or more alternatives, and presume that they are asked to rank their preferences the majority rule will face cycling. Suppose there are three options: (A), (B) and (C) and suppose, too, there are three groups to vote for them with ranking their preferences. Then assume that they vote as following:28

Group I

Group II

Group III

Ranking of Alternatives

A

C

B

B

A

C

C

B

A

Votes

40

30

30

In this case, A will defeat B, 70-30 (Groups I and II against Group III); B will defeat C, 70-30 (Groups I and III against Group II); and C will defeat A, 60-40 (Groups II and III against Group I). In such a case, since none of the alternatives enjoys absolute majority, the majority rule has no answer to adopt any choice as collective decision.29 This is the main problem that majority principle confronts.

However, theorists who favour majority rule suggest some solutions to overcome this dilemma, one of which is deliberation. According to Miller, deliberation has the capability to diminish this problem, firstly by removing the preferences that 'are based on false empirical beliefs, private interest, sectional interest, prejudice and so on', preferences which are so contemptible that may not posed in an openly public discussion. Furthermore, Miller argues, participants ascribe different levels of importance to alternatives because their criteria are not the same. Therefore, through deliberation they know this origin of disagreement. Consequently, they can first choose the most important aspect of the issue after which one of the alternatives would be adopted.30 In other words, they would select two-round voting: in the first, they choose the most significant aspect of the matter in question, and in the next attempt by that chosen criterion, they adopt an alternative amongst all. With this process the ranking which lead to that dilemma is omitted from procedure of decision-making. We encounter here a special sort of two-

round voting in which members select the main option in the second round after choosing the rule for judgement.

C: Legitimacy of the outcome

As the last advantage of deliberative democracy, I shall take a look at Cohen's account of deliberation. His account of 'ideal deliberative procedure' contains four principles.

Since in ideal deliberation, members of the community confine themselves only to the outcome of their discussion not to any 'prior norm or requirement', the deliberation and argument is free.
In such a deliberation participants attempt to reason for their opinion and against other ideas so as to convince others, who have their own ideas and reasons, of justice or, at least more desirability of their own choice. The aim is to arrive at the most reasonable position through deliberation. Therefore, there is 'no force except that of the better argument'; the fact that makes deliberation reasoned.
Since there is neither rule nor real power to affect the chance of any member of the community in choosing a matter for discussion, arguing for or against alternative solutions and participating in decision-making the participants in deliberation are all equal.
Finally, in ideal deliberation, the prior intention is to achieve a reasoned consensus. Although when failing to obtain consensus, participants resort to voting on the basis of 'majority rule' its result is likely different from the result of majority rule in non-deliberative voting, 31 whose members' aim is to pursue the narrow group interest. In the former, the majority's votes are performed to reach the common good, whereas in the later, majority's votes are expected to benefit group interest best. Cohen through these arguments asserts that the outcome of such a free and reasoned deliberation amongst equal citizens seeking rational consensus can only be considered as legitimate and justified result, regardless of the real outcome.32 In fact, deliberation in this account is thought of as the means to make the outcome justifiable and legitimate and more acceptable to the whole participants in the discussion.
Some theorists observe, convincingly, that due to the diversity of cultures, this feature of deliberation is confined to the people who will not feel ashamed if the result of discussion opposes their publicly expressed opinion. Otherwise, the minority would prefer to comply with what it does not disagree with manifestly.33 Therefore, it is more acceptable and justifiable to those people to participate in a non-deliberative situation based on secret ballot which can better preserve their dignity.

Part Three: The shortcomings of deliberative democracy

So far, we have examined the advantages to deliberative democracy. By contrast, there are, allegedly, some imperfections to deliberation, at least, in some cases. Now, it is time to explore them in order to judge the final result in this discussion.

First, some maintain that in emergency cases, where there is a pressing need to deal with a problem very quickly it is not reasonable to 'waste precious time'.34 In such a situation, if participants spend much time examining the pros and cons of every alternative solution to a certain problem with the aim of achieving the common good, they may lose the least interest, let alone succeed in obtaining the best option. Thus, reasonableness necessitates that in such situations the community leaves deliberation in order to obtain a minimum profit available. Yet, we can avoid this harm by a previously agreed rule, which determines the agenda for deliberation. We, rationally, expect that reasonable people, in emergency cases, give dominance to speed, rather than to deliberation. Therefore, by taking into consideration the priority of speed to deliberation members may resort to a type of immediate voting,

or even they might prefer to entrust the decision-making to some more wise members. By this distinction between ordinary and emergency affairs, we can benefit from deliberation in some cases eschewing it in some others, instead of rejecting it in principle. Interestingly, however, this differentiation itself can only be achieved through deliberation.

Second, another censure arises from the assertion that due to the inequality of people with respect to their ability to discuss and reason, in deliberative democracy, 'weaker people may sheepishly acquiesce to the stronger'.35 In this regard, some theorists hold that there is an assumption that 'the better-educated white middle-class' males can better take the opportunities and express themselves. Consequently, deliberation can better serve those privileged people and their interest.36 In other words, it is likely that in deliberative discussion, in which the intention is to discover the common good and justice, stronger people through effective rhetorical speech overcome the weaker either by silencing them or by convincing them to vote for what is not the common good.37 Instead, it is the stronger members' interest. This is unlikely if there is no open discussion, because in that situation the weaker and under-privileged groups avoid entering in an unequal discussion and hide their preferences and motives. As a result, they can make it difficult for others to manipulate them.

One might reject this objection to deliberation by considering the distinction between parties in liberal and deliberative democracies. Whereas in liberal democracy ordinary people, who are more apt to be manipulated, are those who make decisions and vote, in deliberative democracy representatives that are, expectedly, better educated and more effective finalise the argument and make decisions. Through this argument, we can defend deliberative democracy against this censure. Furthermore, we can reverse the criticism to liberal democracy. As Schumpeter put forward, in liberal democracy, in which the aim is to exercise general will, we reasonably expect that under the propagation of professional politicians, people adopt what is not their genuine needs or wills. Instead, the outcome of voting would be what he calls manufactured popular will.38

Third, another problem may arise in deliberative democracy in cases where discussion fails to convince the members about the just attitude or the common good at which deliberation is aimed. In those cases, after participants confront the conflicting and counteracting argument and reasoning, they may fall into hesitation and, accordingly, may become unable to make a decision. Whereas in interest-based democracy this result is unlikely to happen, not only because there is no discussion to affect the initial preferences of participants, but also since the aim is achieving the group interest which can be realised more easily and decided upon than common good or justice. Thus, when the aim is to arrive at consensus or a majority position on justice or the common good through open discussion, the converse result might occur. The members might fail to come to required decision. It is worth noticing that this difficulty varies from the cycling problem in that here the contributors might confront hesitation in person and fail to make an individual decision, whereas in the latter the dilemma relates to aggregating individual preferences.

Conclusion

When we compare deliberative democracy with liberal democracy, the two main streams, one cannot infer exclusive merits to deliberative democracy that would force us to depart from liberal democracy. We can make the following observations in this respect:

1. Deliberative democracy is a 'new normative idea'39 that should be examined in practice to show its viability. In practice, we can better judge its merits and demerits, and thereby evaluate it more

confidently. So far, theorists have propounded this model in theory with assumptions, rather than analysing real cases.

2. Unlike liberal democracy, the deliberative model of democracy can only occur at the level of political associations, such as parliament, cabinet, parties and so forth, and not at the national level. This is a very noticeable distinction, which underlies the requirement of the society to liberal model as well. In fact, one should accommodate each in its proper position. At the national level, the society needs an experimental model of democracy to reach the least bad situation, in which members can guarantee freedom and equality for them. On the other hand, if we try to establish deliberative democracy in political associations the benefits of deliberation may be added to freedom and equality obtained by liberal model. Those profits include a just society, human dignity, the promotion of human virtues, the probability of achieving more correct decisions, more possibility to reach the common good, strengthening democracy through removing cycling from majority rule, and finally achieving legitimate outcomes. All these are the consequences of deliberation if the community can be established properly if partisan spirit does not prevent members of a deliberative democracy from thinking and arguing free from group interest, if people are able to elect the relatively most capable and wisest candidates for national positions, and so on.

On the whole, it seems difficult to achieve a deliberative democracy as discussed in this study. However, if one society can establish a deliberative democracy, it can obtain those implications relating to deliberation discussed above.

Notes:

1-James Bohman & William Rehg, "Introduction," in James Bohman & William Rehg (eds.), Deliberative Democracy, Essays on Reason and Politics, Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press 1999, p. ix.

2-Bohman and Rehg, "Introduction," p. x.

3-Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and democratic legitimacy," in Bohman & Rehg (eds.), Deliberative democracy, p. 67.

4-Thomas Christiano, "The Significance of public deliberation," in Bohman & Rehg (eds.), Deliberative democracy, p. 243.

5-James D. Fearon, "Deliberation as discussion," in Jon Elster (ed.), Deliberative Democracy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, p. 54.

6-Adam Przeworski, "Deliberation and ideological domination", in Elster (ed.), Deliberative democracy, p.140.

7-Diego Gambetta, "Claro!: An essay on discursive machismo," in Elster (ed.), Deliberative democracy, p. 19.

8-Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and democratic legitimacy," pp. 72-3.

9-Jon Elster, "Introduction," in Elster (ed.), Deliberative democracy, p. 1.

10-Scott London, "Teledemocracy vs. Deliberative Democracy, A comparative look at two models of public talk," <http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/tele.html.02/11/ 00>, p. 5.

11-Elster, "Introduction," p. 2.

12-Iris Marion Young, "Communication and the other: beyond deliberative democracy," in Seyla Benhabib (ed.), Democracy and differences, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996, pp. 120-21.

13-Bohman & Rehg, "Introduction," p. x.

14-David Held, Models of democracy, 2nd edition, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1996, pp. 185-86.

15-Held, Models of democracy, p. 179.

16-Jon Elster, "The Market and the Forum: Three varieties of political theory," in Bohman & Rehg (eds.), Deliberative democracy, p. 4.

17-David Miller, "Deliberative Democracy and social choice," in David Held (ed.), Prospects of Democracy,Cambridge: Polity Press 1993, pp. 76-7.

18-Fearon, "Deliberation as discussion," p. 59.

19-Christiano, "The significance of public deliberation," pp. 245-46.

20-Cohen, "Deliberation and democratic legitimacy," p. 68.

21-Fearon, "Deliberation as discussion," p. 59.

22-Cohen, "Deliberation and democractic legitimacy," p. 69.

23-Christiano, "The signifiance of public deliberation," p. 245.

24-Christiano, "The significance of public deliberation," pp. 251-254.

25-John Rawls, "Justice as fairness," in Robert E. Goodin & Philip Pettit (eds.), Contemporary Political Philosophy, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1997, p. 187.

26-Fearon, "Deliberation as discussion," pp. 45-48.

27-Fearon, "Deliberation as discussion," pp. 53-55.

28-Robert A. Dahl, Democracy and its Critics, New Haven: Yale University Press 1989, p. 145.

29-Dahl, Democracy and its critics, p. 145.

30-Miller, "Deliberative democracy and social choice," pp. 80- 87.

31-Cohen, "Deliberation and democratic legitimacy," pp. 74-5.

32-Cohen, "Deliberation and democratic legitimacy," p. 73.

33-Fearon, "Deliberation as discussion," pp. 55, 58.

34-Gambetta, "Claro!" p. 21.

35-Gambetta, "Claro!" p. 21.

36-Young, "Communication and the other," pp. 123-24.

37-Young, "Communication and the other," p. 124.

38-Held, Models of democracy, p. 187.

39-Bohman & Rehg, "Intrudction," p. ix.

Iranian Islam

Nader Ahmadi & Fereshteh Ahmadi, Iranian Islam: The concept of the individual, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press 1998, pp. xv + 281, cloth.

The excruciating title is not a good start. Opening themselves up to essentialism and reductionism in their description of the beliefs and thought of Iranian Muslims, the Ahmadis have made a valiant effort to bring philosophy, the phenomenology of the Henry Corbin school, Iranology and sociology together in a wide-ranging synthesis. A valiant attempt no doubt but quite misguided.

The basic thesis of the book is that in Iran, indeed amongst Shiʻite Muslims in general, the concept of personal identity, and especially of the individual is premature and underdeveloped. This lack of self-awareness, a very modern concept of individual versus society, is attributed to two sets of obstacles: philosophical obstacles such as esoteric philosophy and Sufism that dissolve the self in the Oneness of Being, and socio-legal strictures of Islamic law and politics. Iranian thought is caricaturised as other-worldly, abstract, mystical and wholly inappropriate to a modern, atomised this-worldly society. Mulla Sadra and R£m¢ amongst others are accused to closing the Iranian mind and sealing it in its spiritualised fog, unable to secularise and open itself to the concept of its individuality. Iranian politics from the theory of the King as shadow of God on earth to Khomeini's 'absolute theocracy' has stifled the liberty and sense of individual freedom and rights of Iranians. Iranians are thus complicit and guilty of false consciousness! I would have thought that the use of terms such as 'the Iranian mind' would be anathema to most serious scholars, as well as the rather jejune psychology espoused here but apparently my belief is mistaken.

Further, there are two theoretical problems at the heart of this work. First, the concept of Iranian Islam seems incoherent. Following Corbin, it is an archetype characterised by Shiʻism, esoteric hermeneutics, post-religious (in the conventional sense) energy and antinomianism. Their account is thus both derivative and highly suspect. Where is the nomological, the historical, the theological and the Arab in their (and indeed Corbin's) account? Sufism and Shiʻism are major obstacles to freedom and yet paradoxically are oppositional forces. The historical experience of Iran in which both Sufi orders and

Shiʻite dynasties have held power makes a mockery of much of this confused analysis. The assertions that Sufism and Shiʻism are particularly Iranian phenomena would be disputed by most Maghribi Sunni Sufis and Arab (not to mention American) Shiʻite scholars.

Second, how can an analysis about an abstract essence, a universal 'Iranian Islam' yield knowledge about an individual or even give an account of an individual except in some 'universal' sense? The old Aristotelian aporia of studying particulars through universals defeats them. Swedes as inheritors of the Protestant work ethic see labour as a means of salvation, while Iranians steeped in Sufi lore have a fuzzy concept of the distinction between work and leisure. Basic common sense and empirical study would show up what sort of nonsense this is, dangerous nonsense indeed since it reinforces the prejudices of fascist-nationalist movements in Europe. It would indeed be easy, following Said's condemnation of Fouad Ajami, to describe the Ahmadis as self-hating Iranians. It would be easy but not constructive.

The reader, at least this one, is not instilled with any confidence in the project when one realises (rather quickly) that not only is their 'empirical' data and analysis about Iran severely flawed but that the readings of contemporary philosophical, sociological and anthropological accounts of the individual are highly suspect. The authors are further let down by some sloppy editing; typographical mistakes are abundant.

Iranian Islam is a frustrating book. It is excessively ambitious and exciting, yet inadequately researched and derivative in its analyses and ideas. It indulges in broad generalisations on the sociology and psychology of Iran, but remains parochial and limited in its conclusions, relating them to the Swedish experience, no doubt a constraint imposed by the body that controlled the authors' purse strings. But the questions towards which their inquiry is heading are interesting. Is identity crisis in the contemporary Muslim world a result of the failure to conceptualise oneself as an individual? Did Islamic philosophy fail to provide an account of particular selves? Or is even the attempt at this line of questioning a negation of one's cultural heritage, of a capitulation to an inauthentic ethics of self-interest, atomisation and disintegration of a religious co-operative society? Herein actually lies the value of the book. In constructing one's alternative essentialist account to counter the Ahmadis', one realises the flaws within one's own position, and one needs to rethink what religion, self and identity really mean for us. If this is the unwritten aim of the book, then it is the most critical and pivotal work of the last decade.

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The Oxford History of Western Philosophy

Anthony Kenny, The Oxford History of Western Philosophy. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.

In some sense, all introductions to philosophy must be considered inadequate since one book can hardly contain a comprehensive and yet distilled account of some 2500 years of philosophical reasoning. With that being said, what makes an introduction to philosophy strong must be how it compares to other such attempts, and what makes it weak must be taken with a grain of salt. The Oxford History of Western Philosophy, then, seems an admirable addition to the mass of introductory literature, but its weaknesses may give one pause before choosing this book to use in a classroom setting.

Perhaps the most appealing attribute of this introduction is the scope with which it deals with each individual philosopher. Very often, in order to familiarize the reader with a particular figure's thoughts, the philosopher's works and ideas are expounded but without a sense of the historical context within which the philosopher works. The Oxford History, in delightful contrast, does not study these figures in isolation; rather, this introduction delivers the sense of impact these thinkers had upon their world. Case in point, in Anthony Kenny's own essay on Descartes, he includes the response of Princess Elizabeth of the Palatine concerning Descartes connection between the mind and body (p.126). The work is replete with such anecdotes.

The Oxford History confesses, up front, that the contributors to this introduction are grounded in the analytic tradition, even though the editor offers the caveat that the other authors would probably not consider themselves 'typical practitioners' of this tradition. Nevertheless, even with this caveat, I found the analytic tradition to be quite evident, and, at times, evident in an unwelcome way. The most egregious oversight that we might attribute to the analytic point of view comes early in the work with the presentation of Aristotle. While author Stephen R. L. Clark has written an engaging piece outlining the origins of philosophy, his account of Aristotle focuses upon the early work in the Categories and Aristotle's founding of logic - a topic of analytic interest. Aristotle's form and matter distinction is only implied and his discussion of the four causes and the foundations of nature are conspicuously absent. More than once, logic figures prominently where other introductions would overlook it. The only other place where the analytic tradition takes a misstep is in Kenny's afterword. The distaste held by the entrenched analytic tradition for the rising post-structuralist/post-modern philosophy is obvious in Kenny's accusation of post-structuralist self-refuting propositions which shows his obvious distance and misunderstanding of this movement.

My concluding remarks focus on the concluding chapter of The Oxford History. After five chapters which introduce philosophers along historical lines, the final chapter focuses upon political philosophy, retracing the philosophical time line with an emphasis on the political. This final hapter appears as a strange gaffe in organization - a topical chapter after five historical ones. For those who might use this introduction in the classroom, the well-written essays are refreshing; however, the last chapter seems difficult to include, despite being well constructed in itself.

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Naqdi bar Tah¡futal-falasifa-yi Ghazali

Sayyed Jalalod-Din ashtiyani, Sisila-yi ¡th¡r-iOst¡d ªshtiy¡n¢, Qum: Markaz-i intish¡r¡t-i daftar-i tabl¢gh¡t-i isl¡m¢, howza-yi ʻilmiyya-yi Qum 1375 Shams¢ [1996], pp. 551.

It is unfortunate that, despite the rise in interest in Islamic philosophy in Iran since the Revolution and a shift in the academic discourse that no longer assumes that philosophy is somehow a pariah discipline in Islamdom, attacks on philosophy from certain circles continue unabated. In the face of such attacks, one searches for adequate responses, for attempts to place philosophical and mystical inquiry in Islam within a traditionalist and robust context. And who better to undertake such a task than Sayyed Jal¡lod¢n ªshtiy¡n¢, the contemporary and traditionally trained hakim whom Henry Corbin once described as a Mulla Sadra revividus. The present work under review is a robust defence of philosophy against tah¡fut-gar¢, or anti-intellectualism, and a piercing analysis of the pseudo-rational critique of the method of

philosophers in Islam. Ostensibly a critique of the famous work of al-Ghaz¡l¢ (d. 1111), the book is in fact a collection of articles published over the years in scholarly philosophical and cultural studies journals in Iran. These articles locate philosophy within the wider contexts of Islamic theological and mystical thought and their deep interpenetrations and mutual dependence. Often taking the work of al-Ghaz¡l¢ as a starting point, he draws on his astonishing mastery of Islamic philosophical traditions to elucidate subtle and vexing issues concerning the existence of God, divine knowledge, the problem of knowledge and the nature of creation. As such it is a masterpiece of contemporary Shi'i philosophical theology drawing together different trends, schools and argument from Islamic intellectual traditions and locating them within the discourse of Shi'i theology that stems from the sayings and hermeneutics of the Shi'i Imams.

Contemporary Islamic philosophy is a varied field with different traditions reacting to contrasting influences. Most of these philosophers start with the philosophy of Mulla Sadra as their starting point and despite their critical approaches remain attached to his school of thought. But the spectrum of engagements in contemporary thought range from the ultra-traditionalists, who accept the medieval Aristotelian categories and the Ptolemaic universe as sufficient for their purposes, to the modernisers, who want to reform and fine-tune Islamic philosophy, preserving many of the rational and optimistic assumptions while trimming off the untenable cosmology and outlandish physics and psycho-physics. There is even some space in the debate for 'post-modernists' who are sceptical about the possibility to access the 'Truth' and are concerned with rethinking philosophy and going beyond onto its hermeneutical margins.

ªshtiy¡n¢ is a traditionalist. Not for him is ªyatull¡h Me¥b¡¦'s rejection of the cosmology of the Active Intellect or his attempts at ushering in a Kantian and Copernican revolution in Islamic philosophy. Similarly he does not feel disillusioned with the state of Islamic philosophy to recognise and promote a paradigm shift or a methodical bouleversement away from the critical method of the religiously-minded madrasa to the analytical anthropocentrism and reconstruction that marks much of contemporary Catholic philosophy.

His method in these articles is simple. He presents a critique of the views of philosopher either in the Ghazalian mode or from a Shi'i traditionalist point of view and then systematically dismantles it. The latter critique is represented by the work of M¢rz¡ Mahd¢ I¥fah¡n¢ called Abw¡b al-hud¡ (Gates of guidance). In many ways, this latter work looms over the collection even more than that of Ghaz¡l¢ since his concern lies with those Iranian readers who are more likely to be swayed by the traditionalist argument than the medieval Sunni theologian's critique. The counter-argument takes the following shape. First, he demonstrates the invalidity or unsoundness of the critique considered rationally. Second, in the case of scriptural evidence, he reinterprets texts through a hermeneutic that returns the text to its origin and locates it within a metaphysical context. Third, he invokes authority to win his argument, an invocation that also confirms the role of such authorities within a philosophical context. Authorities are of two types for him: scriptural and doctrinal. On the issue of free will, he quotes the sayings of the Imams and shows how they illuminate our philosophical discourse and even demonstrate how the (Shi'i) philosophical discourse is informed by those sayings. Thus he presents scriptural proofs alongside philosophical arguments. The second type of authority invoked is a major Islamic philosopher of the past such as Avicenna. To corroborate his arguments and demolition of attacks on philosophy, he invokes the views of these canonical figures. By the very fact of his reference to and rehearsal of their opinions, he is establishing them as central figures within a canon of Islamic philosophy.

ªshtiy¡n¢'s significance in the field of Islamic philosophy lies not only in his voluminous output mainly in the form of introductions and annotated commentaries upon the major texts of the later tradition that he has edited. He remains a central spokesman for the school of Mulla Sadra, a true representative who can tease out nuances and make significant connections and provide pointers for the student or the novice in the field. It is as such a representative and as the keen philosophical mind of erudition that he is that he deserves to be read by a wider audience of scholars working in Islamic philosophy. The work under is thus highly recommended as an introduction to his aims and his methods opening up a portal into a world of thought that is undergoing a thorough reconfiguration.

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Philosophical Instructions: An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy

Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, ªm£zish-i falsafa, trs. M. Legenhausen & A. Sarvdalir as Philosophical instructions: An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy, Binghamton, NY.: Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University and the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science in association with the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts at Brigham Young University 1999, pp. xxxiii + 568, paper, n.p.

This translation of a popular and widely used introduction to Islamic philosophy originally in Persian is part of a project in North America to provide a wider audience in philosophy and religious studies with contemporary texts in Islamic thought that are not available to them due to linguistic shortcomings. The project initiated by Brigham Young University and the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science aims at providing reliable translations of classical Islamic philosophical texts as well more contemporary developments and texts produced in recent years by traditionally trained scholars. It is hoped that the series will illuminate the world of contemporary Islamic philosophical theology for a wider audience.

The author of the work is one of the foremost philosophers in Iran today, a prominent public figure, a member of the Council of Guardians and a renowned lecturer and teacher. A student of the late 'All¡ma ±ab¡§ab¡'¢ (d. 1981), ªyatull¡h Mi¥b¡¦ is a keen mind and subtle philosopher. As the head of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, he has been instrumental in encouraging the study of Western philosophical and humanist disciplines among seminary students in Qum. The work is translated by two of his students, one of whom Legenhausen is himself a philosopher trained at Rice University. In their introduction, the translators discuss the significance of ªyatull¡h Mi¥b¡¦. He is part of a revival of the study of philosophy in the Shi'i seminary and a critical thinker who does not shun piercing criticisms of the classical authors. It is his critical stance on the history of philosophy in Islam and his postulation of the importance of philosophical inquiry at the basis of a new and rigorous theology than makes him such an important figure. As such he comes in a long line of rationalist thinkers and theologians in the Shi'i milieu. His critical approach is also part of a new theology (kal¡m-i jad¢d) that seeks responses to the challenge of ideas mainly originating in the West about human inquiry. A significant aspect of this approach is a reorientation and reorganisation of philosophical and theological training. Those aspects of classical Islamic philosophy that are untenable given scientific observations that we now hold are discarded. The cosmology and cosmogony of celestial spheres and intellects emanating from the One are removed from philosophy as such. The rather outlandish natural philosophy originating in Aristotle is put aside. The study of European thought is encouraged and a

broader concept of philosophy embraced. Like neo-Thomism in Catholic Europe, the philosophical foundations for theology while remaining traditional are subjected to newer rationalist standards of rigour. The work is arranged to fit this programme. The first section deals with introductory remarks about the nature of philosophy. Then one is presented with epistemology and foundations of knowledge. Only after that does one discuss ontology and wider metaphysical problems. Once both ontology and epistemology are studied, one moves onto 'special metaphysics' or theology. Conspicuous absentees include cosmology, psychology and physics.

However, this reader has reservations about the choice of presenting this work in English. The author is clearly an important figure who merits an audience in Anglo philosophy and theology. But is this the work by which he deserves to be known? The translators make it clear in the introduction that it is neither his most astute nor most penetrating work; that accolade must rest with his critical scholia upon his teacher's Nihayat al-hikma (Culmination of philosophy). It also suffers from being a transcript of rather simplified lectures for beginners in philosophy. Yet most readers who might pick up this work in Europe or the United States will have more than a passing knowledge of philosophy and probably even some acquaintance with Islamic philosophy. If one assumes that the reader is totally unfamiliar with Islamic thought, then surely notes explaining concepts and terms are required. But there are no notes accompanying the translation.

At times, the author's grasp of European philosophy seems far from adequate. The opening section on the nature of philosophy, the sketch of the history of philosophy in Europe and the rather jejune conflict between empiricists and rationalists that he posits seems rather redundant. The problems of epistemology in contemporary philosophy are not addressed; rather, the traditional objections to scepticism are rehearsed. Perhaps this is an unfair criticism. The work does not purport to be a global introduction to philosophy and often his examples from European philosophy are intended as pointers for students to make the necessary conceptual connections between those philosophical ideas from the Islamic traditions that they study with wider philosophical discourse that he encourages.

So what of the translation itself? The translators have an acute understanding of philosophical and theological terminology in English and are aware of the problems of translating Arabic and Persian terms into English cognates. Fluent academic English is sought, but one which retains a certain literal connection to the Arabic. To take two terms as an example: m¡hiyya is rendered 'whatness' a rather literal but clear translation given that quiddity (used by many scholars of Islamic philosophy following medieval convention) is not used in contemporary philosophy, and essence is too loaded a term. The notoriously slippery iʿtib¡r¢ is rendered as 'respectival' to illustrate that it is always subordinate and that its entification in some mode is always with respect to some 'fact' or conceptual with respect to some mode of reality. The translation is therefore fluent, sophisticated and technical. Given this, it is a shame that the translators did not see fit to append a glossary of the technical terms that would have been a major contribution to the project.

Overall, Philosophical Instructions is a valuable work that gives us an insight into the study of philosophy and its uses within the Shiʿi seminary in Iran. But as an independent work of philosophy, it makes little contribution either to Islamic philosophy as such or to a philosophical dialogue between different global traditions. One suspects that it will be read more for the former reason. One hopes that the more substantial works of ayatullah Mi¥b¡¦ will become available in English in the future.

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The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines, Volumes I,II,III

Volume I: Studies in Abu'l-Barakat al-Baghdadi, Magnes Press 1979, rpt. 2000, pp. 339, cloth, n.p.

Volume II: Studies in Arabic versions of Greek texts and in mediaeval science, Magnes Press 1986, rpt. 2000, pp. xi + 468, cloth, n.p.

Volume III: Studies in the History of Arabic Philosophy, ed. S. Strousma, Magnes Press 1996, pp. 452, cloth, n.p.

The late Shlomo Pines was undoubtedly one of the most prolific and perceptive students of Islamic philosophy in this century. The range and depth of his erudition is represented and reflected in these three volumes collecting his papers published in a variety of journals and collections. Two other volumes of his works have been published but are not considered here. They are his studies on the history of religion, and his collected papers on Jewish thought. The volumes under review are of key concern for the student of Islamic philosophy. Many of the articles are pioneering analyses, which in many cases remain unique investigations on those subjects. A scholar of considerable learning, Pines had a strong background in both the classics and Semitic languages and thought, and consequently much of his work is of interest not just to the Islamicist but to wider audiences in the classics and the history of philosophy and of ideas. His meticulous research drew on a wealth of unpublished manuscript material on Islamic thought and his citation of philosophers ranges from Rhazes to Crescas, from Philoponus to Avicenna, and from Heidegger to Mulla Sadra.

The first volume deals with the thought of the much neglected Jewish/Muslim thinker of 12th century Baghdad, Ab£'l-Barak¡t, and presents the thought of a truly independent thinker who was neither an Aristotelian nor a Avicennan, neither a Platonist nor really a Neoplatonist. Rather he was an independent spirit who had a lasting influence on both the Sunni theologian Fakhr al-D¢n al-R¡z¢ [d. 1209] and the later Illuminationist tradition in Iran following the line of Suhraward¢ [d. 1191]. The independence of the work is due, no doubt, partly to his intellectual location outside the Jewish community, at least in later life, and earlier to his philosophical formation outside the Peripatetic mainstream. Pines draws out the subtle positions on physics and epistemology that truly distinguish Baghdadi. Ab£'l-Barak¡t's Kitab al-Mu'tabar, despite being one of the most significant medieval meditations upon the Aristotelian system remains a little studied work. Yet it is precisely this work that resulted from, as its title suggests, a profound contemplation on philosophical problems, which is central to Pines' analysis. Pines demonstrates how one can understand his work in a dialectical relationship with the thought of Avicenna and by juxtaposing their positions and opposing arguments one not only gains an insight into non-Peripatetic thought in medieval Islam but also a more acute understanding of Avicennan positions. Baghd¡d¢'s contributions to Islamic philosophy cover major areas of metaphysics, physics and epistemology. His physics is avowedly Platonist affirming the existence of infinite space, asserting that space (mak¡n) is a tridimensional entity and even allowing for the existence of a void, all clearly articulated anti-Aristotelian (and anti-Avicennan) positions. He also makes a major contribution to impetus theory. Another major contribution in physics is his theory of the relativity of motion with respect to celestial motion, a theory that explains why our perception of bodies at rest can be reconciled with our theoretical and analogous observation of motive bodies. In metaphysics, his meditations upon the reality of time juxtaposed with its relativity in human conception show an attempt to move discussions of time away from their traditional position in the physics into the realm of

metaphysics and even psychology. A certain aspect of time that is perceived in the soul is accidental to the soul and curiously atemporal, yet the reality of 'time' as such is an irrefutable ontological dimension. Perhaps his most radical and lasting contributions were in the field of epistemology. Like later Illuminationist philosophy, he espouses a priori knowledge and immediacy of self-awareness as the basis of his epistemic system. Knowledge is gained by direct apperception, and the field of knowledge is far more unified than in the Avicennan theory of knowledge. For example, our cognitive faculties are not so clearly divided into the perception of sensibilia and intelligibilia. Rather, the subject that perceives is united and the act of perception is unitary. Given his postulation of a priori knowledge and the foundation within the undivided and self-aware subject, this is not surprising.

Volume II is of great interest to the historian of ideas especially one interested in the transmission of the Hellenic heritage and the formation of medieval thought. In this major collection, one finds significant pieces on fragments of Peripatetic and also Neoplatonic philosophy that solely survive in the Arabic. Of particular interest are the pieces on the critique of Galen, presenting texts and opinions of him that do not survive in any language other than Arabic and does contribute to our understanding of Galen's philosophical positions. With respect to the later Islamic tradition that is marked by Neoplatonism(s) and a blend of the 'rational' and the 'irrational', or the discursive and the mystical, his pieces on the fragments on Proclus' Elements of Theology outside the renowned Liber de Causis (Kitab fi mah¤ al-khayr) are critical.

Volume II collects many early works on Islamic philosophy and is divided by theme and philosopher. The section on Avicenna includes his major article on the authorship of the Fu¥£¥ f¢ l-hikma attributed to Farabi but which Pines shows is probably the work of Avicenna. He also considers the old and well-worn issue of Avicenna's Oriental philosophy, taking a position somewhere between Gutas' rejectionism and Nasr's affirmation of the revival of an ancient Iranian (mystical) tradition. Other sections deal with the transmission of texts, and the relationship between medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophy. Another significant set of articles studies themes in Ism¡'¢l¢ philosophy addressing the relationship to Neoplatonism as expressed in the 'longer version' of the Theologia Aristoteles.

Pines' work is highly recommended and trawling through these intricate pieces of research one finds true gems. For the student, it is an excellent place even to look for dissertation topics given the range of questions and issues that he raises. These volumes are thus essential reading not only for scholars with an interest in Islamic philosophy but also for historians of ideas and of philosophy interested in how Islamic traditions relate to wider philosophical concerns.

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Suhrawardi, The Philosophy of Illumination: A new critical edition of the text of hikmat al-ishraq with English translation

A new critical edition of the text of hikmat al-ishraq with English translation, notes, commentary and introduction by Hossein Ziai and John Walbridge, Islamic Translation Series, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press 1999, pp. xliii + 218 (Arabic and English dual text), cloth, £20.

The present edition and translation under review and the larger series of which it forms an important part are major contributions to our study of Islamic philosophy. These works are critical not just for

Arabists with interests in philosophical inquiry in Islamdom but also philosophers seeking to acquaint themselves with different philosophies around the world. It is hoped that this series of texts will facilitate the study of Islamic philosophy within philosophy and history of philosophy departments. The aim of our study of Islamic philosophy is to produce analyses of significant concepts and systems and understand them within the context of wider human experience and philosophical investigation. Before any analytical work is even possible, we need reliable critical editions of texts and especially for those without the relevant linguistic ability, annotated accurate translations of texts in major European language. In an increasingly monoglot academic world (certainly as far as students are concerned) it is imperative that these translations are made available in English.

The importance of Shih¡b al-D¢n Ya¦yá Suhraward¢ (exe. 1191) is clear for the student of Islamic philosophy. As a founder of a major philosophical tradition at odds with the Peripatetic/Avicennan mainstream, he was responsible for major shifts in fields of philosophical inquiry ranging from a reorganisation and rejection of Aristotelian logic, proposing a new epistemology to postulating a rather different vision of reality. Having mastered the Peripatetic tradition and begun a critical engagement with them as is evidenced by his earlier systematic works like al-Talw¢¦¡t (Intimations), he marked a Platonist shift in philosophy from a rejection (or at the very least revision) of Aristotelian categories and substance metaphysics to a processist, eidetic vision of lights and a metaphysics and epistemology of immediate presence. The Aristotelian theory of definition as a basis for knowledge is wholly rejected and replaced by intuitive immediate knowledge. The material of Aristotelian logic is revised into a practical two-part logic of semantics and proof theory. The hierarchy of lights is differentiated by a scale of intensity and setting aside the traditional Avicennan distinction between existence and essence in contingents, he supports the primacy of essences as 'ideas' immanent in the divine mind. This reorientation of philosophy to what he himself claimed was a more ancient tradition had a key influence on the development of philosophy in Iran and even on the way in which the Avicennan tradition itself was perceived. The Illuminationist (ishr¡q¢) school that he founded, become dominant in intellectual circles in the Islamic East.

Most of the significant work to date on Suhrawardi has been in French including translations of almost all of his works starting with the pioneering work of the late Henry Corbin in the 1940s. Interest in Suhrawardi among Anglophone scholars has been inspired by Corbin's opus and the last decade has seen significant contributions to Suhrawardian studies especially by the translators of this work, Hossein Ziai (Knowledge and Illumination, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1990) and John Walbridge (The science of mystic lights, Camb, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1992, and The leaven of the ancients, Albany: State University of New York Press 2000). Their approach is characterised by a serious engagement with the philosophical problems and inquiries in the text. Also unlike Corbin, and more recently Aminrazavi (Suhrawardi and the school of Illumination, Richmond: Curzon Press 1997), they do not focus on the 'mystical' and non-'rational' elements of the system. Rather, they are concerned with what one might call a mystically based or experiential philosophy that is articulated through a unique and new logical system of argumentation. Corbin in his own translation of this text had ignored the logical propadeutic and focused upon the hierarchy of lights and how this metaphysical exposition of light mysticism was related to allegorical teaching in the form of 'visionary recitals' as he called them. However, for Ziai and Walbridge the form of argumentation is critical and the opening section on logic is the key to understanding the Illuminationist critique of Peripatetic argument. An informative and scholarly introduction and a useful glossary of cross-referenced terms complement the core of the work. The work is also appended with an extensive bibliography and is well indexed.

The success of the endeavour depends on the quality of the edition and the translation. Corbin edited the work in the 1940s, but Ziai and Walbridge have improved on that edition. A good edition requires an intimate acquaintance with the manuscript and commentary traditions, a consideration of the earliest and best manuscripts and knowledge of textual history. Ziai and Walbridge have fulfilled these conditions. They have considered the oldest manuscript at Tehran University Central Library that Corbin did not use. Drawing upon the manuscripts of the commentary of Qu§b al-Din Shirazi (d. 1311), they check the corrected lithograph of the late 19th century and do not fall into some textual errors that Corbin did by checking the lithograph against the manuscripts. All in all as an edition, it is an improvement upon Corbin, at times retaining certain Persian readings instead of Arabicising them to remain faithful to the original, and the critical apparatus at the end of the edition is far more extensive and reliable that Corbin's.

For most readers, the translation is the main interest. In their introduction, the translators tell us that their main aim is to 'explicate the philosophical nature of the Illuminationist tradition' by translating the 'text into philosophically rigorous contemporary American English with as little deviation from the literal sense as possible'. Thus, avoiding the language of 'theosophy' and 'gnosticism', they want to tease out the philosophical significance of the text and present it to Islamicists and philosophers alike as a major work of philosophy. Technical terms are strictly translated in a consistent style. The quest for an adequate lexicon of philosophical terminology is an important by-product of such translations. Terms are translated to render philosophical sense. The term dhawq often rendered as 'taste' is translated here as 'intuition' and as an interpretation is far more communicative to a philosophical argument. I'tibarat 'aqliyya is a notoriously difficult term to render. They render it as 'beings of reason' indicating that the term refers to entities that exist purely in the mind or in mental consideration. An effort is thus made to communicate concepts by using at times cognate terms current in philosophical usage. Overall this works rather well. The translation is ably supported by endnotes. The Philosophy of Illumination is a masterpiece of the Islamic philosophical heritage and the translators are to be congratulated for rendering this work into accessible and sophisticated English.

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